

## Lesson 5a: Culture and Traditions

### *What is culture and how can we share it?*

#### OBJECTIVE:

To help students reflect on aspects of their own culture and what is important to them. To prepare students to think more deeply about the cultures of students in other parts of the world.

#### BACKGROUND:

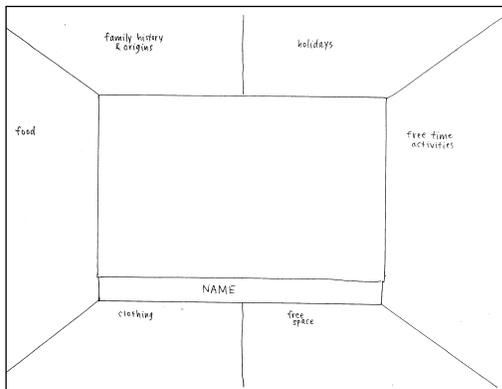
The **Bridges' Cultural Self Portrait** is a graphic organizer that uses photography and illustration to help students express who they are culturally. You can use the initial brainstorming session to help students distinguish between cultural traits and personal traits. The imagery students create can be particularly useful for classes that are communicating across languages. The final projects can be scanned and posted online, or mailed directly to other classes.

A variation of this project is to have students work in small groups on one portrait, or make one portrait for the entire class.

Please post any aspect of this project on the Bridges website, to help continue your dialogue with other Bridges students. **AP/GCP**

#### PREPARE:

- Photocopy graphic organizer templates included at the end of this lesson. Have markers and/or colored pencils available. **Sample graphic organizer:**



- Either have students bring a photograph from home, or prepare for a photo shoot by arranging to have one camera per 4-8 students in the class, photocopies of the **Portrait Activity**, and volunteers to guide and supervise groups. **AP**
- Print one photograph of each student (or each group, if you decide to do the variation)
- Optional: Review the "World Mingle" and "Nacirema" activities at [www.facingthefuture.org](http://www.facingthefuture.org). You may choose to continue the learning with these lessons on culture and stereotyping.
- If possible, have Cultural Self Portraits from another Bridges class available. Photocopy the discussion questions that will guide students to "read" the other class' Cultural Self Portraits. **AP/GCP**

**TEACH:**

- Facilitate “**What is culture**” discussion / brainstorming session with students.
- After naming several ways that humans express themselves culturally, help students to either vote or compromise to choose 4 to 6 aspects they would like to illustrate.
- Collect portraits of each student, either by doing the **Portrait Activity**, or having students bring photos from home.
- Have students each paste their portraits into the graphic organizer and illustrate surrounding area with expressions of their own culture. This is the **Cultural Self Portrait**. You can send them by *snail mail* to another class!
- Compose a message in class and post it to the Bridges discussion forum. If you chose to do a Facing the Future lesson mentioned above, consider including that experience as part of your message. **AP/GCP**
- If you receive Cultural Self Portraits from another class, have your students break into groups or pairs and distribute the artwork evenly among the groups. Use **What does a Cultural Self Portrait tell you?** to guide class discussion, or groups can work from the portraits they have to answer the questions in their journals or in forums. **AP/GCP**
- Now is the time to help students begin to brainstorm and organize some ideas for their digital stories! Save all notes from class discussions! Consider your teaching goals and the values that students expressed in *Lesson 3: What do we care about?* Then brainstorm an idea list.
- How can these ideas and feelings be represented using photography? Multi-media pieces?



## What is culture?

Culture is difficult to define. Name an example that illustrates each of these important elements of culture:

- Members of different cultures view the world in different ways
- Cultures change
- There are universals connecting all cultures
- Humans may identify with more than one culture and thus have multiple loyalties
- Culture and communication are closely connected
- Cultures cross national boundaries
- Cultures are affected by geography and history

**What do you know about culture? Write a brief definition of what you think “culture” means.**

Compare your answers with these definitions of culture that Peace Corps volunteers came up with:

- The daily patterns and the most deeply held beliefs that a group of people have in common.
- A set of behaviors and customs passed from one generation to the next. The rules, languages, religion, family structures, recreation, and education that a group of people share that provide predictability and safety in their lives. When people are bound together by common beliefs and practices, they understand each other and the world around them has meaning.
- A shared set of assumptions, values, and beliefs by which a group of people organize their lives.

