

Across Cultures

Unit Guide for the Theme

Who are we? What can we become?

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Overall Objective

This unit examines how cultural distinctiveness has shaped Canadian society. The choices made by individuals are driven partly by society's acceptance of cultural communities.

Grade level

Advanced 9–12 and beyond. This unit can be adapted to younger grades and different courses of study in various Canadian provinces and territories.

Content Areas

History
Citizenship
Social Studies
Media
English/ Language Arts

Content items used

NFB Film excerpts:

The Tree That Remembers, 2003 (2 min 50 s – 4 min 32 s)
Opre Roma, 1999 (20 min 57 s – 23 min 58 s)
Some Kind of Arrangement, 1997 (19 min 50 s – 21 min 57 s)
Enigmatico, 1995 (29 min 18 s – 32 min 47 s)
Minoru: Memory of Exile, 1992 (15 min 14 s – 17 min 49 s)
The Hutterites, 1964 (10 min 30 s – 13 min 04 s)

Note: Content items can be viewed online free of charge at <www.nfb.ca/acrosscultures> in the theme **Who are we? What can we become?**

Materials Required

Access to a computer lab, Internet connection, Web camera, data projector, flip chart paper or whiteboard, drawing paper and pencils.

Summary

This unit explores the social and cultural influences that affect decisions we make about who we are and how we present ourselves. Students will examine how the modern behaviours and attitudes of Canadian youth are impacted by popular entertainment, and the passion Canadians have for their personal cultural heritage. The film excerpts highlight the contributions made by various people and how they value their cultural distinctiveness in Canada. (Note: Film clip *Enigmatico* contains profanity; teacher discretion advised.)

Introductory Activity (20 minutes)

Ask students if they openly celebrate their cultural heritage. Do they feel comfortable doing so? Do they feel family pressure to downplay or promote their culture? Does their cultural background dictate how they present themselves in society?

Activity 1: Discovering One's Cultural Passion (70 minutes)

Step 1: View film excerpt 1, *Opre Roma*, and excerpt 5, *Enigmatico*.

- In heterogeneous groups of three to five, ask students to identify the event in both films that changed the way the characters looked at and celebrated their culture.
- Have students discuss the role society plays in how people celebrate their culture in public/private.

Step 2: Ask students to document elements of their culture that they openly celebrate or observe. As Canadians do they integrate their cultural beliefs to their everyday life? If so, how and to what extent?

Step 3: Ask students to compare how strongly they express their cultural beliefs in relation to their parents or grandparents.

Step 4: Discuss what role society plays in how our culture defines who we are as Canadians. For example, the cultural make-up of Canada has changed significantly in the last 30-40 years. Why and what effect has this had?

Activity 2: Closed-door culture (70 minutes)

Step 1: View film excerpt 2, *Some Kind of Arrangement*, and excerpt 3, *The Hutterites*. Ask students to:

- Explain why Rajni Kurichh wants to marry someone who shares the same background. Do the reasons reflect her cultural values?
- Describe why the Hutterites want to shelter their children from the mainstream influences around them. Is this cultural isolation?

Step 2: Talk about the similarities and differences in the two film clips. For example, discuss how both individuals/groups promote cultural isolation for different reasons. In one it is a matter of convenience so Rajni does not have to teach and explain her family culture; in the other it is a way of sheltering children from outside influences.

Step 3: View film excerpts 4, *Minoru: Memory of Exile*, and 6, *The Tree That Remembers*. Brainstorm what traditions students would consider important to maintain if they moved to a drastically different country. Discuss the cultural impact of having to start over and rebuild your identity. What role does your past play in rebuilding that identity? What role does Canadian society play?

Bonus Activity (70 minutes)

Have teams of three choose and view an additional film excerpt from the Across Cultures Web site under the theme **Who are we? What can we become?** They can discuss the related questions (see online question panel by each excerpt or the appendix). Groups will then “carousel”: each team will move around the room and respond to other groups with comments and questions.

Closure Activity (20 minutes)

Students write a reflection on the classroom discussions and draw parallels with their own cultural background. This will help them identify how important their culture is in shaping who we are as a country.

Check for Understanding

Leave students with the question: Has your cultural background contributed to the diversity of Canada?

Group Discussion Rubric (to be used by teacher and students)

Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Knowledge/understanding of discussion material	Demonstrates limited knowledge of the material	Demonstrates some knowledge of the material	Demonstrates considerable knowledge of the material	Demonstrates thorough knowledge of the material
Thinking and inquiry	Demonstrates limited use of thinking and inquiry skills	Demonstrates some use of thinking and inquiry skills	Demonstrates competent use of thinking and inquiry skills	Demonstrates highly competent use of thinking and inquiry skills
Communication skills	Communicates information and ideas with limited effectiveness	Communicates information and ideas with some effectiveness	Communicates information and ideas confidently and effectively	Communicates information and ideas very confidently and effectively
Application	Does not make connections	Makes some connections effectively	Makes connections quite effectively	Makes connections very effectively



References and Resources

Archival Images: The Across Cultures Web site, under the theme **Who are we? What can we become?**, also contains excerpts from NFB and CBC archives, along with photographs and illustrations of artefacts. You might want to integrate some of these items into your planning.

Online Resource

Statistics Canada, “Canadian culture in perspective: a statistical overview”

<<http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection-R/Statcan/87-211-XIB/87-211-XIB-e.html>>

Text Resource: Any recommended text for Social Studies.

Appendix

Film excerpt questions in the **Who are we? What can we become?** theme.

From Harling Point, 2003 (26 min 4 s – 28 min 36 s)

Why did Charlayne want to abandon her Chinese heritage?

The Tree That Remembers, 2003 (2 min 50 s – 4 min 32 s)

How does isolation affect one’s identity?

Who Is Albert Woo?, 2000 (34 min 1 s – 35 min 37 s)

Why do you think Kark denied his roots until he was older?

Opre Roma, 1999 (20 min 57 s – 23 min 58 s)

Why did Karen explore her Roma heritage? Why would her father be reluctant to share information about her ‘gypsy’ background?

Wanda Koop: In Her Eyes, 1999 (34 min 2 s - 36 min 5 s)

Why was it important for Wanda to take her mother back to Ukraine?

Some Kind of Arrangement, 1997 (19 min 50 s – 21 min 57 s)

Why did Rajni feel it was important to find a husband with an Indian background?

Enigmatico, 1995 (29 min 18 s – 32 min 47 s)

Why do you think Maristella believes that the Italians celebrate their human spirit so passionately?

Minoru: Memory of Exile, 1992 (15 min 14 s – 17 min 49 s)

Why do you think Minoru’s family came back to Canada after being exiled years earlier?

A Sense of Family, 1980 (39 min 51 s – 46 min 38 s)

Why did Sharon decide to live her own life and reject what her parents did and said?

The Hutterites, 1964 (10 min 30 s – 13 min 04 s)

Why do the Hutterites shelter their children from the mainstream?