

THE WORKING  
CULTURE:  
BOOK 1

Cross-Cultural  
Communication  
for New Americans



# THE WORKING CULTURE: BOOK 1

## Cross-Cultural Communication for New Americans

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# To the Instructor

## ■ NOTE

The accompanying Teacher's Guide should be studied before the presentation of each lesson. This comprehensive guide provides complete lesson objectives and extensive culture notes with important background information and insights. The instructions for each activity give step-by-step guidance and specific factual information.

The activities in the student book are at a linguistic level accessible to the "low intermediate" student and are as self-explanatory as possible at that level. However, apparently simple activities are associated with more complex information and ideas, which are detailed in the Teacher's Guide.

## Philosophy and Approach

*The Working Culture: Cross-Cultural Communication for New Americans* is one of a two-book set of activities for guiding newcomers in their job and career plans and for enhancing the cross-cultural understanding that is needed for these plans. Although English communication is certainly *developed*, the book is *not* designed as a *language-teaching text*.

The lessons are constructed around cultural and vocational concepts and apply these thoughts, ideas, and attitudes to varying situations. The aim is to spark awareness and open up discussion of important vocational and interpersonal issues as they are found in the United States in comparison with other countries. Individual students are expected to create their own responses, just as they will find and develop varying accommodations to their life situations. The lessons succeed when critical thinking has begun, not when issues have been neatly resolved. Right answers and neatly pat solutions are not expected for many of these open-ended activities.

### **Key Features**

**Cross-cultural comparison** is emphasized. Training literature in cross-cultural communication consistently argues that the capacity for handling cultural transition is enhanced when one consciously reflects both on the home culture and the new culture.

**Practical, immediately useful information** about worklife, values, and social customs in the United States is the basis of the lessons.

**The book is a “bank” of activities and not a developmentally sequenced course.** The lessons can be sequenced to best meet the needs of the local program or classroom context.

### **Project Sponsor with major funding from the Ford Foundation**

The Consortium on Employment Communication began in 1983 with major funding from the Ford Foundation. The Consortium's goal is to link linguistic minorities with the workplace. The Consortium's activities include developing instructional resources, impacting public policy, training staff, and conducting research.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Taking a Look at Cultures

**In this chapter you will**

- learn about the word *culture* and what it means.
- think about both your own culture and the culture in the United States and compare them.
- think about ways of keeping your own customs in the United States.
- learn about some American customs.



John Pitkin

# LESSON 1: CULTURE IS . . .

## Introduction

You came to a new country. Many things are different. Life in the United States and life in your home country are not the same. What is different? The customs and the culture are different.

Culture can mean a lot of things:

- how people eat
- how people think
- how people dress
- what kinds of families people have
- what language people use and how they talk together

What American customs do you like?

---

What customs make you feel uncomfortable?

---

What customs are hard to understand?

---

## Picture It

One difference between the United States and your home country is the **language**. Some words seem easy to translate. For example, think of these words in your language:

banana, water, man, tree, milk

What words are you thinking? Write them here.

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

Do you see pictures in your mind? What pictures do you see? Talk about the pictures you can imagine (see in your mind).

Here are some words in English. Write each word in your native language. For each word, draw a picture of what you see when you hear the word in your language.

