

# CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH ROLE PLAY #1

(Time Middle)

## Introductions around the World: Practicing Global Etiquette

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### Lesson Sketch

**Skills:** Students *read* articles on the cultures and greeting rituals of countries around the world; *learn* how to introduce themselves in informal settings in their countries of choice; *practice* introducing themselves appropriately while *collaborating* with classmates; *perform* a chosen country's introduction ritual for their classmates and *articulate* the cultural values that are expressed in the introduction etiquette; *take notes* throughout this process on their responses to various introduction rituals; and *write* personal essays about the differences and similarities between the etiquette they just learned and what their own cultural backgrounds have taught them.

**Grades:** 10

**Time:** Three 90-minute classes plus Homework Essay Assignment

**Featured Resources:** AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com articles on Maps, Country Snapshot, Cultural Overview, The People, Greetings and Courtesies, and Language.

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### Inspirations

*"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." ~Marie Curie*

*"The reality today is that we are all interdependent and have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue." ~The Dalai Lama*

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### Lesson Overview

Students perform greeting rituals from around the world, consider the cultural values that are expressed in these rituals, and write about how their family cultures of origin impact their experience of encountering unfamiliar cultures. Working collaboratively within small groups, students expand cultural understanding while improving reading comprehension, geographic knowledge, and geopolitical awareness. When students write about the similarities and differences between the greeting rituals of the world and the greetings they use at home and at school, they turn the lens of cultural awareness toward themselves and their own cultural tendencies, completing the conceptual circle of the exercise. By working with the connections between verbal expression, body language, and relational expectations in various cultures, and by developing greater awareness of their own cultural tendencies, students become more sophisticated global citizens, better able to engage in dialogue with those different from themselves.

**LESSON STEPS:** With small groups, students make a list of countries they are curious about. Students briefly skim articles on those countries to narrow down the list and choose one country to focus on. Students complete a prewriting exercise in which they make some guesses and some predictions about the country they're about to study. Students read a series of articles about a country of interest in order to develop a sense of cultural context, and note how the country's reality is in line with and/or contradictory to their predictions. Students read specifically about how to introduce themselves in their countries of choice, and rehearse introductions within small groups. Based on the country articles' descriptions of etiquette, students reflect on the values expressed in the country's greeting etiquette. Students perform a chosen country's introduction ritual for their classmates, and explain the values that are expressed in this ritual. Following a series of prewrite exercises on family cultures of origin and how these might effect students' experiences with unfamiliar cultures, students write a personal essay about the differences and similarities between the etiquette they just learned and what they've been taught to do at home and at school.

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## Standards Met

1. **Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Reading**
  - a. Key Ideas and Details 1, 2
  - b. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7
  - c. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10
2. **Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Writing**
  - a. Text Types and Purposes 1, 2, 3
  - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4, 5, 6
  - c. Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7, 8, 9
  - d. Range of Writing 10
3. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Reading**
  - a. Key Ideas and Details 1, 2
  - b. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7
  - c. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10
4. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Writing**
  - a. Text Types and Purposes 1, 2, 3
  - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4, 5, 6
  - c. Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7, 8, 9
  - d. Range of Writing 10
5. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Speaking and Listening**
  - a. Comprehension and Collaboration 1, 2
  - b. Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas 4, 5, 6
6. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Language**
  - a. Conventions of Standard English 1, 2
  - b. Knowledge of Language 3
  - c. Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 4, 6
7. **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standards for the English Language Arts:**

- a. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

**8. National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies:**

- a. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9

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## Supplies

- Computer access sufficient for students to work in groups of three
- Access to AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com
- Access to online language references like BBC Languages, Omniglot.com, and Forvo.com
- Dictionaries
- Notebooks, pens, etc.
- Flashcards for presentation notes

