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WHAT IS MULTICULTURALISM?

Almost every country in the world is multicultural. This means that there are people from many backgrounds living in a particular country which can then be said to have many cultures. Multiculturalism means many cultures. The UK is a multicultural country because people from many other countries have settled and live here.

To define culture can be difficult but if we just list the factors which make up culture you will see that it is easier. Culture includes:

- z language,
- z religion,
- z food,
- z music,
- z art and crafts.

So when we talk about people and their culture we are talking about all these factors and more. It is easy to see the difference between cultures if we concentrate on particular aspects like language. It is also easy to see that the UK is a multicultural country by a visiting the local supermarket. There are many types of food from around the world.

People are divided as to the advantages and disadvantages of multiculturalism. Some people think that in the end every country will end up like the former Yugoslavia with people of different cultures fighting for the right to live the way they want to. Other people think that multiculturalism offers a wonderful opportunity in which we can all enjoy the advantages which many cultures can offer.

Exercise

1. What is multiculturalism?
2. What factors determine culture? List some of your own which do not appear in the list above.
3. How multicultural is the UK compared to other European countries?

Social scientists have offered a number of definitions of human culture, reflecting various schools of thought. Edward Burnett Tylor, in his *Primitive Culture* (1871), provided what has been termed the classic definition, according to which culture

includes all capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Every human society has its own particular culture, which overlaps to some extent with other systems. Variation occurs according:

- z to physical habitats and resources;
- z to the range of possibilities inherent in various areas of activity, such as language, rituals and customs;
- z to the manufacture and use of tools;
- z to the degree of social development.

The attitudes, values, ideals, and beliefs of the individual are greatly influenced by the culture in which he or she lives, and an individual may, of course, live in or travel among several different cultures.

There are two ways in which people see and interpret other cultures. These are:

- z **Ethnocentrism** which is the tendency to interpret or evaluate other cultures in terms of one's own. People who are in this category are more limited and tend to see other cultures as alien, although they do sometimes adopt some practices of other cultures.
- z **Cultural relativism**, on the other hand, is a comparative approach that derives from an understanding and appreciation of cultures different from one's own. These types of people find it easier to look at other cultures with a sympathetic eye and do not see their own culture as unchanging and 'written in stone'.

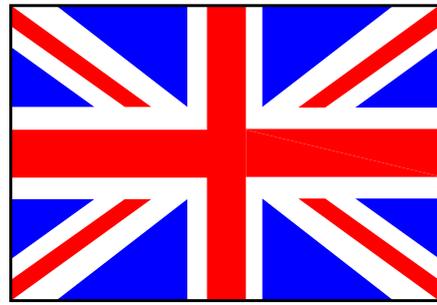
Exercise

1. What is ethnocentrism?
2. How does cultural relativism differ from ethnocentrism?
3. How useful is it to study other cultures?
4. Can a culture exist without changing or being influenced by other cultures? Why?

People often talk about being British, but what is British? To many people this is a fundamental question but a difficult one to answer. Not only do people talk about being British but also about being English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish. Perhaps fifty years ago it might have been easier to talk about what it means to be British but with social change over the past 20 years especially it is now more difficult. Even the idea of Britain as a separate nation is difficult because borders and boundaries are not as clear-cut as they used to be.

The former Conservative cabinet minister Norman Tebbit applied the now famous 'cricket test' in which he said that the real test of being English is that everyone should support the English cricket team. If they supported India, Pakistan, or the West Indies, this showed their lack of commitment to England.

In 1990 when the Gulf War was being fought many people thought that the Muslim community in Britain were a threat because they were of the same religion as Saddam Hussein. This association was also used during the Salman Rushdie affair. Iran declared that the novelist should be killed because he spoke against Islam. Again many people in Britain thought that because Iran was Muslim then all the Muslims in Britain would also agree with this viewpoint.



Some people think that to be British means to agree with everything that the British government decides. But many white people disagree often with the government so this test of Britishness does not work. Events like war, (Falklands War, Gulf War), often unite a country and some of the differences within the country disappear. But this kind of unity is only temporary and after the war ends the national unity also weakens.

It is very difficult to define what is British on which all people can agree. Perhaps it is impossible to have one definition of what is British because Britain is made up of so many groups, social classes, and ideals that it is not possible to come up with one definition. It can be seen as a point of great weakness when a country cannot clearly identify itself, but on the other hand it can also be seen as a great strength because diversity often means the ability to think freely and develop better.

