

## Unit 4-Content

**Surface Culture:** includes the visible aspects of culture that are often obvious. The following are examples of surface culture:

**Food:** Every group has unique foods and eating patterns although availability may determine what is eaten. Tradition (culture) may determine how and when food is prepared and served. A common food prepared by two cultural groups may have little similarity in appearance or flavor.

**Holidays:** Most holidays can be grouped into three categories: patriotic, religious, or personal.

**Arts:** Every cultural group contributes to the arts. Visual or performing arts, music and crafts are a few examples. Geography and the availability of materials usually influence the art forms that a group produces.

**Folklore:** Every culture has unique folklore that usually fits in one of the following categories:

- **Myths** were one of the earliest forms of folklore. Myths explain life and death and the great forces of nature and are often closely related to religion.
- **Fables** teach human values through stories about animals and typically teach a moral lesson.
- **Legends** also teach moral lessons but are closely related to real life personalities and/or events. Legends are sometimes partly true.
- **Fairy tales** often take place in a fictitious “Never-Never Land” where supernatural events occur.
- **Folk songs** are a form of folklore that range from simple expressions of emotion to long ballads that tell stories about real people and events that actually happened.
- **Proverbs, idioms, riddles, jokes, limericks, verses** and **rhymes** used in counting, learning the alphabet, and other games are usually shared by a cultural group.

**History:** The word “history” means a *record of man’s past*. Historians who have written the history of textbooks used at all levels of the American education system have usually presented history from their own perspective and that of their own cultural group. The history and contributions of ethnic groups other than Anglo-Americans in the United States have seldom been presented. Only during the last half of the 20th Century, have textbooks begun to include history written from a multicultural view that includes the writings and perspectives of non-Anglo-American group members.

**Personalities:** Every cultural group celebrates its well-known personalities. However, historical personalities from diverse ethnic groups have typically been omitted from history books and were only well known within their cultural groups.

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While honoring elements of surface culture helps students to feel validated and included at school, it is crucial that we also incorporate elements of deep culture into our curriculum. Students should be exposed to characters and perspectives from around the world. Incorporating literature from diverse cultures exposes our students to global perspectives and promotes sensitivity and understanding within our classes.

**Deep Culture:** encompasses the non-tangible aspects of culture. These are not visible like surface culture. The following are examples of deep culture:

### **Greetings**

- Some cultures teach children to shake hands with adults as an appropriate greeting. However, within many Asian cultures, body contact is not practiced. Greetings are expressed by bowing the head slightly.
- In the United States, eye contact is expected during most conversations, yet, in many cultures it is considered disrespectful for a child to make direct eye contact with an adult.

### **Courtship and Marriage**

- Choosing your own mate is common in many cultures, however, within others, marriages are arranged through the consent of the parents and family members.
- Some cultures have community property laws that entitle a spouse to half of his or her spouse's wealth after marriage.

### **Aesthetics**

- Some cultures emphasize the subdued and miniature while others prefer things that are large.
- Hand-made articles are valued more than machine-made items in some cultures.

### **Ethics**

- What some classroom teachers may perceive as cheating may be an expression of group-oriented norms in many other cultures.
- For some groups, telling a small lie ("white lie") is not considered wrong.
- Discipline and ways that lessons are taught are usually influenced by cultural attitudes and beliefs.

### **Family Ties**

- In some cultures, older children are expected to care for younger children.
- Multiple generation housing is practiced in some cultures where two, three, or four generations may live as one family unit.
- Extended family relationships exist in many cultures. First and second generation relatives may be considered as close as siblings.

### **Health and Medicine**

- Natural medicines including teas made from roots, bark and leaves are used in many cultures.
- Folk medicine is practiced in some cultures through a gifted healer who is expert in treating patients with natural remedies, religion, and the supernatural.

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### Folk Myths

- Some cultures cure hiccups by placing a small ball of red thread moistened by saliva on the forehead, while others believe a sudden scare will do the trick.
- The common cold is cured in some groups by rubbing the skin with a coin, which sometimes causes a bruise.
- Each culture has set of common omens. In some groups, walking under a ladder or opening an umbrella indoors leads to bad luck while in others, spotting an owl, a black cat, or the number 6 in sequence signifies the same.
- For some, the first visitor on New Year's Day will forecast the fate of the coming year. A joyful guest indicates a prosperous year, while a drunk one suggests a year of misfortune. For other groups, eating black-eyed peas on New Year's Day helps to ensure a year of good luck.

