



## Cultural Competence

### Materials:

- Paper (optional)
- Markers (optional)
- Example mosaics (optional)

### Brainstorm

Ask students to draw or list the things that make them unique. Call on student volunteers to share their examples.

### Discuss

Engage students in a discussion about the features that make them unique. When opportunities present themselves, connect students' unique traits to culture, such as speaking another language or having a unique insight, or traveling to an interesting part of the world.

### Dive in!

Explain to students that some of the things they identified that make them unique are related to culture. Detail: **Culture** is the beliefs, values, and customs shared by a group of people. Some of these elements include the language you speak, holidays or celebrations you observe, clothes you wear, foods you eat, religion you practice, even some of your common behaviors are likely rooted in your culture. Your behavior, beliefs, and values are largely shaped by the culture to which you belong. A cultural group is a collection of people who have common patterns of behavior and beliefs - in other words, people who share the same culture. Cultural groups could be made up of people within the same neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, age groups, and more. You each have your own unique set of cultural groups to which you belong. Regardless of what cultural groups you identify with, it's important to understand that everyone is unique and to find value in those differences. This is called **cultural competence**. Cultural competence means being aware of your own cultural beliefs, valuing the cultural beliefs and practices of others, and being aware of how cultures interact with and impact one another. Cultural competence helps us to communicate and interact with people successfully in our daily lives.



## Activity

We have learned that while every culture is unique, there are commonalities between cultures as well. Today we are going to talk about a form of artwork that can be found in many different cultures around the world and throughout history. This artwork is called a mosaic. A **mosaic** is an artistic image created using small pieces of hard substances like tile, glass, stone, or even shells. When they are viewed alone, the materials are just average pieces of tile, glass, or rock. However, when viewed together, the individual pieces form an image. Each piece of the mosaic relates to the pieces around it, and together they help form the complete picture. Looking at one piece of the mosaic will never allow you to see the complete image. The pieces must work together, just as demonstrating cultural competence is not just describing your own culture or learning about different cultures from around the world. Cultural competence requires that we think about how our culture relates to other cultures, how they are connected. Each of our cultures is a piece of the mosaic. If viewed alone, we may not have a full understanding and appreciation for a particular culture. We need to understand how our culture relates to other cultures in order to have a more complete understanding. Our cultures are all connected. We need to look at the impact cultures have on one another. Sometimes cultures are connected through painful historical events. We can't hide from those events or deny their existence. We must use them to help us understand how those events connect us and the impact those events have on the way different cultures relate in the present.

As a way of modeling how different cultures are connected to one another, we will each be creating a piece to contribute to a class mosaic. Your piece of the mosaic will represent the culture that is important to you in your life and the cultural groups you identify with. Distribute markers and one piece of paper to each student. Allow them ample time to work on their mosaic pieces. If time permits, allow student volunteers to share their mosaics and describe how they represent their culture. When all mosaics are done, combine them together to form one large mosaic on your classroom wall.

## Reflect

To wrap up the lesson, ask students verbally to share their definition of culture.

## Professional Development

Is your classroom culturally competent? If not, in what areas would you like to improve?



## High School

### For Further Study:

- Britannica: *Mosaics*: <https://www.britannica.com/art/mosaic-art>
- KY Department of Education: *Culturally Responsive Instruction*:  
<https://education.ky.gov/educational/diff/Pages/CulturallyResponsiveInstruction.aspx>
- Learning for Justice: *Being Culturally Responsive*:  
<https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/being-culturally-responsive>