

Overall Impressions

READING 1

Prereading

Before you read, discuss the following questions with your classmates.

1. What is culture?
2. What are values?
3. What are some things that Americans value?
4. How are American values different from values of people from other countries?

Predicting

Predicting can help you understand what you read. Before you read, do the following activities. They will help you predict what the reading selection will be about.

1. Study the charts in this chapter. What kind of information is in the charts?
2. What do you think this reading selection is about?

Previewing Specialized Vocabulary

Listed here are some of the specialized words that you will find in this reading selection. Knowing and understanding these words will help you understand the reading selection better.

- Review the definitions of these words.
- Identify which of these words, if any, you already know.
- Try to paraphrase the meaning of each word.
- Underline these words in the reading selection.

ingrained (*adj.*)—built in, deep-rooted (paragraph 6)

competitive (*adj.*)—aggressive, wanting to be the winner (paragraph 6)

informal (*adj.*)—not formal, casual (paragraph 6)

generalize (*v.*)—to oversimplify, take a broad view (paragraph 7)

mainstream culture (*n. ph.*)—the culture of most of the people, the normal way of acting (paragraph 8)

subculture (*n.*)—the culture of a small number of people, not considered normal by most of the people (paragraph 8)

heritage (*n.*)—tradition, custom (paragraph 8)

upheld (*v.*)—supported, defended (paragraph 9)

celebrates (*v.*)—pays honor to (paragraph 13)

American Culture and Values

What Is Culture?

- 1 In general, the term *culture* refers to a set of customs, traditions, and behaviors common to a particular human society. There is no generally accepted definition of *culture*. However, most social scientists use the word to describe all of the behavioral patterns, beliefs, institutions, and products of a particular population.

CHART 1.1 WHAT ARE SOME ELEMENTS OF CULTURE?

- Behavioral patterns (example: the way different people think about time)
- Beliefs (example: belief in one god)
- Institutions (example: trial by jury)
- Products (example: folk music)

- 2 In this book, you are going to read about some elements of culture in the United States. You are going to learn about some of the behavioral patterns, beliefs, institutions, and cultural products of people living in the United States of America.

Why It Is Important to Learn About Values

- 3 The United States can be confusing to a visitor from another country. It is difficult for someone who has just arrived to understand why Americans act the way they do. In any culture, the way people act reflects the things they think are important. Whatever people think is important shapes their values. People in one culture may think it is important to show respect to elderly people. Those people value the wisdom that comes from living for a long time. In another culture, people may value youth. Those people value the energy and new ideas that come from young people.
- 4 Each year, thousands of people from all around the world come to the United States. Some visit as tourists; others come to do business. Many visitors are students who have come to study in American schools and universities. Still others are looking for a new life.

One Idea About American Values: Robert Kohls

- 5 At some point, many of these people will take classes to help them improve their English. They also want to improve their understanding of life in the United States. Students in such programs often learn about American values. For example, in some programs, they read a description of American values written by L. Robert Kohls, who served as director of the Washington International Center.
- 6 Kohls says that to make sense of another culture, we must understand “the basic beliefs, assumptions, and values of that particular group.” To help foreign visitors make sense of American behaviors, Kohls has identified thirteen basic values. Chart 1.2 shows eight of Kohls’s basic values. He says that these values are “deeply ingrained” in most Americans. According to Kohls, understanding American values will help foreign visitors understand “95% of American actions.” Some foreigners might find these actions strange, confusing, or unbelievable because they are used to different beliefs, assumptions, and values. Look at these eight values. With a

partner, discuss what you think they mean. Can you think of other examples of each value?

CHART 1.2 AMERICAN VALUES: ROBERT KOHLS

Value	Examples (Common Actions of Americans That Reflect Their Values)
Personal control over the environment	Most American homes have central heating and air conditioning. Some Americans are very uncomfortable if they cannot control the temperature around them.
Change	Most Americans prefer new things and new ways of doing things. They usually buy a new car every three or four years. They like to have the latest technology in their homes.
Time and its control	Most Americans like things to begin on time. Business meetings usually begin and end on time.
Equality	Most Americans believe that people should be treated equally. Men and women should be treated the same, especially at work. It is accepted for women to work as doctors or construction workers and for men to work as secretaries or housecleaners.
Individualism	People can act as they choose to, as long as their actions do not hurt another person. Most Americans believe that it is important to be recognized as an individual rather than part of a group.
Competition	Many Americans are competitive. In school, students compete to get the best grade in the class.
Informality	Americans are generally informal. Even in some businesses, Americans dress in informal clothes.
Materialism	Most Americans like to own nice things. They usually own a car, one or more TVs, and a computer.

- 7 Not everyone agrees with Kohls. Some people say that it is impossible to generalize about a nation with a population of 300 million. While many people do believe in “personal control over the environment,” others do not. Some Americans are materialistic. Many others are not. In other words, it is rather difficult to describe a common culture for such a diverse society. Does the United States have a single culture? Are there behaviors, beliefs, and values that all Americans share? Or is American society just too diverse to describe in generalizations? What—and who—can qualify as “truly American”?