### Gestures and Kinesics

- Body language is not always universal. In the U.S., directions are often given by pointing the index finger. However, in some cultures, pointing your finger is considered rude.
- The “okay” symbol used in the U.S (formed by touching the index finger and thumb together) means “worthless” in some cultures and is an obscene gesture in others.

### Grooming and Presence

- The manner in which one dresses is determined by culture but may also be affected by socioeconomic factors.
- Some newcomers to the United States may use traditional dress at certain times and “Americanized” clothing at others.
- A woman who walks rapidly may be considered “un-lady like” in some cultures, whereas U.S. advertisements portray this woman as confident and determined.
- Rings in the ears is considered beautiful adornment in some cultures while others groups may pierce nostrils, nose bridges or lips.

### Ownership

- Among many traditional Native American nations, land was not to be owned or abused. It was only to be used to provide for one's immediate need.
- Some groups find it rude to accept an offering immediately. They believe offers must be politely refused several times before they can be accepted.

### Age

- While many North Americans tend to be youth orientated, elders are revered in many cultures where age is synonymous with wisdom. To have contact with one's grandparents is considered very fortunate as wisdom can be transferred to the younger generation. Cultural and linguistic influences that threaten this bond are considered detrimental.
- Within some groups, the oldest son is given certain leadership responsibilities. He often becomes an authority figure for his mother and siblings.
- There are specific manners and rituals used to show respect for elders in many cultures. For some, it is customary to greet and serve the eldest person first, then in sequence by descending age.

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### Autonomy and Community

- Children in some cultures are taught to work independently. Self-sufficiency is considered to be a virtue while in other groups, children are taught to help their peers and work cooperatively.
- In some cultures, free speech and autonomous thinking is encouraged, while in others, it is rejected.

### Religion

- Large cultural groups tend to be diversified in their religious practices.
- There are many religions that are practiced solely within an ethnic or cultural group.

### Gender Roles

- Within many cultures, men and women have separate roles and responsibilities. In many groups, the traditional role of the male is financial provider while the role of women is to take care of the family.
- In matriarchal communities, the woman assumes the role of leader and decision-maker.

### Proxemics (Distance between individuals)

- Within Anglo-American culture, individuals tend to maintain a physical distance of 18 to 48 inches during conversations.
- Among Mediterranean cultures, the normal distance for communication is approximately 12 inches.
- In some cultures, it is customary to touch arms while conversing.

### Taboos

- Placing a hand on a person's head may seem harmless in many cultures, however, in some Asian countries, the head is considered sacred and should not be touched.
- Public displays of affection are considered taboo in some cultures.
- In some groups, it is common for children to refrain from asking questions of their teachers even when they do not understand because they do not want to imply to the teacher that he or she has not explained well.

### Time Concept

- Attitudes toward time are often reflected in cultural sayings. In English, the clock "runs," and "time waits for no one." In Spanish and Vietnamese, time "walks." In the United States, "there's no time like the present." In some other cultures, "Tomorrow is another day."
- For many Native American cultures, the solar and lunar positions dictate when certain events will occur. "Indian signs" have been used by American farmers for centuries. Potatoes are planted during a new moon when the astrological signs are below the waist-line while corn is planted during a full moon when the signs are at the head.

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Complete the Surface and Deep Culture Comprehension check in Unit 4 at <http://www.quia.com/pages/crosscultural.html>. Categorize the following scenarios as expressions of surface or deep culture.

Surface Culture	Deep Culture
The school cafeteria is serving Jamaican beef patties and Chinese egg rolls. (Surface)	You hear children addressing adult non-family members as “tio”(uncle) and “tia” (aunt) to show their respect for adults. (Deep)
A student is uncomfortable when the teacher stands very close to him. (Deep)	Observing Yom Kippur (Surface)
Students show pride in their heritage by wearing their national flag in clothing and jewelry. (Surface)	A teenage student frequently misses days of school in order to care for her younger siblings while her parents work. (Deep)
You decorate your room with images from the Harlem Renaissance. (Surface)	A student’s parents ask that their daughter be excused from Physical Education classes because in their culture, it is forbidden for boys and girls to play sports together. (Deep)

Read pages 261-274 in your text. While you read about how culture includes values, social customs and educational practices, consider how each of these affects schooling and the ways teachers can adapt instruction in order to respond to cultural diversity.