

## LESSON PLAN: CULTURE AS ICEBERG

### 45 minutes (level: intermediate and up)

The goal of this lesson is to help students understand the concept of culture by looking at cultures throughout the world. Students will explore aspects of culture by using the iceberg analogy.

### OUTCOMES

Students will be able to:

- Identify and describe features of culture.
- Recognize how culture is diverse and broad.
- Understand the culture iceberg (the iceberg analogy of the culture)
- Compare and contrast one's own culture with other cultures around the world (to a certain extent)
- **language:**

grammar: present simple; passive voice

vocabulary: adjectives, abstract nouns, geographical terms (continents, countries, cities)

### MATERIALS

- A large class map of the world (alternatives: a printable worksheet of the world, a projector)
- blank stickers to write on
- copies of the picture of an iceberg (one copy for each student)
- worksheet "Features of Culture" (one copy per each student; alternatively, you can prepare cutouts of the features to make it more interactive)

### INTRODUCTION: THE WORLD MAP (5 minutes)

- Students are going to explore the world, trying to imagine how people in different parts of the world live.
- Show them a big map of the world. Provide students with stickers. Ask them to think about other places in the world or different characteristics of these places. Tell them there are no right or wrong answers. (BRAINSTORMING)
- Ask students to form small groups and discuss what they wrote. Ask them as a group to write their ideas on the stickers.
- Ask each group to place their stickers on the map and as they do, have them read their ideas aloud or explain their ideas if necessary.
- Leave the map somewhere visible.

## **MAIN ACTIVITY: THE CULTURAL ICEBERG (15 minutes)**

- Explain that the idea of culture is difficult to define. Remind students that everyone has culture that shapes how we see the world, ourselves, and others.

EXTRA SUPPORT: Provide definitions from monolingual learner's dictionaries.

- Explain culture using the iceberg analogy. Draw a picture of an iceberg on the board. Make the point that only about one-eighth of an iceberg is visible above the water; the rest is below. Culture is very similar to an iceberg. Some aspects that are visible and many others that can only be assumed or learned over time. Like an iceberg, the visible part of culture is only a small part of a much larger whole. Ask students if they can give any example. If not, provide them, e.g., attitudes cannot be directly observed; holiday customs can be directly observed.

- Distribute a copy of the iceberg worksheet.

- Provide students with the Features of Culture worksheet. Review with students that the items on the list are all features of culture. In groups, have them review the features one by one and decide as a group if a feature belongs above the line (i.e., it can be directly observed) or below the line (i.e., it is hidden, hard to observe).

- Students work in pairs or small groups. Teacher monitors students and provides support if necessary.

- REVIEW: Go through each feature of culture and ask students where they placed the feature on the iceberg: below or above the line. Write the groups' answers on the board.

- Pay attention if the same feature is categorized as both visible and hidden. This means that different groups have different thoughts on the same feature. Try to come up with the same understanding of that feature as a class.

## **Follow-up activity: discussion (10 minutes)**

Open a discussion with students by asking questions:

- Is culture simple or complex? What does it tell us?

- Are different features of culture interconnected? How?

- How do untouchable aspects of culture influence touchable ones?

If possible, link the discussion with the preparatory activity:

- Look again at the map to see things that are characteristic for particular regions or countries. What comes to your mind now?

- What characteristics are unique for these places? How different are these to your culture?

**Follow-up activity: defining culture and revision (5 minutes)**

- Create a shared class definition of culture. Have students work in small groups or pairs to discuss or write one or two sentences or simple words describing culture.

- Solicit answers and write each group's definition or list of words on the board.

**- Examples may include:**

- the way a specific group of people live, how they perceive situations, and their common behaviours

- ways in which a group or society adapt to the environment

- the set of traditions (such as food, dances, stories, and music)

- knowledge, and beliefs shared and passed from generation to generation

**- REVISION:**

- ask student to explain culture as the iceberg

- ask students to revise and tell the class three examples of features of culture that are easily observed and three examples of features of culture that are hidden

**SOURCE:**

Adapted from:

"Heritage and Diversity: Components of Cultural Heritage." A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS: Cultural Heritage and Cultural Diversity Lessons (2015) p. 18–19, 55–57. [pdf online] [Cited 2023 Nov 25]  
Available from <https://edoc.coe.int/en/cultural-heritage/6551-cultural-heritage-and-cultural-diversity-lessons-a-handbook-for-teacher.html>

WORKSHEET: Features of culture

1	STYLES OF DRESS
2	THE ARTS (PAINTINGS/LITERATURE)
3	MUSIC + DANCING
4	RELIGIOUS RITUALS
5	IMPORANCE OF RELIGION
6	ARCHITECTURE
7	FAMILY LIFE
8	HOSPITALITY
9	ATTITUTUDE TOWARDS PETS
10	LANGUAGE
11	WAYS OF GREETING PEOPLE
12	BELIEFS ABOUT RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS
13	HOLIDAY CUSTOMS
14	FOOD
15	WORK ETHIC
16	ATTITUDE TOWARDS OLD PEOPLE
17	NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP
18	IMPORTANCE OF PRIVACY
19	IMPORTANCE OF PUNCTUALITY
20	GENERAL WORLD VIEW
21	IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION
22	HOUSING





