

Title: Culture Compare and Contrast

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Grade Level: 9-12

Subject/Content: English/Culture/Compare and Contrast Essay

Summary of Lesson: Students master their compare and contrast writing skills by choosing an American cultural element (fashion, food, religion, etc.) and comparing it to the same element of another culture.

Focus Question: How do other cultures compare and contrast to your own?

Databases(s): *Student Resources In Context, LitFinder*

Procedures :

- This lesson may be taught in conjunction with a social studies course studying any culture or independently in an English course studying compare and contrast writing.
- Steps/Activities by teacher: Before starting this lesson, students should be familiar with and have practice writing the basic compare and contrast essay.
- Lead discussion about cultural elements such as food, fashion, religion, language, social customs etc.
- Ask students to think about different cultures that they have encountered. Use the following prompts to get them thinking:
 - List a word from another language that you have used.
 - List a food from another culture you have enjoyed.
 - List music from another culture you have enjoyed.
 - List any fashion from another culture you have worn.
 - List any technology from another culture you use.
- Access *Student Resources In Context*
- Search and view images for SARI and WEDDING DRESS
- Show students images and ask them to comment on each dress. Have them focus on the similarities and differences between each.

- Explain students that many cultures have similar ceremonies (births, coming of age, weddings, funerals) but these ceremonies differ in the details.
- Share with students some of the differences between American and Indian wedding ceremonies:

Indian Sari

- Longest surviving fashion.
- Sari mentioned in the Vedas (the oldest surviving piece of literature).
- 75% of Indian population wears sari.
- Traditionally the wedding sari is red with gold.

American wedding dress

- White represents joyous celebration and purity.
- White was first worn by Anne of Britain in 1499.
- Queen Victoria sealed the tradition 150 years ago and it has remained.
- Most first time brides wear white.

Similarities in cultures

- Both colors are intended to stand out and it is distasteful for any guests to wear either color.
- Both cost more and are more detailed.
- Information regarding mehndi, veils, and wedding jewelry can also be shared here.
- Instruct students to research a cultural element that they are interested in.
- Have students write a compare and contrast essay with the information they collect.

Steps/Activities by student(s):

- *Access Student Resources In Context.*
- Click the Browse Topics button from the black banner.
- Choose World Cultures and Religions from the Choose a Category box.

- Choose a culture you're interested in.
- Read and compile information from the database to help you write a compare and contrast essay comparing one element of American culture with the same element in a culture of your choice.

Outcome: Students will write an essay comparing and contrasting an element of American culture with that of another culture.

Related Activities:

- Through the school library or *LitFinder* (if available) find the short story *Cool Wedding* by Latha Viswanathan.
- Read short story and highlight the cultural differences described in the story.
- Class discusses the differences in the story and whether any of them relate to their individual essays.