Mainstream Culture and Subculture

- 8 Some scholars argue that the United States has many subcultures. Other scholars argue that a *mainstream culture* shapes the institutions that control the beliefs and values of people in the United States. Much of the mainstream culture comes from traditional European ideas. But scholars recognize that this mainstream culture has been influenced by Native Americans, by Africans who were brought to

the United States as slaves, and by other more recent immigrants from Asia, the Americas, and elsewhere. It is clear that the cultural heritage of the United States includes elements from every part of the world. This means that many perspectives exist side by side.

Actions Speak Louder than Words

- 9 Because the United States is a large country with citizens who come from many different parts of the world, we cannot speak of a single American culture. We can, however, identify some of the values that are generally upheld in American culture. Most Americans know that these *stated* ideals are not always put into practice. The meaning of these ideals is subject to continuing discussion. The nation's history has many conflicts in values and actions. For example, Americans have not always treated one another equally or respectfully. Some people in the United States have suffered when others looked down on them. Often conflict arises among Americans when one group fails to pay attention to the values that most Americans think are important.
- 10 It is easy to say, "I value or believe in" one thing or another. Sometimes people who say they believe something act in the opposite way. Americans like to say, "Actions speak louder than words." What do the actions of Americans tell us about their beliefs and values?

Another Idea About American Values: Robert Bellah

- 11 The anthropologist Robert Bellah agrees with Kohls that Americans share a common culture. According to Bellah, this common culture comes from the nation's institutions, including schools and government. He says that people who do not agree with mainstream values in the United States are often poor or live in neighborhoods that are separated from the rest of American society.
- 12 One way in which mainstream culture separates people is through an emphasis on individualism. Bellah says that the belief in individualism is powerful. It is so powerful that sometimes Americans pay too much attention to individual goals. He believes that individualism can have a bad effect on Americans. They do not show concern for other people or what is best for other people. Bellah thinks that Americans are too individualistic. He says that in such a system, only a small number of people can be winners. These few people will have most of the money, power, and freedom. Everyone else loses.
- 13 Bellah's concern about the bad effects of individualism is not important to many Americans. They believe that self-interest leads to the best result both for the individual and for society as a whole. American culture celebrates the ideal of individualism. But as Bellah's careful analysis shows, even the most celebrated of ideals can cause disagreement.

READING SKILLS

EXERCISE 1 Finding the Main Idea

To understand the main idea of a reading selection, it is important to understand the reason why it was written. Choose the main purpose of

this reading selection from the choices given. Explain why you think your choice is the best answer.

What is the main purpose of this reading selection?

- a. to explain why Americans need values
- b. to explain why Americans act so strangely
- c. to explain eight American values identified by Robert Kohls
- d. to explain some different ideas about American values

EXERCISE 2

Reading for Details

Choose the correct answer based on the reading selection.

1. Showing respect to elderly people is an example of
 - a. a culture.
 - b. a value.
 - c. a belief.
 - d. a behavioral pattern.
2. According to Robert Kohls, to understand another culture we need to
 - a. understand the values of that group.
 - b. understand the assumptions of that group.
 - c. understand the beliefs of that group.
 - d. understand the values, assumptions, and beliefs of that group.
3. A foreigner might find Americans strange because
 - a. sometimes Americans' actions do not reflect their values.
 - b. Americans like competition and individualism.
 - c. a foreigner might be used to different beliefs, assumptions, and values.
 - d. 95 percent of Americans' actions come from their values.
4. Which is not an example of an American value from Chart 1.2?
 - a. Most Americans like things to start on time.
 - b. Most Americans believe that it is important to cooperate with others.
 - c. Most Americans like to buy and own nice things.
 - d. Most Americans believe that it is important to be better than other people.
5. All Americans agree with Kohls's ideas about American values.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. Mainstream American culture is influenced by
 - a. traditional European ideas along with those of Native Americans, Africans, and immigrants.
 - b. only traditional European ideas.
 - c. mostly Native Americans, Africans, and immigrants.
 - d. traditional European ideas and immigrants from Asia and the Americas.
7. American values are always reflected in their actions.
 - a. True
 - b. False

8. According to Robert Bellah, people who are poor or live in neighborhoods separated from the rest of American society
 - a. are usually part of mainstream American culture.
 - b. are usually part of a subculture.
 - c. usually have the most power and freedom.
 - d. are usually the small number of people who are winners.

VOCABULARY SKILLS

EXERCISE 3

Academic Word List

The following words are frequently found in academic writing. Knowing these words will help you read all kinds of academic texts. There are many ways to learn new vocabulary words. Each reading selection will have suggestions on how you can learn the Academic Words. Try the different suggestions until you find the one that works the best for you. The number in parentheses indicates the paragraph in this reading selection where the word appears.

