



S is for Shoes Off in the House | ABC's of AAPIs

This lesson plan encourages classroom discussions and reflections on cultural norms, mores, and folkways and uses the coloring sheet and poem: "S is for Shoes Off in the House" to propel critical thinking about students' own cultures in relation to others and how we can show respect, tolerance, and acceptance. Poem by Gina Yu Artwork by Dianna Settles In partnership with the Asian American Advocacy Fund (AAAF), WQED Education took AAAF's ABC's of AAPIs coloring book project and created lesson plans for educators to use in the classroom to provide a creative activity and resource for AAPI Studies.

Time Allotment: 1 class period

Learning Objectives

- Define norms, mores, and folkways
- Explore culture iceberg

Prep for Teachers

- Print enough copies of the coloring sheet

Supplies

- [Culture iceberg](#)
- Coloring utensils
- "S is for Shoes Off in the House" coloring sheet

Learning Activities

1. Before starting this lesson, make sure to set class discussion rules like what is acceptable versus not acceptable to say when talking about customs and cultures, especially if they aren't your own. Let the class set their own rules and write them down somewhere that is visible the entire class period. Make sure that everyone consents and agrees to follow these rules. If someone doesn't, then the rules need to be discussed and revised until a group consensus is reached. This is an important step to make sure everyone is comfortable talking and sharing as a class.
 - Some examples of rules might be: don't interrupt, respect others' views, criticize ideas, not people or a group of people, avoid inflammatory language
2. Distribute copies of the coloring sheet and put students into small groups to read and analyze the poem. What are their initial thoughts? What does the poem convey?
3. Ask students to define the word "respect." Record their answers somewhere they can see. What is respect and what is it not? Can it be misused? In what ways?
4. What does it mean to be respectful of someone else's culture? Does this context change depending on where you are? I.e. country, environment, etc.



5. Show students the [iceberg concept of culture](#) and define each layer. Surface level vs deep level. Unspoken rules vs unconscious rules.
6. Put students together in small groups and ask them to respond to each prompt with ideas about their culture. Refer to the iceberg to help. If students are struggling, they can research some examples online.
 - **Surface Level:** What do you know about your culture on the surface level? (Ex: Traditions, lifestyles, holidays, food)
 - **Below Surface Level:** What aspects of your culture are just below the surface, not explicitly obvious or visible to others? (Ex: Unspoken rules or social contracts that people observe without discussing, aspects of your home life that others might not know).
 - **Deep Surface Level:** What aspects of your culture or heritage might be below your conscious levels of awareness or understanding? (Ex: Questions you have about your own heritage, patterns that you and others might not understand)
7. Ask students to share out their discussion points.
8. Then define norms, mores, folkways, taboos, and law for students.
 - **Social/Societal Norms:** Norms are cultural expectations for how to behave in situations. They are agreed upon expectations & rules by which members of a culture or society behave and are enforced by that society. These can vary by the culture or society and are often times different. There are 4 types of norms: folkways, mores, taboos, and law. Many of these types can overlap.
 - **Folkways:** Folkways or customs are norms for everyday behavior that people follow due to tradition or convenience. Breaking a folkway does not usually have serious consequences, but can be viewed as odd or annoying.
 - i.e. Facing the back when in an elevator, following dresscode in certain spaces/events, being polite by saying please and thank you, etc.
 - **Mores:** Mores are codes of conduct that control moral and ethical behavior. These are definitions of right and wrong, but not always written or formal rules. People feel more strongly about mores and violating them are strongly frowned upon and sometimes can result in punishment or exclusion.
 - i.e. stealing, lying, cheating, vandalism, littering, disrespecting parents, etc.
 - **Taboo:** A taboo is a norm that society holds so strongly that violating it results in extreme disgust. Strong punishment is enacted on those who break taboos. Often times taboo breakers are cast out of society.
 - **Law:** Written, formal rules of conduct created and enforced by government. Laws are enforced by designated groups to discourage behavior that would harm people or property. Any folkway, more, or taboo can be made into a law. Breaking a law can be strong punishment like prison or a light punishment like a fine or verbal warning.

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9. Thinking back on the iceberg of culture and the students' responses, what on there can be categorized as a more versus a folkway? Have any of these cultural norms changed over time? i.e. use of recreational drugs, divorce, etc.
10. What are some folkways that are different in other cultures? How can we be respectful of these folkways? What about when we don't agree with other culture's folkways? How can we navigate through those social situations and be global citizens? Discuss a group.
11. Lastly, read through the poem "S is for Shoes Off in the House". Has the message changed since we've finished this lesson? How has your feeling about the poem changed or not? What is a folkway in your family or culture that when others respect it, makes you feel seen, heard, and respected?

The iceberg concept of culture

Surface Culture

Above sea level

Emotional level: relatively low

Deep Culture

Unspoken Rules

Partially below sea level

Emotional level: very high

Unconscious Rules

Completely below sea level

Emotional level:
intense

The iceberg concept of culture

Surface Culture

Above sea level

Emotional level: relatively low

food • dress • music
visual arts • drama • crafts
dance • literature • language
celebrations • games

Deep Culture

Unspoken Rules

Partially below sea level

Emotional level: very high

courtesy • contextual conversational patterns • concept of time
personal space • rules of conduct • facial expressions
nonverbal communication • body language • touching • eye contact
patterns of handling emotions • notions of modesty • concept of beauty
courtship practices • relationships to animals • notions of leadership
tempo of work • concepts of food • ideals of childrearing
theory of disease • social interaction rate • nature of friendships
tone of voice • attitudes toward elders • concept of cleanliness
notions of adolescence • patterns of group decision-making
definition of insanity • preference for competition or cooperation
tolerance of physical pain • concept of “self” • concept of past and future
definition of obscenity • attitudes toward dependents • problem-solving
roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth

Unconscious Rules

Completely below
sea level

Emotional level:
intense