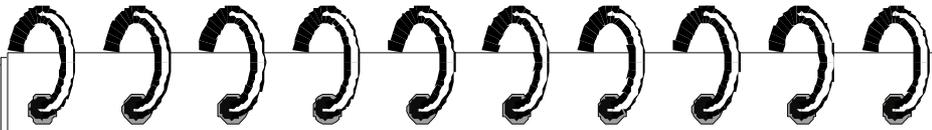
Exercise

1. What does British mean to you?
2. Are you British? Which aspects of your make-up are least British, and which most?



Exercise

1. Identify the places on the map where people you know come from.
2. Which parts of the world influence you in your everyday life; think of TV programmes, food you eat, computer games, pastimes, sports, and hobbies.
3. Where would you like to live if you had to live outside the UK? Give reasons why.



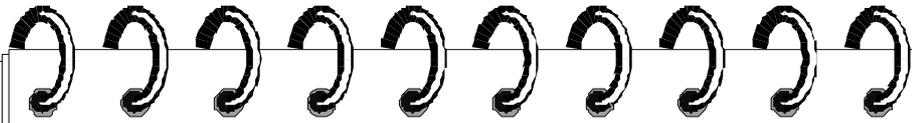
Multiculturalism is all very well but what about British culture. Yes, we can afford to enjoy other cultures but only once our culture is safe guarded. What happens to our own culture if we simply welcome every other culture. We will end up without anything which our parents would have recognised. First of all we should make sure that all the things which make Britain great are not only maintained but guaranteed. And once we have safe guarded our own national institutions and symbols then we can welcome other cultures into our country. But other cultures should never be allowed to become more important than our own because every country should keep its identity clearly its own.

For one thing English is the main language spoken throughout the world. And anyone who comes to live in the UK should be expected to learn and speak English before they speak their own language. For another thing, the world looks to our Queen with envy and our democratic institutions are a model for other countries to follow. Anyone who lives in the UK should be proud of this country.

I am not against other cultures or against other ways of living but if someone wants to live in the UK then they should live as we do. If I went to live in another country I would live according to that country's laws and customs, and I expect the same for people who live in this country.

Exercise

1. Which things make up British culture?
2. How far do you think people who come to the UK should integrate into British culture?
3. What are the advantages of having one strong and dominant culture in a country?



Well I think that the best thing which has ever happened in the UK is that we are a multicultural country. The world is mirrored in every town in Britain and that is a wonderful thing. You can go out and eat food from countries spread across the world and see people on the street from all over the world.

People who do not like multiculturalism are just living in the past and they should realise that times have changed. Almost every country is multicultural. This is inevitable because modern transport and technology has made the world a very small place. We are very lucky because we can enjoy things which our parents could not even the dream about.

Of course multiculturalism cuts both ways. Just as other people come to this country and can enjoy our culture, in the same way we can go to other countries and enjoy their cultures as well. Some people who do not go on foreign holidays can see something of other cultures without leaving their home town.

I can't see any disadvantages in multiculturalism because variety is the spice of life.

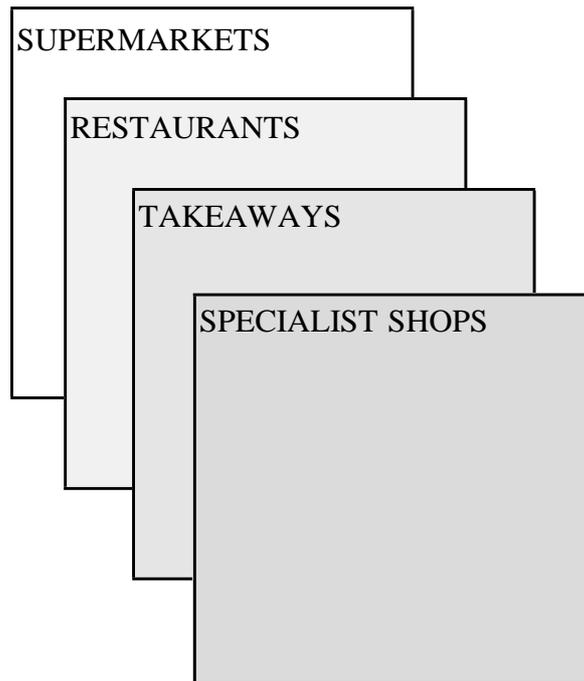
Exercise

1. Which other cultures are strongly evident in your town or city?
2. How do these cultures affect you?
3. How does multiculturalism help people to understand the way other people live?

