

Culture

Students will identify features that all cultures share and decide which are visible and which are invisible.



Amerindian Heritage

Grenada National Museum: Teacher Kit

Before You Visit

Overview

Culture has been compared to an iceberg. Just as an iceberg has a visible section (one-ninth of it) above the waterline and a larger, invisible section below the waterline, culture has some aspects that you can observe and others that you can only imagine or intuit. Like an iceberg, the part of culture that is visible (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much bigger whole.

Lesson objectives

SWBAT define culture and recognize their own cultural biases.

- Students will identify features that all cultures have in common.
- Students will understand that culture includes visible and invisible features.

Procedure

1. Draw a large iceberg floating in the sea on the board. Ask students: What do you know about icebergs? Emphasize the fact that most of the iceberg is hidden from view.
2. Ask students to look over the Features of Culture handout. Explain that this list presents some of the features all cultures have in common. Pictures of people involved in everyday activities in various parts of the world will help you illustrate this idea.
3. Ask students to identify those features from the list that they can see in the behavior of people and those that are invisible. As students share their ideas, record them above or below the waterline on your iceberg drawing.

Grade Levels

- 4th +
- Extension Activities for Secondary Forms 1+

Duration

- Pre-Visit: 30 minutes
- Visit: 30 minutes
- Post-Visit: 15-20 minutes

Topics

- Defining culture
- Iceberg metaphor
- Cultural observations
- “Visible” and “invisible” characteristics
- How archeologists learn about past cultures

Linkages: Race/Ethnicity, religious beliefs, holidays, ceremonies, ancient and modern-day cultures

Materials

- **Features of Culture 2** handout (see p. ____); Or, write the features on the board for students to copy into their exercise books BEFORE reaching the museum
- Clipboards or notebooks for students to press on
- Pencils for each student

Exhibit Tie-Ins

- Amerindian Exhibit Display: What is Archaeology?
- Various cultural artifacts: ceramics, tools, adornos, etc.

Objects of Interest

- Object 1 (in Display #) - description of item for teacher
- Object 2 (in Display #) - description of item for teacher
- Object 3 (in Display #) - description of item for teacher

Culture, Continued

4. Point out that there is a relationship between those items that appear above the waterline and those that appear below it. In most cases, the invisible aspects of culture influence or cause the visible ones. Religious beliefs, for example, are "seen" in certain holiday customs, and notions of modesty influence styles of dress. Ask students to find other examples of this from the iceberg representation of culture.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students understand how the "Features of Culture" can be used to enhance their understanding of other cultures.

1. Does it make sense to compare culture to an iceberg? Can you think of other things to which the visible and invisible features of culture can be compared?
2. A US Peace Corps Volunteer serving as a teacher in Mongolia had this to say about some photographs she sent to a group of students in the United States.

"Mongolians are very serious and composed in their expressions. In the city, this is beginning to change slightly. You'll see a number of my students smiling. But this is not traditional. When I first came here, my friends asked me why Americans smile so much. They felt that Americans smile even at people they don't like and that this was quite insincere." —Lisa Buchwalder

What does this tell you about the visible and invisible features of culture? Does it explain why people from different cultures sometimes misunderstand each other?

3. Can you match this description of American and Mongolian behaviors with any of the items on your list of cultural features?
4. How can a list such as "Features of Culture" help you understand differences among people? (Possible answer: Differences may seem less strange or unusual when we understand them as variations on fundamental characteristics that all cultures have in common.)

Extension

1. For homework, have students use the Features of Culture handout or list as a guide to interview someone from another culture. They could present their findings or write a reflection on them.

Adaptations for Struggling Students

- Have students work in pairs or small groups and assign a strong writer as the group's recorder. This will take the pressure off of writing while still allowing struggling writers to contribute their ideas.
- Give adequate 'think time' when asking questions. Some students need extra processing time to formulate their answers.

Culture, Continued

At the Museum

Culture Detectives

Overview

Students will explore the Amerindian Room as Culture Detectives in order to fill in as much of the Features of Culture 2 handout as possible.

Background Information

Culture is a system of beliefs, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and are shared by a group of people. It includes customs, language, and material artifacts. These are transmitted from generation to generation, rarely with explicit instructions.

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Lesson objectives

SWBAT define culture and recognize their own cultural biases

- Students will learn about Amerindian culture through exploration of the exhibit

Procedure

1. Give students copies of the Features of Culture 2 worksheet, or have them copy the headings from the worksheet into their exercise books. They will need to record their ideas as they explore the exhibit so they should have a pencil and something to press on with them. *Alternatives: students could work in small groups or each student could be assigned a small number of headings from the worksheet.*

2. Before entering the exhibit, review the definition of culture with the class:

Culture is a system of beliefs, values, and assumptions about life that guide behavior and are shared by a group of people. It includes customs, language, and material artifacts. These are transmitted from generation to generation, rarely with explicit instructions.

3. If you completed the pre-visit lesson: *The Iceberg*, review the iceberg metaphor and remind students that only a small portion of culture is visible. If you have not completed the pre-visit lesson, briefly introduce students to the idea: Just as an iceberg has a visible section above the waterline and a larger, invisible section below the waterline, culture has some aspects that you can observe and others that you can only imagine or intuit. Like an iceberg, the part of culture that is visible (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much

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bigger whole.

4. Assign students to fill in as much of their worksheets as possible as they explore the exhibit while keeping in mind that only a small portion of the culture will be directly observable. They may be able to draw inferences about some of the 'invisible aspects' of the culture but many may require extra research or be unknown even to scholars. Give students about 30 minutes to complete this task.

Debriefing

1. Bring the group back together, allow students to share their answers and discuss the difference between direct observations and inferences. Draw attention to any conflicting inferences.

After Your Visit

Extensions/Post Visit Activities

1. Assign students to attempt to answer any lingering questions about Amerindian culture through a research project.
2. Have students write a reflection on similarities and differences between contemporary Grenadian culture and Amerindian culture.
3. Have students write a short story or play as if they accidentally time-travelled to the time of the Amerindians. They should describe their reaction to the culture.

Post-Visit Reflection

- How has what you learned through reading the 'Anthropology/Archaeology' poster influenced your impressions of Amerindian culture?