
Group 1 Topics: Culture

Cultural Diversity

This topic offers an opportunity to introduce students to various major belief and/or cultural systems through concepts such as rules, structures, class, gender, ceremony, power, fear, and order. Students should understand the differences between beliefs, values, and attitudes, and how these are linked to culture. Students may analyse their social and cultural worlds, and question and challenge belief systems, acknowledging that such systems, as well as identities, are socially constructed and can therefore be changed.

Students consider factors that affect resistance to, or acceptance of, change. They examine the concept of change — its initiation, impact, and management — in a cultural setting. They evaluate the ways in which things have been done and decisions have been made in the past or present, and challenge ideas and interpretations of events to encourage future change. They analyse why, in the process of change, some stories are not heard or are silenced.

In exploring cultural diversity, students may be introduced to a range of examples in different societies or in different groups or subcultures of a particular society. Students may examine the ways in which values and beliefs shape cultures and societies. They may consider and act on ways to create wider awareness and understanding of, and respect for, cultural diversity. Students may identify and analyse attitudes relevant to their own beliefs, cultural competencies, and practices, and assess and develop strategies to support change and social inclusion.

Youth Culture

This topic allows students to explore the idea of youth culture and the ways in which the experience of being young has changed, locally or elsewhere. Students also explore changes in youth experience (e.g. in the youth labour market), the ways in which young people are represented in the media, and young people as citizens. Students examine the extent to which social, economic, and cultural changes have shaped the lives of young people. They examine the beliefs, values, customs, and practices of youth culture in comparison with other cultures in Australia and in other places.

Students consider how the social construction of prejudice and stereotypes, including stereotypes of young Indigenous people, affect youth and adolescence. They investigate the ways in which young people use space and create places in the community. Students consider factors that affect youth culture (e.g. neighbourhood, sense of community, socio-economic status, popular culture, demographic characteristics, gender, and ethnic background). They share creative ideas on non-material aspects of life that promote well-being and are cost-neutral and intrinsically rewarding.

Work and Leisure

In this topic students have the opportunity to consider changing perceptions about people's work, sport, leisure, family, community life, and well-being, locally and elsewhere. Students begin to challenge notions surrounding the concept of work (e.g. paid, volunteer, and household) and understand how circumstances can affect people's opportunity to participate effectively in workplaces. They analyse a range of workplace issues, and ways in which these can influence productivity and/or working conditions (e.g. childcare, sex-based harassment, redundancies, access to training, casualisation of the workforce, the role of unions, and volunteer and unpaid work).

Students explore the significance of work and life issues for Indigenous, migrant, and/or other groups of people, and analyse the connections between income, work, sport and leisure, and family and community life. They investigate the ways in which leisure and consumption are linked to identity, particularly in countries where leisure has become an industry. They analyse the concept of a leisure society in an age that demands greater economic efficiency and longer working hours.

Students consider issues such as drug use, violence, sexism, and racism. They consider the ways in which gender, class inequalities, and ethnicity can affect people's lives. They share creative ideas for non-material aspects of life that promote well-being and are cost-neutral and intrinsically rewarding.

The Material World

In this topic students have the opportunity to investigate some aspects of the contemporary material world (e.g. clothing, theme parks, fast food, and the leisure industry). They may consider how their interrelationships with people, society, and the particular culture in which they live are affected by, for example, clothes and jewellery; furniture; artefacts; body products, decorations, and piercings; mobile telephones, radio headsets, and other gadgets; and cars.

Students examine what is meant by a cultural artefact and analyse the ways in which the circulation of cultural artefacts is intimately related to forms of power and hierarchical structures. They also consider how the status of certain material objects allows groups in society to differentiate themselves from others, and the effects of this on the 'in' groups and 'out' groups.

Students may also examine why the human body has become such an important consideration in contemporary society. They analyse the growth industry associated with the body, including body piercing, tattooing, exercise, cosmetic surgery, diet, and the use of make-up, all of which are designed to remodel the body. They may consider the processes by which the body has become commodified.

They consider strategies to counter peer pressure and ways to include rather than exclude; appreciate diversity across groups; and act ethically to value diversity. They share creative ideas for non-material aspects of life that promote well-being and are cost-neutral and intrinsically rewarding.

Group 2 Topics: Contemporary Challenges

Social Ethics

This topic allows students to analyse the ways in which society as a whole deals with ethical issues. They consider how ethical codes of conduct are determined by many social influences, including family, culture, religion, and work. They begin to understand the types of power that support different value systems. They analyse positions taken and appraise social issues that involve complex ethical judgments.

Students may consider issues such as animal rights; job discrimination; assisted suicide; censorship; welfare and social justice; punishment; sexual ethics; the ethics of social research; the mass media; privacy; and the role of new technologies such as domestic and reproductive technology, production technology, and military technology.

They may also consider the origins and effects of repressive or unfair laws, policies, and/or agreements in relation to minorities and less powerful nations. They research ways in which government, business, and community policies and practices relate to a particular ethical stance. They explore and contribute to the implementation of goals related to ethical behaviour or to ecological and social sustainability.

Students identify and analyse ethical issues relevant to their own positions and practices, and assess appropriate strategies to change these if appropriate.

Contemporary Contexts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

This topic gives students an opportunity to consider, and explore strategies to address, a range of issues and challenges that confront Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Students examine the contradictions that result in the significant gaps in health, education, services, and choices experienced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in comparison with other members of Australian society. Students consider the influence of the achievements of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in highlighting a range of issues.

