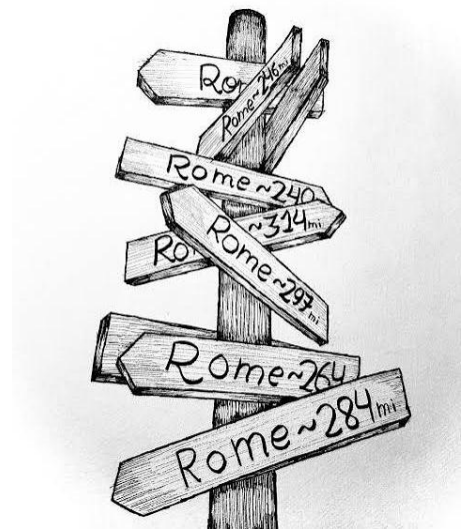


Are all cultures equal?

‘All roads lead to Rome.’

The above proverb has its roots in the centralisation and road-building of the pagan Roman Empire 2,000 years ago. Then all roads did literally lead to Rome.

The origin of the idiom “All roads lead to Rome” is in the historical fact of the extensive road system of the Roman Empire. Rome was at the centre of one of the world’s greatest empires, and to be in a position to dominate it, the Romans built an elaborate system of roads stretching over their vast dominions.



The proverb now means that there are many ways of achieving the same goal.

The idiom “All roads lead to Rome” expresses the idea that several paths, methods, or approaches will all ultimately reach the same point.

It expresses that although individuals may take different approaches or journeys, they are often working toward a common end or result. The phrase highlights flexibility and universality, reassuring that there is no single “correct” way to achieve success or resolution. In a broader sense, it can also imply inevitability, meaning that regardless of the starting point or chosen course, the outcome is already somewhat assured.

The idea that ‘all roads lead to Rome’ is held by many when it comes to faith. Many believe that it doesn’t matter which religion or faith you follow, you will get to heaven in the end.

But this is not the message that Jesus taught. Jesus told us that there is only one way to heaven, through belief in Him, and there is only one path – the narrow path.

The true story of “I Dared to Call Him Father”, which you are studying this term, is the story of the wife of a high-ranking Muslim government official in Pakistan. The story describes the struggle of Bilquis Sheikh as she was drawn into the light of Christ, and the persecution that followed after rejecting the religious side of her cultural tradition. Other books telling stories of people who discovered the narrow path are ‘The God who answers by Fire’ (Year 9) and ‘Christ’s Witchdoctor’ (Year 10). If you missed reading these in earlier years, ask your teacher to access them for you from the beacon Media website.

The idea that ‘all roads lead to Rome’ has crept into society and government.

When it comes to immigration, should a government allow endless immigration of any person from any country in the world, even from countries that have different ideologies and values to our own?

If all religions are equal, then it doesn't matter. But are they?

Consider societies based on Judaeo-Christian values compared with those based on Sharia law for example. Consider countries where governments suppress women's rights forcing them to dress in black, covering themselves from head to foot so that only their eyes can be seen. Some countries still practice forced child marriages.

Are we prepared to allow these cultures to bring these practices with them and continue practicing them?

Religion is part of culture. So are food, dress, art and music. When it comes to these other aspects of culture, we should welcome and learn from people from other cultures. Who doesn't like a delicious new and exciting culinary sensation? But what about practices, often having roots in religions other than Christianity? What about practice that we would see as opposed to Biblical values?

Multiculturalism is the view that cultures, races, and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve acknowledgment of their differences within a dominant political culture.

Multiculturalism addresses cultural pluralism in modern democracies. Instead of assimilating different cultures into a unified national culture, multiculturalism promotes maintaining particular identities within the larger society. (Britannica)

In terms of immigration, how fair is it to force citizens of the host country to accept ALL aspects of a newcomer's culture? For example, in a Judeo-Christian culture, would a 5 am 'call to prayer' over a loud speaker from a mosque be acceptable?