INVESTIGATE MULTICULTURALISM FOOD

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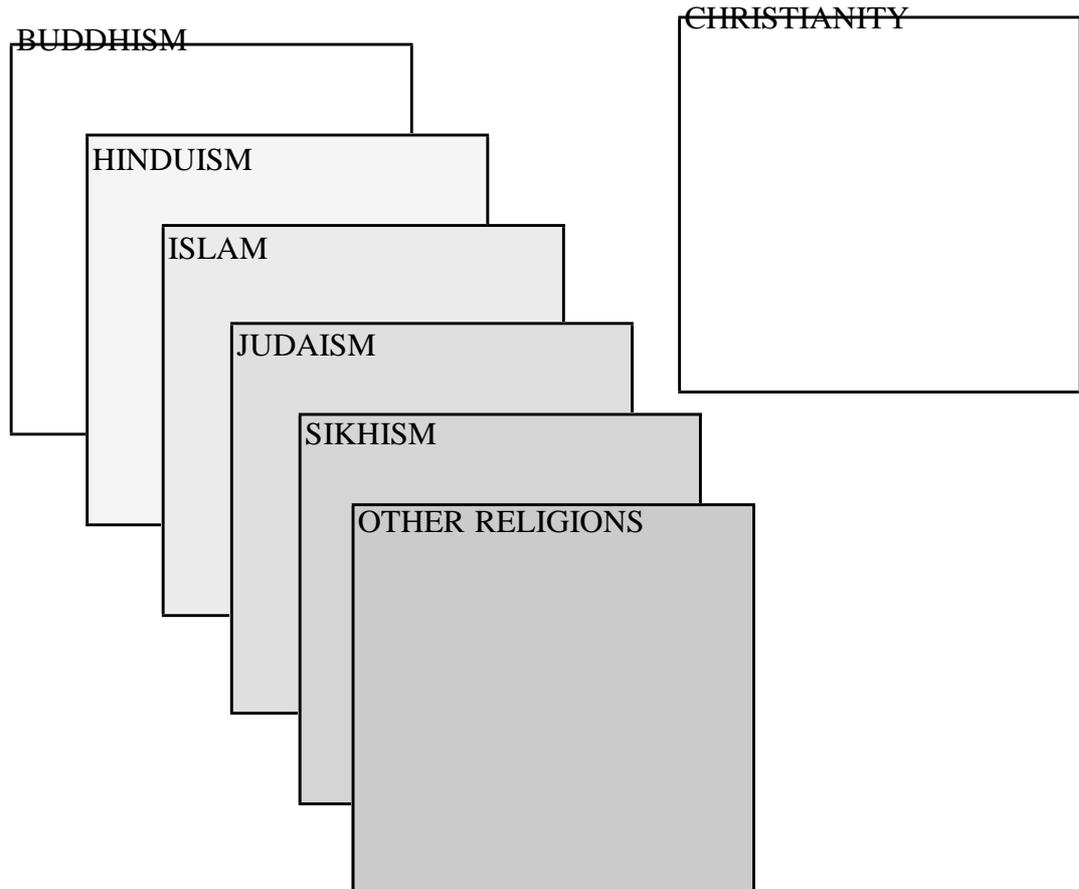
Investigate for evidence of multiculturalism by looking at the types of food available in your area. Use local directories, the library, local newspapers and your own knowledge of the area where you live to assemble a short report.



1. Using the headings above write a paragraph each on what evidence you found to show that food from other cultures is present and available.
2. Draw a chart to show how many restaurants there are in your area selling food from different countries; e.g. Indian, Chinese, Italian etc.
3. How many specialist shops are there?
4. How much of the specialist food provided by supermarkets do you think is made for people from other cultures and how much is for the consumption of indigenous British people?
5. Make a list of foods which originate from outside the UK but which because of their popularity can be considered a part of British cuisine.