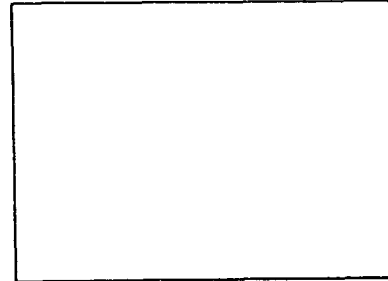
**In English**  
**Words**

**In My Language**  
**Words**

**To People in My Country**  
**Pictures**

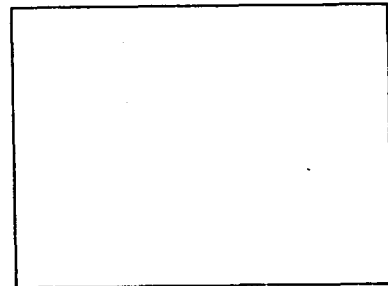
fruit

\_\_\_\_\_



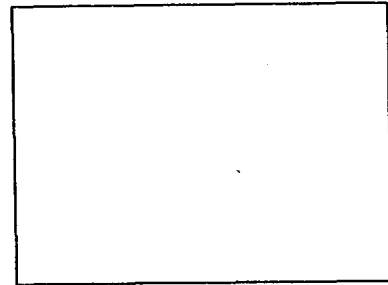
water to drink

\_\_\_\_\_



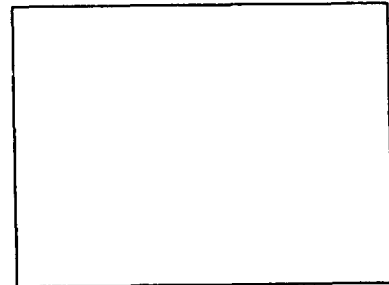
tree

\_\_\_\_\_



milk

\_\_\_\_\_



**4** Taking a Look at Cultures

Now look at what people in the United States often see when they hear these words. Are your pictures the same or different?