Consider these cultural practices still observed today:

Foot Binding - China

While no longer widely practiced, foot binding still lingers in some rural pockets of China, and its scars are very much alive in older generations. This centuries-old tradition involved tightly binding the feet of young girls to change their shape, creating what was once considered a symbol of beauty and status

Bullfighting - Spain

Bullfighting is often described as a dance, an art form—but it ends in blood. In this spectacle, matadors face off against bulls, taunting them, injuring them, and finally killing them in front of cheering crowds. In Spain, it's still considered a proud tradition, taught from a young age and protected as part of the culture.

Trokosi - West Africa

In parts of Ghana, Togo, and Benin, there's a deeply disturbing ritual called trokosi, where young girls are sent to live in shrines as offerings to atone for the sins of family members. These girls, some as young as seven, live in servitude for years—or even their entire lives.

Honour killing – Some Islamic countries

In some cultures, a family's "honour" is considered more valuable than a person's life. Honour killings are acts of murder—often of women—committed by relatives who believe the victim has brought shame to the family. This could be for something as simple as refusing an arranged marriage or speaking to the wrong person.

While illegal in most countries, honour killings still occur in parts of the Middle East, South Asia, and even among immigrant communities in the West. The worst part? They're often not prosecuted or are even condoned by local communities. The idea that someone's life is worth less than a reputation is terrifying. And it shows how deeply rooted toxic beliefs can be.

Dog meat festivals China

The Yulin Dog Meat Festival in China is infamous for the cruelty involved—thousands of dogs are slaughtered and consumed over several days. Many of these dogs are stolen pets, kept in cages, and brutally killed.

Neck elongation - Myanmar and Thailand

Among the Kayan people in Myanmar and parts of Thailand, some women wear brass neck rings from childhood that gradually push down their collarbones, giving the appearance of an elongated neck. It's seen as a symbol of beauty and cultural identity. But it's not without cost. The rings can deform the body and make it difficult to remove them later in life.

Whipping of boys (Some African tribes)

In certain rites of passage, boys are subjected to brutal whippings to prove their strength or manhood. These ceremonies are often public, with families watching—and cheering—while boys bleed. Scars are worn like badges of honour, but the psychological trauma runs deep. The idea is to toughen them up for adulthood, but it often teaches that pain equals pride. The line between tradition and abuse gets blurry very fast. There's got to be a better way to raise confident, resilient men than beating the sensitivity out of them.

<https://wiseoldowl.net/15-disturbing-traditions-still-alive-today-youll-question-humanity/>

And from the past ...

Cannibalism in Fiji

Death by 'pointing the bone' in Australian Aboriginal culture

Some argue that multiculturalism may erode the common good by prioritizing specific groups over and above the general population. Others suggest certain minority groups may require more than just recognition, such as special group rights, to maintain their distinct identities.

Questions

1. If you were Prime Minister, faced with many people from all around the world wanting to come and live in your country, what policy would you promote regarding immigration?
3. What are the positives and negatives of immigration?
4. What could a potential problem be with governments believing that “all roads lead to Rome?”

Culture Clash

Definition: a conflict arising from the interaction of people with different cultural values

Culture clash happens when people from different backgrounds bump into each other with completely different rulebooks. Sometimes it shows up as awkward silence when someone’s directness feels rude, or when a neighbourhood event accidentally ignores a tradition that matters deeply to half the people there.

You’ll find it in boardrooms, classrooms, online comment sections, anywhere expectations collide hard enough to spark confusion or actual conflict. The root cause? Rarely malice. More often it’s two groups following different scripts without realizing the other side is doing the same thing.

These clashes surface in familiar places:

Workplace tension — Your manager’s casual “how was your weekend?” feels invasive if you’re from a culture that keeps work and personal life in separate boxes.

Immigrant integration — Newcomers face pushback when host country norms around punctuality or child discipline contradict values they’ve held for generations.

Product naming disasters — A brand name that sounds smart in one language becomes offensive or ridiculous in another.

Nonverbal confusion — Eye contact means respect in some cultures, defiance in others. Routine conversations turn into distrust without anyone understanding why.