INVESTIGATE MULTICULTURALISM RELIGION

Investigate the incidence of other religions and religious belief in your area. Use local directories, the library, local newspapers and your own knowledge of the area where you live to assemble a short report.

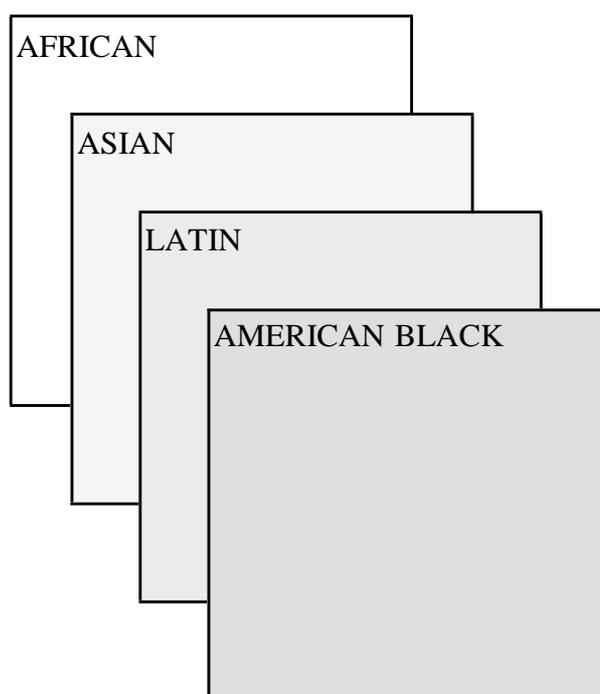


1. Which religions are evident in your area?
2. Which religions are the most popular?
3. Make a list of the places of worship of these religions.
4. Find out and list the main beliefs of two of the religions which are evident in your area. Your own religion should not be one of these.
5. Are there any communities in your area which are from another culture but who are Christians? Explain this.

INVESTIGATE MULTICULTURALISM MUSIC

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Music is one of the things which is very intermixed in British culture. There is evidence of African, Asian, Latin (Spanish), and American Black influence, among others, on many British bands, both white and black. Use the library, local newspapers and your own knowledge of the area where you live to assemble a short report.

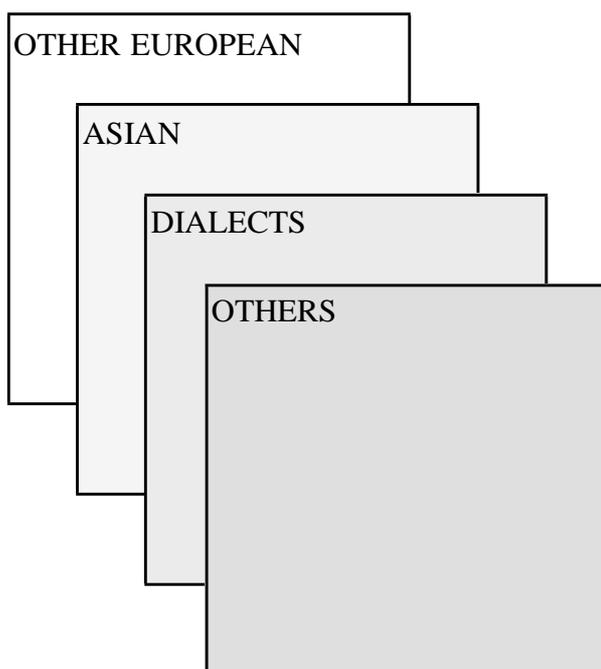


1. Select one of your favourite bands and look closely at the influences of other cultures on the way they perform their music, either lyrics or instruments.
2. What is traditionally British music?
3. Find out what sort of music people from other cultures who live in your area listen to.
4. Are there any specialist music shops in your area? What does this tell you about the musical tastes of the people who live in your area.

INVESTIGATE MULTICULTURALISM LANGUAGE

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Language is one of the most obvious ways to find out about whether people from other cultures live in your area. Use local directories, the library, local newspapers and your own knowledge of the area where you live to assemble a short report.



1. Which other languages are spoken in your area? Select the most popular 3 languages not including English.
2. Are there any foreign language newspapers or information leaflets available in your area? What are their main purpose?
3. How many people do you know who can speak more than one language? What does this tell you about multiculturalism?
4. What limitations are experienced by people whose first language is not English?

