

Developing Multicultural Awareness: Using Stories to Transcend Cultural Boundaries

A Workshop

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**Abstract**

Discussion of cross-cultural myths can increase multicultural awareness. There will be storytelling of five myths (Korean, Native American, European American, Polish, and Indian). Objectives include transcending cultural boundaries and bringing knowledge of culture to life through reflections in small groups on these cross-cultural stories and subsequent development of personalized myths.

**Description**

Discussion of cross-cultural myths can increase cultural awareness. Around the world, we are taught lessons and morals through myths. Individuals develop personal myths as a way to clarify where they have been, make meaning of what they are doing, and influence where they are going. Stories can be used in experiential training to bring textbook knowledge to life. In this workshop, there is storytelling of five myths: Korean, Native American, European American, Polish, and Indian. Participants form small groups, and each group discusses and reflects upon one of the stories and, subsequently, creates its own group myth. Upon returning to the large group, participants share their group's experiences, reflections, and group myth. Small group activity is facilitated by guidelines, questions, and a group facilitator. (124 words)

**Procedures**

Participants will first meet as a large group for thirty minutes. They will be given an introduction to the workshop, its goals and objectives, and will then be told summarized myths

from five different cultures (Korean, Euro-Caucasian, Native American, Polish, and Indian). Participants will break into small groups for forty-five minutes, and each group will discuss one of the stories, using a set of pre-determined questions to facilitate their reflections. Participants will return to the large group for thirty minutes, where they will report on their small group's experiences and reflections on their stories. Participants will again break into their small groups for thirty minutes, when each group will create its own myth, using themes that are provided. All groups will get the same themes, but are expected to develop different stories, as influenced by group members' contexts. Participants will reconvene in the large group for thirty minutes and share stories they have created, followed by closing comments. (400 words)

### **Educational Objectives**

This experiential activity utilizes cross-cultural storytelling to increase multicultural awareness. Cultural empathy can develop when participants are exposed to myths of diverse cultures. Reflections on stories allow participants to take an active role through identification with characters, discovering personal meaning while also gaining enhanced understanding about other cultures through active discussion.

### **Discussion Questions on Myths**

- How is the main character influenced by his or her cultural heritage?  
(cultural contexts)
- What is your awareness of the culture-specific values that are held by the characters in the myth or are represented by the story?  
(cultural contexts)

- How do you find the story universal? Explain how certain problems, relationships, behaviors, or environmental issues transcend cultural boundaries.  
(universal humanity)
- How did you personally identify with the main character's struggles?  
(individuality/personal empathy)
- If you had the main character's problem, how would you resolve it?  
(individuality/personal coping)

### GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A MYTH

- What are the prominent values or beliefs of your chosen culture?
- Your myth should reflect the values of your chosen/created culture.
- Give a name to your culture.
- The myth should have a main character.
- There must be a supernatural element that interacts with the main character.
- The main character faces a very difficult challenge, dilemma, or conflict.
- Resolving the challenge is not easy, but a way is found to resolve the issue at hand.
- Morality is represented by the dispensation of a reward or punishment.
- You might include themes of power vs. powerlessness, rich versus poor, good versus evil, cruelty versus kindness, etc.
- Gender roles of your culture need to be included.
- Romance and various relationships may be included.
- The theme of survival, resilience, a happy ending, or a sad ending ought to be considered as an element of your myth.

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