

2012

## Cultural Variations through Gestures

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# Cultural Variations through Gestures

Created by: Erin Coffey  
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Grade Level (Req.): 10th-12th grade	Content Area (Req.): World Geography, Human Geography, Sociology	Unit (Opt.):
Connections to Other Disciplines (Opt.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Arts</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>		
Time Frame (Req.): One 45 minute class period	Goal (Req.): To understand aspects of culture between different peoples.	
	Objective (Req.): Students will be able to describe cultural universals and why they exist. Students will be able to identify factors that account for variations among and within cultures.	
Materials Needed (Req.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture PowerPoint</li> <li>• Culture Graphic Organizer</li> <li>• “Gestures” Activity Sheet</li> <li>• Clip from “Gran Torino” – Where Clint Eastwood’s character inadvertently offends his neighbors’ culture when he pats the little girl on the head.</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	New Vocabulary (Opt.): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	
Anticipatory Set/Introduction [Inquiry Question is required] (Req.): Hold up a picture of an Irish “Exit Sign”. Ask the students: what do you believe this means?		
Instructional Sequence/Procedure (Req.): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. **The previous day the students would have learned about culture and society.</li> <li>2. Go over the information in the PowerPoint under the section Cultural Variation. This isn’t to say that it is a lecture, but more of a class discussion as the information is presented.</li> <li>3. Class Activity “Gestures” – see attached document. In this activity, the teacher “acts out” certain gestures. Students are to write down what they feel they mean.</li> <li>4. Afterwards, the class as a whole goes over the list. Including some additional expectations Americans have that are seen differently in other places.</li> <li>5. Show clip from “Gran Torino”</li> <li>6.</li> <li>7.</li> <li>8.</li> <li>9.</li> <li>10.</li> <li>11.</li> <li>12.</li> </ol>		

- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

Formative Evaluation (Req.): Classroom discussion

Assessment (Req.): Unit Test

Iowa Core Curriculum Standards Used (Req.):

- Behavioral Sciences, grade 9-12: Understand the historical development of the behavioral sciences and the changing nature of society.
- Behavioral Sciences, grade 9-12: Understand the influences on individual and group behavior and group decision making.
- Geography, grade 9-12: Understand how culture affects the interaction of human populations through time and space.
- Geography, grade 9-12: Understand how cultural factors influence the design of human communities.
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Common Core Curriculum Standards Used (Opt.):

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NGS Standards Used (Req.):

- How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions
- The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics
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Five Themes of Geography Used (Req.):

- Place
- Region
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School District Standards and Benchmarks (Opt.):

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21<sup>st</sup> Century Universal Constructs (Opt.):

Other Disciplinary Standards (Opt.):

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Other Essential Information (Opt.):

Other Resources (Opt.):

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# WHAT IS CULTURE?

What is Culture?

Material Culture:

Nonmaterial Culture:

Society:

What is the Difference between Culture and Society?



## 5 Basic Components of Culture

### Technology

- Combination of objects and rules
  - Computer- rules governing use

### Symbols

- Have shared meaning attached
- How we create our culture and communicate it to other members and future generation
- Differ from culture to culture

### Language

### Values

- Shared beliefs about what is good or bad, right or wrong
  - Determines character

### Norms

2 Types of Norms:

**1. Folkways:**

**2. Mores:**

# Cultural Variation

Are all cultures the same?

## **ALL CULTURES:**



But



*Why do some of the practices and rituals of other cultures seem odd or foreign to us?*

### Cultural Universals:

- Features common to all cultures
  - Cooking, feasting, sports, language, housing etc.

### Ethnocentrism:

### Cultural Relativism:

- Belief that cultures should be judged by their own standards
  - Understood from the member's point of view
  - Ex. Preparation of food

### Subculture:

- Group with its own unique values, norms and behaviors that exists within a larger culture
  - age, deviance, social-class etc.
  - Chinatown
  - Little Italy
  - Little Sweden
- Most do not threaten society
- May add diversity

### Counterculture:

# What is Culture?

- What is Culture?
- Cultural Variation



# What is Culture?

## ➤ Culture:

- Shared products of human groups
  - Objects, beliefs etc.

## • Material Culture:

- Physical objects that people create and use
  - clothing, vehicles, food

## • Nonmaterial Culture:

Abstract human creations

- beliefs, political systems. religion





## ➤ Society:

- An organized group of people
- Share common culture and feelings of unity



# What is the difference between Culture and Society?

- **Society consists of people**
- **Culture consists of the material and nonmaterial culture created by the people**

# 5 Basic Components of Culture

- **Technology**
- **Symbols**
- **Language**
- **Values**
- **Norms**



# Technology

- **Combination of objects and rules**
  - **Computer- rules governing use**



# Language

- Standardized system of written and spoken language



# Values

- Shared beliefs about what is good or bad, right or wrong
- Determines character



# Norms

- Shared rules that tell people how to act in specific situations
- Expectations for behavior- NOT the behavior itself



# 2 Types of Norms:

## ➤ Folkways

- Norms without great moral significance attached
- Common customs
  - Table manners, shaking hands
- Violation does not endanger the well-being or stability of society



## ➤ Mores

- Norms with great moral significance attached
  - Endangers society's well being and stability
  - Murder, theft etc.

