

Preparing to Present Information

- 1) You will be given a short text. Read the text and take down notes. Focus on important information in each paragraph.
- 2) Work in pairs or small groups and prepare a short presentation (a few minutes) on one of the two texts. Be sure you deliver the important information in each text accurately. If you are listening to a presentation, take notes.
- 3) Compare the two presentations. What did you find out about the topic? Was there anything surprising?
- 4) Look back to your notes. Were they useful in preparing the presentation? Why/why not?
- 5) Now read the other text. Was there something that the others missed?

Text A) Cultural significance of social appraisals

We believe that social appraisals, i.e. evaluations or judgments of events and situations that people encounter in their life, play a role in the emotion process in all cultures. This is because people are generally concerned with how others think, feel and act, and all the more so in emotional settings. However, cultures are likely to differ in the extent to which they explicitly value social appraisals. It is by now well established that cultures differ with respect to the way in which self is perceived and this may impact on the importance and strength of social appraisals. A currently influential way of thinking about the differences between cultures, in terms of their impacts on self-image, is Markus and Kitayama's (1991) distinction between "independent" and "interdependent" understanding of self, which in turn can be related to Triandis' (e.g., 1989) distinction between individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

In individualistic cultures, the cultural task of the individual is to seek out, achieve, and maintain independence from others. The characteristic self-image in such a culture is one that focuses on internal attributes, such as ability, personality, preferences, and aspirations; attributes that set the individual apart from other persons. The self is seen as a separate entity, clearly distinct from others. In collective cultures, the cultural task of the individual is one that focuses on interdependent attributes, such as relatedness to others, and the rights, duties, obligations, and responsibilities that are involved in these relationships. The self is seen as a connected entity, not clearly separated from relationships with others. Culturally based variations in the way self is perceived are therefore likely to influence the way emotions and emotional situations are appraised.

Evidence consistent with these arguments comes from recent research by Bagozzi, Wong, and Yi (in press). Drawing on the notion of independent-based and interdependent-based cultures, they proposed that culture and gender interact to produce different patterns of association between positive and negative emotions in memory. Specifically, they expected that positive and negative emotions would be *negatively* associated in independent cultures and *positively* associated in interdependent cultures. The reasoning behind this prediction is as follows: in independent cultures there is a tendency to differentiate the self from others and to perceive attributes of persons (such as

emotions) as separate categories. In interdependent cultures, by contrast, the self is seen as connected to others and to social context, and emotions and other attributes of the individual are seen neither as a way of differentiating the self from others nor as a basis for social action. This then has an impact on the answers to questions such as “How do you feel at the moment?”, as the answer to this question depends not only on their emotional state, but also on the world views of their cultures. In other words, the representation of our emotional responses can vary across cultures.

Text B) The Literary Marketplace in an Expanding Nation

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Americans had easy access to contemporary British literature and criticism. Crossing the Atlantic on sailing ships and by the late 1830s on steamers, books or magazines first published in London could be distributed or republished almost immediately in the largest coastal cities – Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston. Volumes of poetry by the Scottish poet Robert Burns and by the English Romantics (Wordsworth, Byron, etc.) and other writers were reprinted in the United States within months of their initial publication. Sir Walter Scott’s historical novels were immensely popular in the United States, and during the 1840s and 1850s crowds of Charles Dickens fans would gather at the docks to greet steamships arriving in New York City with the latest installment of one of his serialized novels.

Geography and modes of transportation had a direct impact on publishing practices in the United States during this period. In 1800 there were few publishing firms; writers who wanted to publish a book generally took the handwritten manuscript to a local printer. They had to pay for printing and had to make their own arrangements for distribution and sales, frequently having signed up committed purchasers beforehand in what was then called the “subscription” system. However, by around 1820 publishing centers began to develop in the major seaports, which could receive the largest British books by the fastest ships; these publishers shipped hastily reprinted copies inland by river traffic. The leading publishing towns were New York and Philadelphia; Boston remained peripheral to the publishing industry until railroad connections to the West developed during the 1840s. Nevertheless, despite the aggressive merchandizing techniques of a few firms, a national market for American literature was slow to develop.

Besides the technical problems of book distribution across the huge nation, economic interests of American publishers and booksellers were sometimes directly opposite to the interests of American writers. A national copyright law became effective in the United States in 1790, but not until 1891 did U.S. writers get international copyright protection and foreign writers receive similar protection in the United States. For most of the century, American publishers routinely pirated English writers, paying nothing to writers such as Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, and other popular writers for works sold widely in inexpensive editions throughout the United States. American readers benefited from the situation, but the large quantities of texts available to publishers virtually for free made it difficult for U.S. writers to be paid for their work in their home country. As a result, there were relatively few professional authors in the United States before the Civil War. Nathaniel Hawthorne received various political appointments over his lifetime; Ralph Waldo Emerson lived on a legacy from his first wife and on his well-compensated lectures; the financially struggling Herman Melville was forced to spend the last several decades of his life working in the New York custom

house; most famously, Edgar Allan Poe received only \$9 for his famous poem “The Raven” and had to constantly plead for money only to die in utter poverty.

Read “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” by James Thurber

(<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1939/03/18/the-secret-life-of-walter-mitty-2>). Then try to compose a summary of the short story using:

- a) 2 sentences
- b) 5 sentences
- c) 10 sentences