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## Instructional Plan

### Student Objectives

#### Students will:

- Improve reading comprehension skills, abstract thinking skills, and speaking/writing skills.
- Increase global awareness by working with texts on world cultures and world history.
- Begin to develop a sense of which languages are spoken in what regions, and have a brief encounter with a language other than English.
- Increase cultural awareness and self-awareness by encountering their own cultural tendencies, and considering how these tendencies condition responses to unfamiliar cultures.
- Improve skills in understanding and presenting complex sequences.
- Collaborate with classmates, encountering and bridging cultural differences within their own groups.
- Practice taking notes and prewriting, then incorporating these incremental steps into a fully realized essay.
- Write personal essays about their experiences, considering how their own cultural values conditioned their expectations regarding greeting etiquettes.
- Become more sophisticated global citizens able to engage in dialogue with those different from themselves.

### Session One

#### Teacher Introduction

- Introduce students to the idea that “polite” behavior is different from place to place, because what’s considered “polite” is culturally determined.
- Let students know that small class activities will culminate in a performance and a larger writing assignment—those who participate in small preparatory steps along the way will find the performance and the final writing assignment much easier.
- Establish expectations for prewriting and preparatory steps toward the final writing assignment: prewriting is to be taken seriously as a time to generate ideas, but it is not the time to agonize over perfect word choice or perfect spelling. Prewriting is a time to generate, not revise—revision will come later.
- Guide students in forming groups of 3—mixed-gender groups are ideal for this exercise.

- Direct groups to move to shared work stations.
- When students choose what countries they will investigate, encourage groups to cover countries in different regions, vs. covering countries all in the same region. This is helpful because a stronger contrast in greeting behaviors will be experienced by students working on Tanzania, Cambodia, Brazil, and France than by students working on Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and France.

## Student Directions

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### Which country would you like to visit? Select a country

- Go to [AtoZWorldCulture.com](http://AtoZWorldCulture.com) or [AtoZtheWorld.com](http://AtoZtheWorld.com).
- Peruse list of countries.
- Identify three countries you are curious about. Skim materials for these countries: get a quick sense of where the country is, who lives there, and whether you are curious about the place.
- Choose one country to mentally visit for this exercise.

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### Learn about your chosen country: Comparing expectations to reality

- Go to Maps—understand where country is.
- Place your bets: Pre-writing #1
  - Based on this country's location, what are your expectations regarding the culture? In what language/s do you guess that people greet each other? Do you guess that most residents have their roots in this country, or do you expect a large recent immigrant population? Do you expect that most residents are of the same ethnic background and religion, or do you expect a high degree of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity in this place? What do you suppose is important to residents of this country? Do you imagine an intricate ritual of greeting, or a loose, laid-back greeting style? What role do hierarchy and social status play in the culture's greeting rituals? Do you expect that greeting etiquette will be different depending upon social status, gender, age, or degree of relationship? Do you expect those of different cultural backgrounds within the country to greet each other differently? Any specific gestures or words you expect to see in their greetings?
- Read the articles Country Snapshot, Cultural Overview, and The People.
- Place your bets: Pre-writing #1A
  - So far, how do your guesses before reading compare to the lives of this country's citizens? What is as you expected, and what surprises you?
- Read the article Greetings and Courtesies. Pay special attention to the sections "General," "Informal Greetings," "Conversation Topics," and "Taboos."
- Place your bets: Pre-writing #1B
  - What surprises you so far about the ways in which people greet each other? What is in line with the expectations you wrote about earlier?

## Session Two

### Teacher Introduction

- Reconvene groups and remind students that these reading and prewriting exercises are building toward a performance and a writing assignment—both of which will be easier to complete if a good-faith effort is made on the preparatory steps.
- Try to keep student groups moving on pace with each other—when the first groups get to the vocabulary practice steps, the volume level in the room will rise, which could be distracting to those trying to read and write. Similarly, script writing is bound to be an animated activity.

- When students arrive at the step of learning the vocabulary of their chosen countries, assist as necessary with finding the supplemental Web materials and audio files for word pronunciation that are listed in the Supplies section.

