

IR-1: Trash Can Visual



Elements of Culture

Culture is one of those commonly used words that we think we understand until we are asked to define it. A simple definition of culture is “The way of life of a group of people.”

But what exactly is meant by “way of life”? This definition includes many smaller **cultural traits** that make up all aspects of life, including but not limited to language, religion, form of government, clothing, food, and types of entertainment. Sometimes culture also is referred to as a **culture complex** because of all the unique components that make up an overarching social structure.

Understanding the elements of culture is an easy way to compare and analyze different culture groups. The elements of culture can be classified by using the letters A–L.

12 Elements of Culture	
A: appearance	G: government type
B: belief system	H: housing and type of architecture
C: communication ; specifically, language used	I: information that is learned
D: dates or historical events	J: jobs the majority of people have
E: entertainment	K: kind of physical environment (topography and climate)
F: food	L: leftovers ; anything not included above

Appearance encompasses clothing; body piercing and tattoos; jewelry; and genetic features such as hair color, eye color, and bone structure. Clothing includes normal or typical everyday wear or clothing worn for special occasions or ceremonies.

Belief systems focus on religions and moral teachings. There are many clearly defined religions in the world (Lesson 6). The concept of life after death, for example, is present in both Christianity and Hinduism, but each religion has its own interpretation of the belief. Some belief systems such as Confucianism and Taoism are considered a way of life rather than an organized religious system.

IR-2: Elements of Culture

Arabic:

مرحبا. كيف حالك؟

Chinese:

你好。你怎麼樣？

English:

Hello. How are you?

Russian:

Здравствуйте. Как дела?

Spanish:

Hola. ¿Cómo está?

The element of communication is summarized by the language used to communicate. Alphabets used by people in regions throughout the world can be different. In fact, the Chinese alphabet has characters instead of letters. Linguists use the term **pictogram** to identify each component of the Chinese alphabet because each symbol represents an idea rather than a single sound.

Consider the phrase “Hello. How are you?” Study the text box to compare how this phrase would be written in different languages. Do you see similarities in any of the letters (characters) or punctuation? How would you describe the differences?

Every culture has significant dates or historical events that help to define the people. In terms of the culture of the United States, General George Washington crossing the Delaware River during the Revolutionary War, John Hancock signing the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and the tragic images of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, are significant dates or events in the history and culture of the United States.

Entertainment varies from culture to culture. Some cultures engage in traditional folklore dances and ceremonies. Some cultures have significant activities revolving around music or drama. Other cultures have incorporated sporting events into their culture. What do you like to do for entertainment? Play video games? Write poetry? Watch movies?

Food is something every person requires to survive, yet food types vary significantly from culture to culture. Insects and other invertebrates are a part of the regular diet of many cultures throughout the world. Some people eat meat, including beef, pork, or poultry. Some cultures are vegetarian and refrain from consuming not only meat, but also products made from animal fat or animal by-products.

Every civilization establishes its own form of government. Leaders, laws, and societal procedures are defined by each country. For example, laws and governmental procedures are very different in the communist regimes of North Korea and Cuba, the theocracy of Iran, and the democracy of the United States.

Housing includes the types of structures in which people live as well as the building materials used. Wooden A-frame houses are common in the northeastern United States because wood is abundant and the sloping roof helps to keep snow from accumulating. Structures in the arid southwestern United States are built of adobe. Other types of buildings also are considered in this element of culture. Public buildings such as sporting arenas and fields, opera houses, downtown skyscrapers, and shopping malls would fit into this category.

IR-2: Elements of Culture

Information refers to what people are taught. Information can be learned during formal education in a school or a religious setting. Students receive a formal education when they learn to read and write, as well as when they learn the intricacies of Shakespearean literature. Informal education, usually taught within a family setting, might include things such as table manners, tying shoes, and brushing teeth.

The level of development of a country is determined in part by the type of job the majority of people have. Generalizations can be made for every country. For example, the majority of people in the United States have jobs in the tertiary sector of the economy. There are still farmers and fishermen, but this sector represents less than 3 percent of the total work force in the United States. There are still manufacturing jobs that produce a variety of American-made products, but the secondary sector employs less than 25 percent of the total work force.