- | | | |
|--|---|----------------------|
| 1. culture (1),
cultural (2),
subculture (8) | 7. assumptions (6) | 12. grade (6) |
| 2. traditions (1) | 8. identified (6),
identify (9) | 13. computer (6) |
| 3. definition (1) | 9. chart (6) | 14. diverse (7) |
| 4. institutions (1) | 10. environment (6) | 15. immigrants (8) |
| 5. elements (1) | 11. individual (6),
individualism (6),
individualistic (10) | 16. perspectives (8) |
| 6. energy (3) | | 17. conflict (9) |
| | | 18. goals (12) |
| | | 19. analysis (13) |

EXERCISE 4

Vocabulary Notebook

Keeping a vocabulary notebook is a good way to learn vocabulary words, because it gives you an opportunity to easily review the words. It is important to organize the vocabulary notebook neatly. You might organize it in alphabetical order. This will help you practice the words many times. For each word, include these pieces of information:

- the word
- a short definition or its opposite
- a brief example (a whole sentence is not necessary)

Here is an example:

Word	Definition	Example
<i>analysis (n)</i>	<i>examination of facts</i>	<i>careful analysis</i>

You can use your vocabulary notebook to remind you of words you already know. You can also add more information about the word each time you read it in a different text. For example:

Word	Definition	Example
<i>analysis (n.)</i>	<i>examination of facts</i>	<i>careful analysis</i> <i>carry out an analysis</i>

EXERCISE 5

Discovering Related Word Forms

Once you learn a word, it is easy to learn related words. Learning related words is a good way to increase your vocabulary. Here are some of the words from the Academic Word List and related words. Practice pronouncing the words. Study the list. Then answer the questions that follow the list.

Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb
analysis	analyze	analytic	analytically
computer	compute	computerized	
conflict	conflict	conflicting	
contrast	contrast	contrasting	
cooperation	cooperate	cooperative	cooperatively
creation, creativity	create	creative	creatively
culture, subculture		cultural	culturally
definition	define	defined	
diversity, diversification	diversify	diverse	diversely
energy	energize	energetic, energized	energetically
environment		environmental	environmentally
individual, individualism, individuality	individualize	individualistic, individualized	individualistically
institution		institutional	institutionally
tradition		traditional	traditionally

1. Look at the adverb forms. What letters do they end in?

2. Which words end in *ic*?

a. _____

c. _____

b. _____

3. Words ending in *ic* are usually what part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)? _____
4. Which words end in *tion*?
- a. _____ d. _____
- b. _____ e. _____
- c. _____ f. _____
5. Words ending in *tion* are usually what part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)? _____
6. Which words end in *al*?
- a. _____ d. _____
- b. _____ e. _____
- c. _____
7. Most of the words ending in *al* are what part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)? _____
8. Which words end in *ed*?
- a. _____ c. _____
- b. _____ d. _____
9. Words ending in *ed* are usually what part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)? _____
10. What is another form that uses *ed*? _____
11. Which words end in *tive*?
- a. _____ b. _____
12. Words ending in *tive* are usually what part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)? _____
13. Which words end in *ity*?
- a. _____ c. _____
- b. _____
14. Words ending in *ity* are usually what part of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)? _____

Talking About Your Own Values

Practice the rules you have created for group activities by doing the following:

1. Look at Chart 1.1. With your group of four, list some other examples of elements of culture. Share your list with your other classmates.
2. Look at Chart 1.2. Think about your own values. Are they like American values? Make a mark by the American values that are similar to your values. Then explain to a partner why you chose to make your marks where you did. What kinds of things influenced your values? Your family? Friends? The country you came from? Your own personality? Compare your values to your partner's values.

READING-RESPONSE JOURNAL

The best readers think about what they read. One way to think about what you have read is to write about it. Choose one of the following topics, and write about it in your reading journal.

1. What information do you find interesting in this reading assignment? Summarize the point of interest, and then discuss why you find it interesting.
2. Choose one American value that you agree with. Explain why you agree. Choose another value that you do not agree with. Explain why you do not agree.
3. What do you think about Kohls's ideas? Do you think they accurately describe American values? Are there any values you would add? Are there any you think are less important to Americans than Kohls believes?

WRITING TOPICS

Choose one of the following topics, and write a composition.

1. How do Americans show what they value by the way they act? Write a composition describing two of Kohls's values that can be supported by the way Americans act. Give specific examples of actions you have observed.
2. Can you think of a place where some of the values that Kohls identifies are readily observed? For example, are these values on display in a shopping mall? A bank? An airport? A fast-food restaurant? A U.S. embassy or consulate? Write an essay describing how three of the values that Kohls identifies can be observed in one of these places. Describe the place in the first paragraph. In the following paragraphs, write about the values you can see there.
3. Bellah believes that individualism has a bad effect on American society. Do you agree or disagree with Bellah? Describe examples that support your opinion.