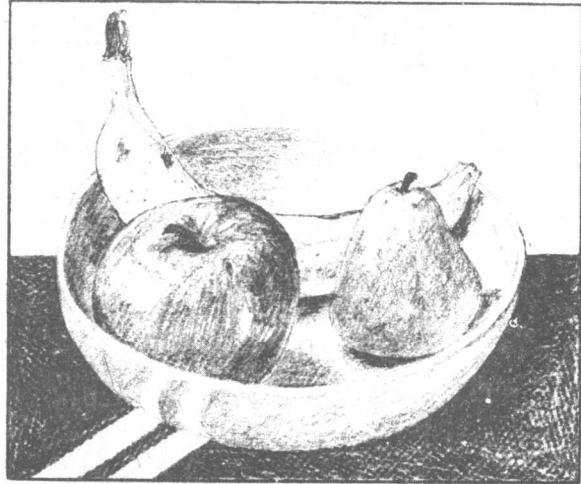
**In English**

*Words*

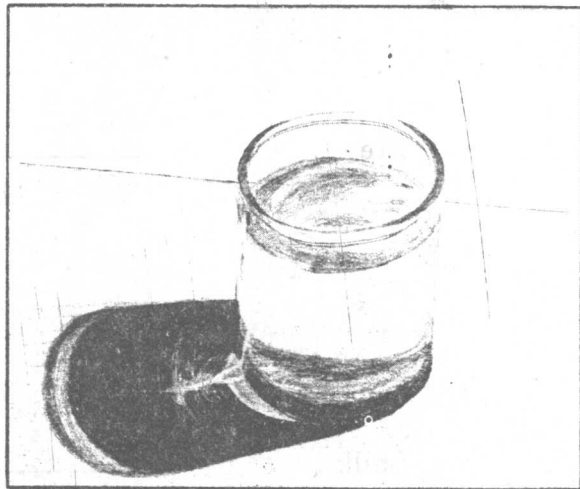
fruit

**To Some People in the U.S.**

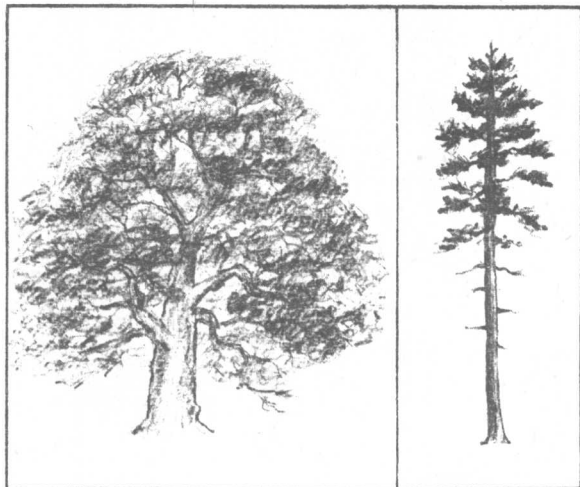
*Pictures*



water to drink



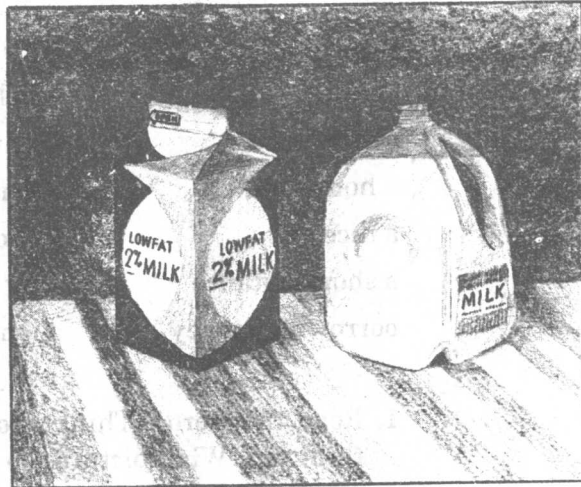
tree



**In English**  
**Words**

**To Some People in the U.S.**  
**Pictures**

milk





## LESSON 2: WHAT'S IN YOUR MIND?

Now we will think about other kinds of words. These words tell about our daily lives, our feelings, and our beliefs.

dinner	a good husband	it's expensive
religion	a holiday	a good wife
the best job	transportation	sports
a house	a very good person	leaving home
a nice gift	a bad mistake	the future
a short distance	long hair	having a good time
borrowing money	a long trip	clothes

1. Read the words. Think about them in your country. What are you thinking? What pictures do you see in your mind?
2. Now work with a partner from your native country. The teacher will give you and your partner two words. Write down your thoughts and tell about the pictures you see. Write them in column 1.

The Words	1. To You in Your Country	2. To Americans in the U.S.
-----------	---------------------------	-----------------------------


Now start over again. Read the words and try to guess what American people think. Your teacher will help you after you finish. Write your ideas in column 2.

### ■ *Discuss with your teacher and classmates*

Now talk with your teacher and classmates about the words and your thoughts about them (1) in your country and (2) to Americans in the United States.

## **LESSON 3: WHY AND WHY?**

Are you feeling confused about life in the United States or about American people and American things? Do you wonder why the people here do some things? Do you have questions about American customs?

**Write Down Ten Questions to Ask Some American People.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

### **How to Get Your Answers**

Your teacher will invite some American visitors to your class. You may ask the visitors your questions.

**OR**

Your teacher will give you a homework assignment. You will have to ask some American people by yourself, outside of the class. Your teacher will help you with the English.

## LESSON 4: WHAT'S IN YOUR MIND AGAIN?

Here is the list of words from Lesson 2 again. You wrote down your thoughts and pictures about these words in your country. Then you wrote down what Americans think about the words. Now you will write about the same words again. Think about what the words mean **to you** in the United States. For example, *dinner*. What is it *to you* in the United States? Do you eat different foods here than you ate in your country? Is the time you eat different? Is the place you eat different?

dinner	a good husband	it's expensive
religion	a holiday	a good wife
the best job	transportation	sports
a house	a very good person	leaving home
a nice gift	a bad mistake	the future
a short distance	long hair	having a good time
borrowing money	a long trip	clothes

Write down your thoughts and the pictures in your mind.

### The Words      3. To You in the U.S.


### ■ **Discuss with your teacher and classmates**

Now talk with your teacher and classmates. Compare list 1 from Lesson 2 and list 3 from this activity.

What pictures are the same? similar? different? very different?