The kind of environment addresses the physical climate and landscape of the country. Does the country have sufficient arable land to produce enough food to feed its own people? Is the land covered by rain forest, desert, or tundra? How much annual precipitation is there? What is the average annual temperature? These indicators all address the kind of physical environment of a country.

The element of culture labeled as leftovers is a category for any part of culture that does not fit into one of the previous categories. Most items in this category are items of technology, such as television sets, cell phones, and computers. We may get entertainment, communicate, and learn new information using these examples of technology, but the actual item would fit into the leftovers category.

IR-3: Nailati Characteristics—Reading to Learn

Use the following note-taking guide while reading IR-4. What you record in each section will be based on the text you read.

Element of Culture	Text Example
Appearance	
Belief	
Communication	
Dates	
Entertainment	
Food	
Government	
Housing	
Information	
Jobs	
Kind	
Leftovers	

IR-3: Nailati Characteristics—Reading to Learn—Answer Key

Use the following note-taking guide while reading IR-4. What you record in each section will be based on the text you read.

Element of Culture	Text Example
Appearance	<i>Not found in text</i>
Belief	<i>Not found in text</i>
Communication	<i>Not found in text</i>
Dates	<i>Relative times and dates such as "antiquity," "today," and "ancient" may be used. Teacher may have to assist students in completing this.</i>
Entertainment	<i>Opera, symphony, Olympic sporting events have been hosted</i>
Food	<i>Olive oil, pasta, cheese, wine, and fresh vegetables</i>
Government	<i>First to develop a system of representatives elected by its citizens to govern the masses. Currently, political corruption, debt, and organized crime.</i>
Housing	<i>Live in cities</i>
Information	<i>Open ended</i>
Jobs	<i>Fashion industry, 71% service sector, 2% involved in agriculture, industrial economy, tourism</i>
Kind	<i>Rugged mountains and only a few coastal plains, Mediterranean climate, cold and snowy in the northern subregion in winter. One city is sinking because of subsidence. Southern subregion is dry year-round.</i>
Leftovers	<i>Trace their history to antiquity, known for production of luxury and sports cars, fashion, and manufacturing yachts</i>

The Nailati

The Nailati (naa-LAH-tee) are a proud and historic people, tracing their heritage back to antiquity. The Nailati people settled in a region dominated by rugged mountains and only a few coastal plains. The climate is predominantly Mediterranean, although in the northern subregion it gets quite cold and snows extensively in the winter. The southern subregion is much drier year-round. The Nailati people live mostly in cities. One city in the northeastern region is sinking due to subsidence. A northern city is famous for its contributions to the fashion industry. Its capital city, in the central region, has been the home to emperors, kings, popes, and presidents.

The homeland of the Nailati is considered to be the cradle of civilization in its region because the Nailati were the first to develop a system of government that comprises representatives elected by its citizens to govern the masses. Today, however, the Nailati people are frustrated because of political corruption, a huge government debt, and the influence of an organized-crime structure that influences people throughout the world.

The ancient people of Nailati created roads and water delivery systems that are used today by people who live thousands of miles from the hearth of Nailati culture. The Nailati people created the opera and the symphony, both of which are enjoyed today throughout the world. The Nailati also have made many scientific contributions, including the telescope, electric battery, radio, and nuclear reactor. In addition, the founder of microscopic anatomy and the codeveloper of quantum theory are of Nailati origin. The Nailati have hosted international Olympic sporting events with some of the same rules, entertainment values, and venues that were present during the time of the gladiators.

The Nailati enjoy a diet that includes olive oil, pasta, cheese, and wine. While the diet of the Nailati is rich in seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables, only about 2% of the work force is involved in agricultural activities, mostly in the southern region. In the northern region, the Nailati people have more of a diversified and industrial economy. About 71% of the Nailati people have service sector jobs. Internationally, the Nailati are known for the production of luxury and sports cars, fashion, and yachts. Tourism, however, is the fastest growing and most profitable sector of the national economy.