

What is Culture?

Cross-Curricular Focus: History/Social Sciences



Our **culture** is the system we use to build our **identity**. All living creatures are part of a culture. Even animals have a culture! So what is culture? It's the way we behave in a group. It begins with each individual family. Within our families we do things to build relationships with each other. This can include routines for doing things. It also includes traditions. Traditions are activities that are repeated on a regular basis.

Culture is not limited to individual family groups. The real strength of culture is in larger community groups. These larger groups are called **societies**. Every society makes rules for itself.

It decides how people should act in different situations. Some of these rules are written down. Some are just things that are automatically expected of all members of that society. Often, cultures can be identified by what the people believe. Cultures are also known by what they choose to include in their art. Sometimes a society forms around people who speak the same language. Cultures may also be known for their customs, including the foods they make and the things they do.

Our cultures help us understand who we are and what we believe. There are very strong emotions connecting us to our own society. Two different cultures may disagree on something, especially if they both feel strongly about it. When that happens, war is a common result.

People are learning better ways to communicate with each other. The more we learn, the more we appreciate the differences in cultures.

Name: _____

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) Tell about a tradition your family shares.

2) Have you ever had a friend whose family had different beliefs than your own? If so, what was your reaction to the difference? _____

3) What would your art tell someone about your culture? _____

4) Do you speak more than one language? What is the value of learning an additional language?

5) How can we help prevent wars between cultures? _____
