

# CULTURAL AWARENESS



## Lesson: Cultural Awareness

### Worksheet A

#### 1 Read the text and answer the questions that follow.

##### What is cultural awareness and why is it important?

What is classed as normal behaviour in one culture can sometimes be unsuitable, unacceptable, or even offensive in another. We're all different and we all have different beliefs and ways of doing things. Understanding this is what cultural awareness is all about.

Cultural awareness can begin by holding up a mirror. We need to take a long, hard look at ourselves. What makes us the way we are? Well, there's history, religion, tradition, education, and our parents. These are all good things. But do any of them make us better than others? No. Not better, but different.

It's easy to understand why we start off believing that our culture is better than any other. In fact, some argue that it's necessary in order to survive. As children, we typically build our view of the world from our family and the place we grow up. However, as we get older our understanding of the world grows with us.

In the past, many people never left the comfort of their own town or district. They could all spend their days happily believing that the life they knew was the best, that their way of doing things was the right way, and not imagining or caring what others might think. Today's world isn't like that though. We do business with people from different cultures, we sell each other products and ideas, we live next door to each other, we listen to music from around the world and we learn different languages. We all need to learn to appreciate each other's cultures and ways of living.

##### Paragraph 1

- 1 Can you think of any examples of behaviour from another culture being 'unsuitable, unacceptable, or even offensive'?
- 2 In your own words, what is cultural awareness?

##### Paragraph 2

- 3 Why does the writer mention 'holding up a mirror'? What does he mean?
- 4 The writer mentions 'history, religion, tradition, education, and our parents'. Which of these do you think is most important in forming our cultural identity?

##### Paragraph 3

- 5 Where does our original view of culture come from?
- 6 Which phrase in this paragraph is a synonym of 'better than'?

##### Paragraph 4

- 7 This paragraph contains examples of cultural exchange. Can you think of other examples?
- 8 In your own words, why is cultural awareness important?

Student's copy



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- 2 Look at the diagram below. In pairs or small groups, discuss your reaction to it.  
How cultural awareness develops

START HERE

There's only one way – and it's my way!  
We're born like this – a clean sheet.  
We only know what we're told, so we only know about our culture.  
It's fine. We're happy.  
But then we grow.

You mean there's another way?  
We start to become aware of other ways of doing things.  
We notice that other people do things differently.  
Our way is still the best, though, right?  
Yes, don't worry – our way is still the best.  
Because ...  
Because ...?

Let's just try it your way ...  
We become aware that sometimes ... in some cases ... another way works.  
There might still be problems with doing it another way but sometimes it's better.  
We're open to new ideas.

Let's do it together, shall we?  
We have true collaboration.  
Everyone's opinions count for something.  
We make it work.  
We find the best solution to the problem – our solution.

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### Worksheet B

3 Look at the points below and match the words in bold to their meanings. Tick the points you agree with.

#### Living successfully with different cultures

- We need to recognise and welcome cultural **diversity**.
- Cultural awareness begins with **self-awareness**.
- We shouldn't make **assumptions** about other people.
- It's wrong to make **judgements** about people until we understand their culture.
- We need **empathy** if we are going to understand the other person.
- Never forget that people new to living in your culture face **challenges** we can only imagine.
- You don't have to agree with the views of others, but always **respect** them.
- When we learn to **embrace** the differences between us, we can work well together.
- Keeping language simple helps prevent the **exclusion** of others.
- It's a mistake to try to **impose** one culture onto another.

- 1 beliefs based on little evidence \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 treat properly \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 an understanding gained by putting ourselves in the other's position \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 force; press \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 being different \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 welcome; show warmth towards; accept enthusiastically \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 difficulties \_\_\_\_\_
- 8 opinions \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 knowledge of yourself \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 not including; leaving something or someone on the outside \_\_\_\_\_

4 Read the experiences overleaf and, for each one, say:

- ▶ what the person learned.
- ▶ whether you think it was a valuable lesson.
- ▶ whether you have heard about, or experienced, similar situations.

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# Things I've learned

Continuing our regular look at cultural differences, today four people tell us about the time they learned a valuable life lesson.

### SAM, UK

"We grew up on a diet of American television. As a result of that, I used to think that all teenagers ever did was hang out with their friends, go for a drive in someone's car, have parties all the time, oh, and eat burgers. I thought that in the USA, the sun shone all the time, you could travel across the country in an hour or two, and if you went to New York or Chicago or Miami, you would almost certainly be killed! Now I know better."

### JAMIE, SCOTLAND

"I used to watch a comedy programme on TV. There were characters from different countries and they spoke English in a funny way. I used to laugh so much! Then I met someone from one of those countries and I showed them a video of the programme, expecting them to laugh. No reaction at first, and then an apologetic, 'I'm sorry but it doesn't make me laugh'. It was a massive lesson for me – we were just ridiculing and stereotyping foreigners for comic effect. I don't find that so funny any more."

### MARIE, USA

"When I travelled abroad for the first time, I was really shocked at the way people stared at me in the street. It was really scary sometimes. One day a girl was looking at me on the train and I'd had enough of it. She was staring at me – right in the eyes. Not angrily but she wasn't smiling either. I said to her, 'What are you looking at?' She didn't look embarrassed or turn away. She just said, 'You have very beautiful eyes'. I think that was my first lesson in cultural awareness – what she was doing wasn't rude or threatening for her, but it was for me."

### SEAN, IRELAND

"I once got the chance to watch my favourite football team play in another country. Well, we got a great reception from the people we met. They were good-natured and friendly and made us feel at home. Of course, some of the fans were not so friendly but most people were really nice. The thing is, this came as a huge surprise to me. I don't know quite what I expected but my own prejudices shocked me. I realised that I had built up a picture in my mind of foreign teams as the enemy – because you always want your team to win. But I had then made the same assumptions about a whole country. It's true what they say – travel really does broaden the mind."

5 In pairs or small groups, discuss what you know about the following.

- ▶ 'Foreign' food
- ▶ International film or television
- ▶ Music from other countries
- ▶ The places where your clothes are made
- ▶ Celebrities from other countries
- ▶ The countries where your favorite international team or sports stars come from