## Student Directions

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### Understanding cultural values

- Return to the Informal Greetings section of Greetings and Courtesies. Observe the etiquette variations in your country.
  - With your group, take notes: Does the nature of polite behavior vary depending on social class? Age? Gender? Degree of relationship between speakers (family members vs. people meeting for the first time)? Religion? Language? Region? Some combination of these factors? Other factors?
- Working together with your group, revisit the Greetings and Courtesies article looking for value words that connect to greeting behaviors.
  - Look for words like: egalitarian, authoritarian, patriarchal, matriarchal, respectful, polite, outgoing, welcoming, hospitable, private, reserved, open, laid-back, cautious, etc.
  - With your group, take some notes about what you think is important to people's relationships in this country, based on what they prioritize in their greeting etiquette (you'll use these notes later to write a short presentation to your classmates). Do people more highly value maintaining differences in social status, or putting everyone on the same footing? Recognizing differences in age? Recognizing differences in professional status? Recognizing family relationships? Expressing concern for and interest in all the members of each other's families?

### Learning greeting vocabulary

- Return to the article Greetings and Courtesies. What sense can you make of the words in language/s other than English presented in the Informal Greetings so far? With your group, take a guess aloud as to how these greetings sound when spoken.
- Go to Language. In the Essential Terms glossary, use the phonetic guide to refine your pronunciation of greeting words for Informal Greetings. Practice greeting words aloud with your group. For further assistance, visit BBC Languages online, Omniglot.com, or Forvo.com to download sound files of common words and expressions. For example, Google "Omniglot useful Icelandic phrases" or "Forvo Icelandic pronunciation" to reach these audio files.

### Write the script; Rehearse

- Choose three scenarios to demonstrate for the class. For example, in Belgium, greetings vary based on region, language, and gender, so a group working on Belgium might demonstrate greetings between:
  - Two French-speaking women who've never met before
  - Two French-speaking women who are close friends
  - A Flemish-speaking man and Flemish-speaking woman who have never met before
- Using the Informal Greetings section of Greetings and Courtesies as your guide, prepare to demonstrate how the people in your three scenarios encounter each other.
- For each scenario, your team will divide into two actors and one narrator.
- Let's envision the completed performance, then back up and take the steps to get there one at a time. Here's what you're aiming for:
  - The narrator will describe the scenario—"Two French-speaking women, close friends from school who haven't seen each other in years, run into each other at their neighborhood bakery"—and then the two actors will demonstrate the appropriate greeting. When the two actors have demonstrated the greeting once, the narrator will read an explanation of the cultural values expressed in the greeting

ritual (see your group's notes on the value words in the Greetings and Courtesies article), and then the actors will repeat their demonstration of the greeting.

- Breaking it down into steps:
- Identify your three greeting scenarios.
- Identify which team members will be actors, and which narrators, for each scenario.
- Working together as a group, using flashcards or another note taking method that will work for a presentation, write out the appropriate greeting lines for the actors in their parts for each of the three scenarios.
- Working together as a group, referring to the Greetings and Courtesies article, write two to three sentences for the narrator to speak in explanation of each scenario. For example, if working on Nepal: The narrator might mention that the namaste greeting, which involves placing the hands together before the chest and bowing slightly with a smile, shows the regional preference for a greeting that establishes personal connection without physical contact. This deeply reverent greeting shows a strong cultural value of respect, especially for elders—younger people are expected to address the eldest at a gathering first.
- Rehearse your three scenarios, complete with the narrator's explanation of the scenario and the narrator's explanation of the values shown in the scenario, until you are comfortable with the words and gestures you have learned, and the group can perform the demonstration smoothly.

## Teacher Introduction

- Lead a sensitive discussion regarding cultural comfort and discomfort, and possible responses to unfamiliar behaviors.
- Set some ground rules for expressing those responses appropriately.
- Direct students to note their responses to learning about unfamiliar cultural practices using the list of cues below.
- Oversee student performances.

