

Culture Kit Teaching Tools

Culture kits can be a tactile and visually stimulating way for students to better understand other cultures and make meaning of the cultures through objects. The following list of possible instructional activity ideas has been generated to assist your students in deriving meaning from the cultural artifacts. Please send your creative idea for using the kits to Tara_Muller@unc.edu.

1. How to Analyze an Artifact

2. Mystery Objects- Put one object from the culture kit in different stations around the room to serve as clues as to the country under study and the objects' origins. Students should rotate through the centers examining each object and any written clues provided using deductive reasoning to determine where the mystery objects are from. After visiting each station students should submit a yes/no question to the teacher to help them guess where the objects are from. After each station has been visited, students should guess the country origin of the objects and explain the rationale for their decision.

3. Questions to Consider-

- What do you notice about the object- colors, shape, texture, smell, size, sound, etc.?
- What is the object made of?
- What does the object tell us about natural resources and available materials in the culture?
- What does the object remind you of?
- What questions does the object evoke?
- What might the object be used for?
- What does this object say about the culture of this country?
- Why do you think this object was included in the kit? What is its significance?

Have students brainstorm answers in small groups and report back to the class. You may provide one object per group, rotate objects among groups, or have all students brainstorm on the same objects. Afterwards talk about their explanations in relation to the real function, origin and significance of the object.

4. Original Culture- After learning about the artifacts of a real culture from the kit, have students create their own culture. Students must imagine a location, climate and setting for their cultural group. What natural resources are available? What are the people's needs? Fears? How do they explain the unknown? Do they have any emblems, totems, legends or myths? What items hold the greatest respect or importance? What are the rules of their society? After creating their imaginary land with its own unique culture, students should construct a cultural artifact from their land and explain its significance.

5. US Culture- Identify objects of cultural significance to US culture. What message do these items convey about our way of life? Compose a list of items to be included in a USA culture kit, a North Carolina culture kit, or a culture kit from students' ethnic groups, school or family. Write a description of each item describing its significance, use, name, etc.

6. Literacy Skills- Write a fictional story or poem about the objects. How are they used? How were they created? Is there a myth or legend regarding the object?

7. Travel Log- After examining the culture kit items, make a travel log of things and experiences you may expect to have using the cultural items as a guide. What does the place look and feel like? Where in the country did you travel? Use a map to chart your trip. Did you use any of the objects from the kit on your journey? Where did you go to buy these items? How much did they cost? Did you learn the exchange rate? What about the language?

8. Which One Does Not Belong?- For culture kits with mainly traditional items included, arrange culture kit artifacts with groups of items or photos from the internet and other sources. Be sure to include pictures of modern objects from the same country as the culture kit, interspersed with photos of more traditional objects from other countries. Ask students which objects are from the same country and which do not belong in the sequence. By including pictures of modern items from the country you can teach the concept of modern vs. traditional artifacts and make students aware of common stereotypes of “less modern” countries and regions. Use the juxtaposition of traditional and modern artifacts to show that, for instance, many African countries such as Kenya, for example, have skyscrapers as well as traditional mud huts and rap music as well as traditional African instruments, etc.

9. Compare and Contrast Kits- If you have checked out more than one kit, have students compare and contrast the contents of each kit, making inferences about the countries they represent. Use the CIA Fact Book and other sources to compare statistics. Use the internet to view top stories of the day from the countries’ newspapers. Are the leading stories similar? What about their language, music, food, government, housing, schools, sports? What similarities and difference can you detect?

10. Your own culture kit activity. Share your creative ideas with fellow educators. Email Tara_Muller@unc.edu to add them to our list.