

Year 9 Unit 1: Culture and Beliefs

KEY TERMS

Culture - a shared set of beliefs, values, attitudes, norms, customs, traditions and practices.

Beliefs - a set of ideas about the world that form the basis of a religion or other way of making sense of life.

Values - what a person feels to be important to them. Values are usually shared among members of a culture.

Traditions - the handing down from generation to generation of customs and beliefs.

Practices - the way culture, beliefs, values and so on are put into action, e.g. a person with religious beliefs may go to a place of worship.

Customs - the long established habits of a society.

Primitive tribe - a simple culture that has survived for a very long time. It is likely to be characterised by a hunting and gathering existence.

Colonisation - when one country goes to another country and takes over important aspects of its culture.

Amish - a group of traditionalist Christian church fellowships with Swiss German Anabaptist origins

Rumspringa - a period of adolescence in which boys and girls are given greater personal freedom and allowed to form romantic relationships, usually ending with the choice of baptism into the church or leaving the community.

Shunning - a longstanding practice in which church members isolate, ignore, or otherwise punish someone for breaking community rules.

Gelassenheit - the idea that a believer should surrender to God by living in a way that pleases God and by obeying legitimate religious authority.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture sums up the way a group of people live. It is a system of behaviours and beliefs passed from one generation to the next. The rules, language, religion, family systems, recreation and education that a group of people shares provide predictability and safety in their daily lives.

They understand each other and the world around them has meaning. So culture is the pattern of shared behaviour among the members of a group.

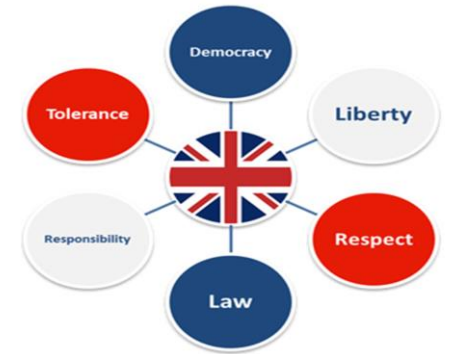
The word 'culture' helps us explain the different ways people behave.

This ability to explain different types of behaviour can lead to better relations between people of different cultures.

BRITISH CULTURE

Whilst 'Britishness' is reflected in our food, recreation, family life, religion and art, etc, it is probably nowhere more poignantly present than in our values; which inform the basis of much of our British culture. How you describe our culture will vary based on your own experiences.

Today, Ofsted requires all schools 'to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs'.



EMERGENCE OF DIFFERENT CULTURES

Basic human physical needs for survival are: Food, water, shelter. Emotional needs are: Love, security, identity. Living in groups makes it easier to provide for those needs. Different groups have found different ways of achieving these goals. This has led to many different cultures with different beliefs and values.

Groups adapted to survive and so began to develop their own distinct culture. They used things found about them for clothing and shelter, and local animals and plants hunted or gathered for food. The beliefs and languages which developed reflected that group's particular natural environment. So, although human beings had learned that living in groups and co-operating were the best ways to survive, they learned to do this in different ways. Some were more successful than others. Some became more cautious, even hostile to 'outsiders'. As a result men and women in different culture groups have developed different roles, norms, beliefs, languages and traditions.