## Student Directions

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### Context of Cultural Comfort and Discomfort

When we encounter things that are unfamiliar to us, such as behaviors that diverge from our own cultural training, we may experience various emotions and sensations. Some people feel queasy when encountering unfamiliar behavior; others may feel intensely curious, even euphoric. As you witness your classmates' performances of various greeting rituals, note your physical and emotional responses.

#### Physical responses could include:

elevated pulse

sweating

queasiness

feeling shaky or disoriented

feeling euphoric

#### Emotional responses could include feeling:

curious

excited

uncomfortable  
offended  
amused  
bored  
relaxed  
comfortable  
inspired  
frightened  
alarmed  
surprised  
startled  
joyful

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### Perform & Observe

- Each group performs its greeting ritual in turn. The event sequence is:
- Narrator introduces scenario (old friends run into each other at bakery)
- Actors perform the greeting
- Audience takes reflective notes: Of the physical and emotional responses noted in the list above, which do you experience when you observe this greeting ritual? Or what other physical or emotional responses do you experience when you observe this greeting ritual?
- Narrator explains the cultural values expressed in the greeting
- Actors perform the greeting a second time
- Audience takes reflective notes: What do you experience physically and emotionally the second time you witness the greeting? Is this different from the first time? Do you think your experience is impacted by understanding the values expressed by the greeting? How and why?
- When all groups have performed their greetings, all take a moment to reflect in writing.
- Pleasant & Unpleasant Responses to Unfamiliar Cultures: Prewrite #2
  - Note which customs seem especially appealing to you. Why do you think these customs draw you the most?
  - Note which customs, if any, are associated with a negative emotional response for you, those that you feel uncomfortable or offended when watching. Why do you think that these negative emotional responses arise for you?

## Session Three

### Teacher Introduction

- Remind students of expectations for prewriting.

### Student Directions

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#### Blast from the Past: Prewrite #3

See if you can remember what you were taught as a child about how to meet new people, and how to greet those you already knew. What did you learn? Did you learn it through direct instruction, or



just by watching other people? Who taught you, and/or to whom did you look for example? Parents? Older siblings? Grandparents? Aunts and uncles? Family friends? Others? What is the first thing you remember about instructions for meeting and greeting people? How did the instructions you received, whether directly, or indirectly, change over time? What different circumstances or relationships were you instructed (directly or indirectly) to account for in how you interact with people when you meet/greet them? Age? Status? Gender? Family member vs. non-relative? Other criteria? Did you learn different behaviors, directly and/or indirectly, in your home culture and in your school culture? What are the differences between what you learned at home and what you learned at school? What were you told at home about the reasons for the greeting behaviors that were considered polite? What were you told at school about the reasons for the greeting behaviors that were considered polite? Were you given any reasons for the polite behaviors? If you weren't told what the cultural values behind the behaviors were, could it be that this itself revealed a cultural value, such as *children should obey adults without question*? At home and at school, did what adults told you about appropriate behavior seem to match their behavior?

Write down as much as you remember. Don't worry about writing great prose right now—just get your thoughts down on paper.

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#### Connecting Past and Present: Prewrite #4

Keeping in mind what you just wrote about greetings in your culture growing up at home and at school, and revisiting your notes from the performances as necessary, think on paper about the questions below. Again, no need to write perfect prose right now—just get your thoughts on paper.

- What surprised you most in learning about the country whose greetings you performed? How did you feel when acting out the greetings of another culture? How did you feel physically? What about emotionally?
- For which countries was your experience of watching the second performance of a greeting very different than watching the first performance? Why?
- With which cultures, if any, are you now more comfortable than you were before this exercise? Why?
- With which cultures, if any, are you now less comfortable than you were before this exercise? Why?
- Which of the countries you saw greetings performed for do you think you would be most comfortable traveling to? Moving to? In which culture do you think you would be least at home? Why? How do your cultures of origin, at home and at school, relate to which cultures are more and less comfortable for you to encounter?
- What do you do when you run into a friend you haven't seen in a while? What about when you greet your grandparents? What variables affect how you greet people? Age? Family member vs. non-family-member? Old friend or new acquaintance? Gender? Status? Ethnicity? Language? Religion?
- What cultural values are expressed in your own customary greeting style for different kinds of people?
- Overall, how do you think your own cultural background influenced your encounter with other cultures' ways of meeting and greeting?

