

Using Building Bridges

Why This Workbook?

The lessons in this book will

- Help students better understand their own culture and how it has shaped them.
- Help students begin to understand the perspectives of other cultures, leading to increased respect for those who are different from them—in the classroom and worldwide.
- Provide an increased awareness of the value and practicality of social service within and beyond the bounds of schools.

Why Culture-Related Lessons?

Simply put, understanding the concept of culture facilitates living with others of different backgrounds—within the classroom, in the local community, and on the world-wide scale of political, social, and economic interaction.

Who Is This Book For?

This book is designed for easy adaptation by teachers in grades 6 through 12.

Where Did the Lessons Come From?

The lessons are adapted from the Peace Corps' cross-cultural training workbook "Culture Matters," designed for Peace Corps Volunteers; and from "Insights from the Field," "Looking at Ourselves and Others," and "Voices from the Field," all of which are World Wise Schools curriculum resources designed for classroom use. These publications are available for free downloading from the Web. We hope that you will use them to build on the lessons offered here. For a complete list of these publications and their Web addresses, see page 6.

What's the Peace Corps' Role?

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy launched the Peace Corps to promote understanding between the predominant culture in the United States and cultures around the world—in addition to providing assistance to developing countries. Since then, almost 200,000 Americans have lived and served overseas in more than 130 countries. With its cumulative experience and its ongoing mission, the Peace Corps is uniquely positioned to offer lessons that promote cultural understanding.

What's for Younger Students? For Older Students?

High school: All lessons in this workbook can be adapted easily for use in grades 9–12.

Middle school: Teachers may find lessons 1–5, 7–9, and 13 more suited to students in grades 6–8.

Terms in the Margins

Throughout this book, two terms—enduring understandings and essential questions—are used to focus lessons on the "big ideas" about culture. They are derived from the

Building Bridges: A Peace Corps Classroom Guide to Cross-Culture Understanding

curriculum design framework “Understanding by Design,” developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD], 1998).

Enduring understandings are important ideas or core processes that have lasting value beyond the classroom. An enduring understanding is what we want students to understand and be able to use years from now, after they have forgotten the details.

Example:

—Understanding someone from another culture can be difficult because people see the world, themselves, and others in fundamentally different ways.

Essential questions are provocative queries designed to guide teaching and provoke students’ interest. They are open-ended and do not have an obvious right answer.

Examples:

—Why doesn’t everyone see things the way I do?

—How do my beliefs and values influence the way I behave?

—Is there a set of common American beliefs and values?

The Major Enduring Understandings Addressed in This Book:

Everyone has a culture. It shapes how we see ourselves, others, and the world.

Culture is like an iceberg. Some aspects are visible; others are beneath the surface.

Invisible aspects of culture influence and cause the visible ones.

Understanding someone from another culture can be hard. People really do see the world in fundamentally different ways. People behave as they do because of the things they believe in and value.

It’s easy to misinterpret things people do in a cross-cultural setting. To keep from misunderstanding the behavior of others, you have to try to see the world from their point of view, not yours.

Crossing cultures isn’t easy. It’s a complex process where understanding the context is everything.

Understanding and respecting cultural differences can lead to greater harmony in school, the community, and the world.

See *Insights From the Field*, Unit 2: Culture, for an in-depth treatment of these enduring understandings.

Quotes for Thought

Each night I sit with these four old men and learn their language. We go over simple phrases like, “How is the body?” “The body is well.” “I tell God thank you.” But it is this small effort that brings us together.

—Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Sierra Leone

Building Bridges: A Peace Corps Classroom Guide to Cross-Culture Understanding

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.

—Nelson Mandela, Former President, South Africa