

## Stories of My Culture

### Skills Focus

**Reading Literature, Informational Text, Writing, Language**

### Connection to Habits of Good Readers

Questioning, Connecting

### Overview

The world is a great big place. The more we know about each other, the better chance we have of getting along. Exposing our children to different cultures is a great way to begin to break down barriers. We can expose our kids through readings and visits to various places such as museums. Help your child understand that often people are more alike than different, despite our various cultural backgrounds.

### Guiding Questions and Talking Points

The following questions and talking points may be used to spark a discussion with your child about culture:

- What do you think of when you hear the word “culture”? What are some words that describe our family’s culture?
- How are your friends similar and different from you? How would the world be different if everyone was alike and believed the same things?
- Ask if your child has any peers or friends from different cultures. If so, what have they learned or what would they like to learn about that culture?

### Intro Activity

Ask your child if he or she knows what an acrostic poem is. An acrostic is a poem or other form of writing in which the first letter, syllable or word of each line, paragraph or other recurring feature in the text spells out a word or a message. Write the word “CULTURE” down the side of a paper. Help your child write an acrostic poem using the letters to help explain what culture means to you both.

### Before (Background Knowledge and/or Vocabulary)

We hear the word culture a lot, but we may not have a clear understanding of exactly what culture means. By definition, culture is a collection of beliefs, values, customs, experiences, and arts of a particular group. Children should know that many facets make up a culture and most times we just become a part of a given culture simply by the circumstances of our birth. Children should understand that no one culture is better than another.

The following terms may be helpful for children as they learn about culture:

- **Artifact:** an object made by humans that reflects contemporary society or culture.
- **Heritage:** anything that has been transmitted from the past or handed down by tradition.
- **Ritual:** a formal act, institution, or procedure that is followed consistently.
- **Tradition:** a long-established way of thinking or acting.
- **Nationality:** the state or fact of being a citizen of a particular nation.

### During

As a family, discuss the different people you may come in contact with on a regular basis. Are any of these people from another culture? What makes you think so? As you talk, think about what you might want to know about this person’s culture. Generate one question that you would like to find the answer to about this person’s culture.

- **Emergent readers** can consult two sources to find the answer to the question you created. The sources may be online or in the library. Encourage your child to compare what each source has to say about the culture.
- **Proficient readers** can interview someone from a different culture. In addition, have him/her consult at least one source for research about that culture. Have your child compare the information gathered in the interview with the information gathered from the print source.
- **Advanced readers** can research specific artifacts that might help us better understand a particular culture. Have your child compare this artifact to an artifact from his/her own culture.

After the research is completed, sit and talk as a family about your own culture. In what ways is your culture similar to and different from the culture your child has researched? Of what is your family most proud as it relates to your own culture? Imagine that you are putting together a museum exhibit about your culture. Together, write a brief description about something in your culture.

## Stories of My Culture (cont.)

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#### After (Extension Activities)

- Visit a local museum to learn more about various cultures.
- Check the local newspaper to find out about upcoming shows and cultural events taking place in your community.
- Learn a dance or create an art project that reflects another culture.
- Find out if there are any cultural centers close to your home. Plan a tour for your family to take.

#### Web Resources

The following websites may be useful when conducting research on various cultures:

- [www.nativeculturelinks.com/indians.html](http://www.nativeculturelinks.com/indians.html)
- [www.factmonster.com](http://www.factmonster.com)
- [www.libraryspot.com](http://www.libraryspot.com)
- [www.ivyjoy.com/rayne/kidsearch.html](http://www.ivyjoy.com/rayne/kidsearch.html)

#### Suggested Readings

I is for India, Prodeepa Das

K is for Korea, Hyechong Cheung

D is for Drum: A Native American Alphabet, Michael and Debbie Shoulders

D is for Drinking Gourd: An African-American Alphabet, Nancy J. Sanders

Shannon: An Ojibway Dancer, Sandra King