### Teacher Introduction

- To prepare students for small-group discussion, establish or remind students of ground rules for fair, respectful discussion of sensitive issues.
  - Interpersonal strategies to address include:
    - the use of I statements ("I feel freaked out when people are speaking languages I can't understand");
    - the avoidance of you statements ("You just don't like people from the Middle East");
    - the avoidance of labeling and/or name-calling ("You're a hypocrite" or "Those people are weirdos");



- and possibly some conversation about the value of active listening (listening attentively instead of thinking about what to say next while the other person is talking, and demonstrating understanding of the other party's point—"I hear what you're saying . . ."—before launching into why you feel differently—" . . . but for me it's more like . . .").

## Student Directions

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### Comparing Notes with Your Group

Reunite with your performance group to compare notes from prewrites so far. Identify and discuss some similarities and differences in the cultures of your families of origin, and how these colored your responses to the cultural rituals you've encountered in this exercise.

### End of Session Three and Homework

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## Teacher Introduction

- Remind students that the final writing assignment is to be completed with the help of all their notes and prewrites from the previous classes. If students get stuck, encourage them to consult their notes and prewrites.

## Student Directions

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### Putting It All Together: Personal Essay

Situation: Imagine that a local newspaper has sponsored a writing contest in which students are asked to submit essays regarding their cultural experiences at school.

Assignment: Write a personal essay in five-paragraph form. Remember that the readers of this essay will not have participated in your classroom exercise, so you'll have to provide the context so that readers can understand the experiences you're describing.

Essay prompt: How has your cultural background so far in life colored your responses to unfamiliar cultures and customs? How do you predict that your responses to unfamiliar cultures might change as you get older?

Tools: Use your notes from class and your prewrite pages to get the essay started.

### Essay Ingredients

Paragraph 1: Begin the essay in a moment of scene, of physical interaction—since an unfolding scene is much more interesting than an abstract concept, a scene makes an excellent hook, and draws the reader in to the essay.

Continue your introductory paragraph with some context about where this moment of scene occurred.

Arrive at a thesis in which you explain something about how your own cultural background conditioned your responses to learning about new cultures.

Paragraphs 2–4: Give evidence for your thesis. In a personal essay, evidence could mean describing a childhood memory, or sharing with the reader something your grandmother always says, or describing your physical response to encountering a new custom.

Paragraph 5: Conclude your essay by predicting, based on your cultural background and your experiences with this exercise, how your responses to new cultures might change over time.

Example first paragraph:

*Hook: Scene:* "When I bowed to my friend Bob, I started giggling, and I felt like I was about to start laughing hysterically."

*Introduction: Context:* "My father always used to tell me to stand up straight when I met a person. He said it was disrespectful to slouch. He used to harangue all of us kids, me and all my five brothers and sisters, every day about our posture. At the dinner table: 'Sit up straight!' When we were doing our homework: 'Sit up straight!' And when we visited our grandparents, he would poke me in the ribs and whisper, 'Stand up straight!' So when I had to bow very deeply, to bend low to show the Nepalese *namaste* greeting for a class exercise about greetings around the world, I felt ridiculous. In my family, an upright physical posture equals respect, so it was hard for me to understand how in another culture a deep bow could show respect. I could understand bowing as a sign of respect in theory, but physically, it just felt wrong to me. However, it was easier for me to understand bowing as a sign of respect once I knew that the *namaste* bow is to not just the person, but to God as expressed in that person. In my family, we are taught to kneel at church, so kneeling or bowing to God is easier for me to understand than bowing to a person. "

*Thesis: Claim:* "Once I learned what *namaste* means, the idea of bowing to another person felt more familiar to me, because I could connect it to something my family does at church."