<https://lifebred.org/culture-clash/>

Questions

1. What is culture clash?
2. The author says that 'culture clash' rarely comes out of malice. What does he mean by this? How does culture class happen?
3. Give two examples of how different cultures may see things differently.
4. 'Fiji time' is part of the Fijian culture. What culture clash problem might occur when a Fijian takes on paid employment in a country that observes strict punctuality?
5. Japanese people on holiday in Fiji are used to everything 'running like clockwork' at home. What problems might the Japanese encounter in Fiji?
6. How should the Japanese and the Fijian respond in each of the above two situations?

Cultural Traits

What Is a Cultural Trait?

A cultural trait refers to a characteristic, belief, or behaviour that is shared by a particular group of people and is passed down through generations. These traits shape how individuals within a culture interact, think, and express themselves. Unlike biological traits, cultural traits are learned and can vary significantly between different societies. They include everything from language and religion to social norms and values.

Cultural traits are essential for understanding diversity and fostering cross-cultural communication. They help explain why people from different backgrounds may have different expectations, behaviors, and attitudes. For example, in some cultures, it's common to greet others with a handshake, while in others, a bow or kiss on the cheek is more appropriate.

Examples of Cultural Traits Around the World

Cultural traits vary widely across the globe, reflecting unique historical, geographical, and social influences. Here are some notable examples:

Japan: Punctuality is highly valued, and arriving late to an appointment is considered rude. Public transportation is often used for short distances, and personal space is respected.

Mexico: Family is central to social life, and extended family gatherings are common. Food plays a significant role in celebrations, and meals are often shared with large groups.

Germany: Direct communication is the norm, and people often express opinions openly. Work-life balance is important, and employees may take frequent breaks.

India: Hierarchy is deeply ingrained, with respect for elders and authority figures. Guest hospitality is a strong cultural value, and meals are often served with elaborate rituals.

Types of Cultural Traits

Cultural traits can be categorized into several types, each influencing different aspects of life. Here's a breakdown:

Type	Description	Example
Social Norms	Expected behaviours and practices within a society.	Wearing formal attire to a wedding in many cultures.
Values	Beliefs about what is important or desirable.	Honesty and integrity as core values in some cultures.
Language	Communication methods and expressions.	Using polite phrases like "please" and "thank you" in many societies.
Religion	Spiritual beliefs and practices.	Observing Ramadan with fasting and prayer in Muslim cultures.

Why Are Cultural Traits Important?

Understanding cultural traits is crucial for several reasons. First, it helps in cross-cultural communication, ensuring that interactions are respectful and effective. Second, it promotes global awareness, helping individuals appreciate diversity and avoid stereotypes. Finally, it aids in business and diplomacy, as recognizing cultural differences can prevent misunderstandings and foster cooperation.

For example, in business settings, being aware of cultural traits can help managers adapt leadership styles to different teams, leading to better productivity and morale.

How to Identify Cultural Traits

Identifying cultural traits involves observing and analyzing behaviours, beliefs, and practices within a society. Here's a simple guide:

Research: Study historical, geographical, and social influences on a culture.

Observe: Pay attention to daily behaviours, such as greetings, dining habits, and social interactions.

Ask Questions: Engage with locals to understand their perspectives and values.

Compare: Use cultural frameworks to analyze similarities and differences between groups.

For instance, if you're in a new country, notice how people greet each other, whether they eat with utensils or by hand, and how they express emotions in public.

Conclusion

Cultural traits are the building blocks of human societies, shaping how people live, work, and interact. By understanding these traits, we can foster greater respect, empathy, and cooperation across cultures. Whether you're traveling, working internationally, or simply learning about the world, recognizing cultural traits can enrich your experiences and deepen your understanding of diversity.

<https://completeera.com/what-is-a-cultural-trait-definitions-and-examples-from-around-the-world/>

Questions

1. Compare cultural traits of two nationalities.
2. How can misunderstandings be overcome?
3. If you were going on a holiday to Germany, outline the research you should do before you go.