Students have opportunities to explore issues concerning social inclusion, equitable service provision, and initiatives developed by Indigenous communities, service providers, and individuals, and consider possible solutions that may close the gaps in health, education, services, and choices and provide more equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Students explore the concept of self-management and consider the importance of having individuals and communities as key partners in decision-making processes about issues that affect their lives. Students consider the impacts of racism, paternalism, marginalisation, prevailing stereotypes, and current bureaucratic and social policies. They examine the progress made towards the recognition of Indigenous rights in Australia, and analyse the concept of reconciliation.

Students identify and analyse attitudes relevant to their own beliefs and practices and assess strategies to change these if appropriate. Learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and/or organisations is particularly relevant to this topic.

Technological Revolutions

This topic allows students to examine the effects of technologies on society and at the same time to assess the extent to which such technologies are affected by the social context in which they are developed. They consider the ways in which societies choose to

use technology, and investigate how technological innovation (e.g. the phenomenon of virtual reality) is considered to be one of the most important forces for cultural change.

Students consider the rise of the Internet as an example of a current technology that has grown into a global phenomenon. Students investigate how the Internet has developed as a technology in response to the new uses that individuals, groups, and societies have found for it. They have opportunities to explore the cultures, customs, rules, and vocabularies that are developing in association with the Internet and other electronic communication systems.

Students question the notion of a surveillance society made possible by the use of sophisticated technologies. They explore the concept of technology as a force for social division and/or cohesion. They propose advice for potential decision-makers (e.g. parents, their school, the elderly, and/or politicians) about safety, threats, or creative opportunities.

People and the Environment

This topic allows students to analyse the positions that people take on the environment and to evaluate social and environmental issues that involve complex ethical judgments. Students consider examples of how negative attitudes (e.g. abuse, apathy, or ignorance) towards the management of natural and built environments relate to economics, quality of life, and ecological sustainability.

Students explore the diversity of understanding and management of the environment by and among groups (e.g. Indigenous societies, farmers' groups, mining companies, corporations, scientists, environmentalists, and lobby groups), and analyse ways of working for environmental sustainability and social justice, now and in the future.

Students consider the place of negotiation and compromise among personal, group, and community interests. They appraise the roles of individuals and groups in developing feelings of responsibility towards their local community and adopting the position of an environmental watchdog.

Students analyse Australia's position as a high-consumption society and consider factors that affect the environment (e.g. housing, energy consumption, immigration policy, water supply, food, transport, and technology). They take into account a range of perspectives and act for positive change as appropriate.

Group 3 Topics: Global Issues

Globalisation

In this topic students have the opportunity to explore, analyse, and evaluate recent world-shaping phenomena. They may examine the development and effects of globalisation in a range of areas.

Students investigate inequitable distributions of power and resources, as well as the roles and impacts of government and non-governmental organisations and local advocacy groups. They consider why and how the practices of economic organisations and players (e.g. governments, banks, and investment managers; pharmaceutical, mining, and insurance corporations; transnational corporations; the European Union; and the World Trade Organization) affect people's lives. From perspectives of justice, equity, dignity, and environmental sustainability, students have opportunities to analyse the actions of global power brokers and their effects on public opinion.

Students analyse the effects of globalisation on the cultures of various societies, including the ways in which dominant cultures are absorbed, hybridised, resisted, or reshaped. They plan and act to make a positive difference.

A Question of Rights

In this topic students have an opportunity to explore the interrelationships between choice, rights, and responsibilities. They appraise and explore the notion of fundamental human rights for all people in a globalising world. They consider ways in which human rights have evolved and changed, and ways in which the rights of one may work against the rights of others. They explore notions of shared understanding of human rights in different contexts.

Students consider the feelings of those continually marginalised because of particular characteristics (e.g. physical appearance, illness, age, gender, dress, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, political views, lack of access to technology, and lack of employment) and examine the effects of discrimination, marginalisation, paternalism, prevailing stereotypes, and social policies on those who experience disadvantage.

Countries throughout the world share, and are connected by, media images of elections, warfare, and acts of terrorism. In this context, students may examine the interrelationships between social justice, civil responsibility, civil liberties, and the role of the state. They may also explore conflict or tension over rights at a local level (e.g. censorship, police detention, unfair advertising, harassment, bullying, or terrorism).

This topic also gives students opportunities to examine the roles of groups (such as the Australian Human Rights Commission, Link-Up services, and refugee associations) whose ethical aim is to protect human rights. Students consider how they may act to promote human rights.

People and Power

In this topic students analyse the distribution of power in societies, identify ways in which they and other people participate as citizens of nation-states in a globalising world, and determine how this participation might be increased. They consider the power of people to influence others. They identify examples of the development of advantage and disadvantage in a community or a society. They analyse power structures in and between systems, and discuss why individuals and groups have or do not have access to power. They assess the power of different forms of communication used to present and challenge opinions, arguments, points of view, and conclusions.

Students analyse the power of the media on a global scale and the power of multimedia products in forming and changing attitudes. They also identify examples of power and status in contemporary society. They use evidence to discuss and interpret events from the perspective of those who hold or want power as well as from the perspective of those who lack power. Students may analyse how a conflict over cultural, religious, environmental, or political beliefs might have emerged and might actually be about power, land, natural resources, money, and the influence of a few powerful people or nations. They plan ways in which to influence decision-makers to act ethically.

Students may also analyse people and power from the perspective of political leadership, by focusing on the values, goals, achievements, and impacts of political leadership in a variety of contexts in a globalising world. Students may consider leaders who are involved in a range of issues (e.g. constitutional questions, civil conflict, and local, national, social, religious, economic, and pro-democracy movements). They consider the evolution of political strategies and the impacts that political parties, corporate lobby groups, environmental, rural, and religious groups and the media have on leadership decisions.