**Name ten expressions of culture.**

One way to get a clearer understanding of culture is to think of its many features. For example, the kind of food you eat is one expression of culture.



## What can a Cultural Self-Portrait tell you?

The 4-6 sections of drawings tell you what students in another class decided were their most important ways of expressing their culture. Are they similar to your choices?

The background and details of their photo-portraits tell you a great deal about the student, as well as the school. Are they wearing uniforms? Are they indoors? Outdoors? Candid? Formal?

Each Cultural Self Portrait is made by an individual. What do you notice about the style in each of the Portraits? Are the drawing styles similar? And how are they different?

Answer these questions about the Portraits you are looking at:

1. What is the MOST common drawing you see?
2. Name two kinds of food they eat in the other class.
3. What are the most common activities that students like to do?
4. Can you tell what religion is most commonly practiced by students in the other class?
5. Name two things that you have in common with students in the other class.
6. Write two questions you have for students in the other class.



**Assessment Rubric for Cultural Self-Portrait**

<b>Performance</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Acceptable</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
Photograph	Photo is in focus, with balanced composition (thoughtful use of available light, balance of color, interesting perspective). Setting is informative and tells something extra about the subject.	Photo is in focus. Subject is properly exposed. Background doesn't interfere with subject.	Photo is blurry. Subject is over or under-exposed, or silhouetted. Subject is making funny face or gesture which can be misinterpreted and is inappropriate for this assignment.
Cultural self-portrait ideas	Each section contains 3 thoughtful examples of artist's cultural identity.	Each section contains 2 examples of artist's cultural identity.	Sections are incomplete with fewer than 2 examples of artist's cultural identity.
Cultural self-portrait illustrations	Illustrations fill space of each section with color and detail.	Illustrations partially fill space and contain some color and detail.	Illustrations do not fill space and lack color and/or detail.
Cultural self-portrait labels	Labels assist viewer in understanding message by being clearly printed and precisely stated.	Labels assist viewer somewhat by being legible and accurate.	Labels do not assist because they are not clearly printed and/or are inaccurate.



## Portrait Activity

In its most basic form, a portrait is a picture that just shows what someone looks like. If you approach it with thought, you can try to show much more about the person.

### Portraits as an introduction

Your portrait will introduce you to your peers. What kind of portrait is appropriate?

- Friendly
- Clearly shows what you look like
- No gestures or funny faces – these can easily be misinterpreted in different cultures

### What will you include in the portrait?

Objects that appear in a picture with someone can illustrate something about their culture. Can you show them with something they use for work or play? (for example, in the school library with a book.) Is it important to show what the subject is wearing?

### The mood of your picture:

Do you want the picture to be: Silly or serious? Candid or posed? Casual or formal?

### Bridges portraits in groups activity

Today you are going to

1. take portraits of each other, and
2. take photos of things that are important to you.

**1. Fill in the names of people in your group below.** You will probably have 5-7 people in your group.

**Each person takes pictures of one other person**, then passes the camera to that person...following the order on this list until the last person on the list takes photos of the first person. **\*Please shoot horizontally!\***

\_\_\_\_\_ takes photos of  
 \_\_\_\_\_, who takes photos of the first person.

**Remember all the photos you've looked at in class**, and think about how you want to introduce yourselves to the other students around the world. **What should you include in your portraits?**

**2. Take pictures of two things that are important to your group:**

Friendship (important to all of us!)

\_\_\_\_\_ (your group's choice. Some suggestions: tradition, clothing, education  
– what can you think of?)