- Laws

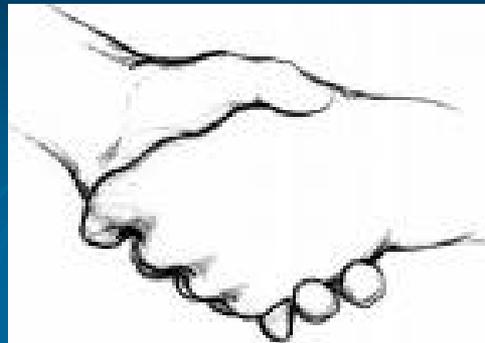
- Formalize mores
- Also enforce less severe folkways





# Symbols

- Have shared meaning attached
- How we create our culture and communicate it to other members and future generation
- Differ from culture to culture



# Cultural Variation

**Are all cultures the same?**

All Cultures:

➤ Have the same features

but

➤ Different characteristics make them unique



## ➤ Cultural Universals

- Features common to all cultures
  - Cooking, feasting, sports, language, housing etc.



## ➤ Ethnocentrism

- Tendency to view one's own culture and group as being superior
  - Negative responses to cultural traits they do not share

## ➤ Cultural Relativism

- Belief that cultures should be judged by their own standards
  - Understood from the member's point of view
  - Ex. Preparation of food

## ➤ Subculture

- Group with its own unique values, norms and behaviors that exists within a larger culture
  - age, deviance, social-class etc.
  - Chinatown
  - Little Italy
  - Little Sweden
- Most do not threaten society
- May add diversity



## ➤ Counterculture

- Group that rejects the values, norms and practices of the larger society- replaces with a news set of cultural patterns



# GESTURES

## Key Concepts:

- Very few gestures are universally understood and interpreted
- What is perfectly acceptable in the United States may be rude or even obscene in other cultures.

## Materials:

- Paper and pen for each student

## Procedure:

1. Have students number paper 1-12
2. Demonstrate the gestures below and ask students to write down what they think each gesture means and whether it is considered rude here in the United States.
3. Discuss how body language could influence communication between cultures.

## Gestures:

### **1. Beckon with index finger**

- Means “come here: in the U.S.
- To motion to call someone is insulting, even obscene in some cultures.
  - Middle East, Portugal, Spain, Latin America, Japan, Indonesia, Hong Kong
- More acceptable to beckon with the palm down, with fingers or whole hand waving.

### **2. Point at something in the room using an index finger**

- It is impolite to point with the index finger in the Middle East.
- Use an open hand or your thumb (Indonesia)

### **3. Sit with sole of feet or shoe showing**

- Many cultures sends a rude message
- Thailand, Japan and France: demonstrates disrespect
  - You are exposing the lowest and dirtiest part of your body so this is insulting

### **4. Smile**

- Universally understood
- However in various cultures there are different reasons for smiling
- Japanese: may smile when they are confused or angry
- Asia: may smile when they are embarrassed
- It is important not to judge students or their parents because they do not smile, or smile at what is considered “inappropriate” times

### **5. Make a “V” Sign/Peace Sign**

- Means “victory” in most of Europe when the palm is facing away from you
- With your palm in it means “shove it” or “bug off” in Ireland

### **6. Form a circle with fingers to indicate “OK”**

- Means OK in the U.S. and many other places
- Brazil and Germany: obscene or vulgar
- Japan: Money
- France: “zero” or “worthless”

## **7. Pat a student on the head**

- Can be very upsetting for someone from Asia
- In the Buddhist religion the head is the repository of the soul

## **8. Pass an item to someone with one hand**

- Japan: very rude, even a small item such as a pencil would be passed with two hands
- In many Middle East countries it is rude to pass something with your left hand which is considered “unclean”

## **9. Wave hand with palm facing outward to greet someone**

- Serious insult in Nigeria if the hand is too close to another person’s face.
- Europe: waving the hand back and forth can mean “NO”
  - To wave goodbye raise the palm outward and wag the fingers in unison.

## **10. Nod head up and down to say “yes:”**

- Bulgaria and Greece: means “NO”

## **11. Fingers Crossed**

- Europe: Protection, good luck
- Paraguay: may be offensive

## **12. Snapping Fingers**

- France and Belgium: snapping the fingers of both hands has a vulgar meaning
- Brazil: means something done long ago or for a long time.
- China: very rude

## **Other Notes of Interest:**

- Lines are treated with respect in the United States, not necessarily everywhere else...

### In Ireland:

- Being a few minutes late isn’t a big deal, unless it is a business meeting.
- Making eye contact is important during a greeting but not necessary during a conversation.
- “Cheers” = Thank you
- Exit Sign is a running man on a green background

### In France:

- Avoid the following in public:
  - Chewing gum
  - Yawning
  - Scratching
  - Having aloud conversation