KOMBAI

There are 4,000 or so members of the Kombai, most of whom live in isolated family homesteads in tree houses. The tribal communities of inland New Guinea were arguably the last peoples on earth to trade in metal goods such as knives or axes. In the remotest parts of this island this is still the case and the local people use stone axes to fell trees, bamboo slivers to slice their meat and traded shells or bamboo to hold their water. Cooking is done without receptacles, but using a method of heated stones. The Kombai are typical hunter gatherers. The men hunt a wide range of prey including cassowary, wild boar and marsupials in the forest using their bows and arrows with their dogs as trackers. Pigs are domesticated for ritual use. The staple food is starch harvested from sago palms growing wild in the jungle. It takes the women a few hours to drain and dry a few bundles of starch from the palm, and a large tree can provide enough starch to sustain a family for seven to ten days. Usually, dozens of trees are found in the same area. Once they have been used, a family will move to a new location within clan territory. In addition, the sago provides a particular Kumbai delicacy: the sago grub, the larva of the Capricorn beetle. A palm is cut down, left for a month, then wrapped in leaves where it continues to rot, during which time the grubs develop within the tree. The Kumbai return three months later when the trunk is full of larvae. The jungle is divided into clan territories. There are also territories of the spirits where no clans live. For a stranger to enter a clan's territory is viewed as a threat - potentially to life itself. It's telling that kwai, which means 'spirit' or 'ghost', is also the word to describe an outsider. Other traditions include the Kumbai piercing their noses with a sago thorn. At times, the digits of bats will also be used for this ornamentation, especially by the women. Another tradition includes the men inverting their penises. This appears to involve pushing the penis back into their bodies, and wrapping what's left in a leaf.



CULTURE OF SPAIN

The Spanish are well known for a distinctive style of dancing, the Flamenco and you can learn to dance the Fandango.



The Spanish love Fiestas or holiday celebrations. Easter is a popular festival as well as the Fall Bonfire festival held in Valencia. Seville hosts the April fair and the 'Running of the Bulls' festival, suited to the young men of the community, takes place in Pamplona. They enjoy music and dancing and the national sport is football. Bull fighting is a sport that is part of the Spanish culture. It is not a sport that everyone supports because it is a 'blood sport.' The matadors dress in very colourful outfits and parade round the bull ring. Originally bull fighters rode on horseback, but now they walk on foot around the bull ring. In Spain, most people celebrate their name day. In Spanish, it is called el día de tu santo. If you have the same name as a saint or a name related to the story of a saint, then you will have a name day. On every day of the year at least one name is celebrated. In Spain, everyone has two surnames. The first is your father's first surname and the second is your mother's first surname. Your father's surname is considered to be more important and that is why it is positioned first. It is always the father's surname that is carried forward to the next generation! In Spain, the Spanish language is officially called Castilian (el castellano). There are other Spanish languages spoken there too, such as, Catalan (el catalán), Galician (el gallego), Basque (el vasco or el euskera), Valencian (el valenciano). Christmas Eve is very important in Spain. It is called Nochebuena (The good night) and it is a very happy occasion with lots of parties. Families eat a special meal on the night of 24 December. Christmas Day is called El Día de Navidad. Another big meal is eaten and some presents might be given. The 6 January is the most important day of Christmas in Spain. This is known as the day of The Three Kings (Los Reyes). This is the day when children receive most presents. The Three Kings arrive during the night of 5 January and leave presents for the children.

AMISH

The Amish (pronounced 'Aahmish') are an American Protestant group with around 200,000 members descended from European Anabaptists who came to the USA more than two centuries ago to escape persecution. Amish believe that the community is at the heart of their life and faith, and that the way to salvation is to live as a loving community apart from the world. Individualism is avoided. Members of the community help each other, and the whole community will work together to help a member in trouble. They do not accept state benefits or use insurance, but rely on community support instead. The Amish believe that it's essential to keep themselves separate from the 'world', so they live in their own small communities and differ from other Americans in their dress, language, work, travel and education. Each Amish district is fully independent and lives by its own set of unwritten rules, or Ordnung. The Old Order is the strictest of these groups. There is no central authority. The Amish stress simplicity and humility. They avoid anything associated with self-exaltation, pride of position or enjoyment of power. Amish believe that God is pleased when people work in harmony with nature, the soil, the weather, and care for animals and plants. Amish always live in rural communities. Some modern 'conveniences', such as cars, electricity and telephones are avoided. They only avoid technology where it might damage the community, not because they are Luddites or think technology is inherently evil. Amish only marry other Amish and don't divorce. They have large families averaging 7-8 children. Amish children are educated in their own schools. Schooling stops at 14 after which they learn practical skills on the job. After 16 Amish children can experience life outside the community for a few years to decide whether they wish to become full baptised members of the community. 90% decide to do so.