



## TITLE: Surface Culture vs. Deep Culture

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**Grade band:** 4-6    **Subject:** Social Studies    **Topic:** Surface Culture vs. Deep Culture  
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### Introduction

This is a companion lesson to the unit/lessons I created about exploring cultural identity. In this lesson, the students will play a game that will help them solidify the differences between surface culture and deep culture.

### Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to deepen understanding of surface culture and deep culture.

- **surface culture:** Surface culture refers to those pieces of culture that exist on the surface and can be observed.
- **deep culture:** Deep culture refers to the ideas, beliefs, feelings, and attitudes associated with a particular country or culture. It is intangible and exists below the surface.

### Materials

- Iceberg Concepts of Culture (see below)
- Culture Cards (separate download on website)
- List of instructions for students (see below)
- Sentence frames for students to help develop language (see below)



Instructions



### Game directions:

1. Organize students into small groups of 2-3 students. Pass out one set of culture cards to each group.
2. Each player should be dealt 4 cards from the mixed deck of surface culture and deep culture examples. The rest of the deck of cards should be placed face down in front of the dealer.
3. The players can look at their cards, but should not show them to other players in the group.
4. The dealer will start by flipping over 2 cards from the upside-down deck of cards to start the game.
5. Each player should quickly look at the cards and make a connection to one of the cards that is face up. (For example: if there is a card with a birthday cake on it and a player has a card with a wedding anniversary on it, they can place theirs on top. The player who lays down a card *has to tell how the cards are connected*. For example, "At a birthday party, you're celebrating how many years you've been alive and for an anniversary you are celebrating how many years you've been together. These celebrations are both examples of surface culture."  
Another example: A card that is face up is a picture of two people greeting each other by shaking hands. A player puts a card on top of this that shows a classroom of students raising their hands to answer a question. The player may say, "These are related because one shows how people use their body language to greet each other and the other one shows how people use their body language to show their teacher they are ready to answer a question. These are both examples of deep culture."
6. Once a card has been laid down on another one and the player has said the connection between the two cards, the group has to agree or disagree with the connection. If the majority of the group agrees that the connection makes sense, that card can remain there. If they disagree, the player who played it has to take it back AND pick up an extra card from the face down pile.
7. Players continue until one player has laid down all of their cards.
8. The object of the game is to be the first person to get rid of all your cards.
9. A player cannot say that the picture on the cards are the same color, shape, or size; they have to make a connection related to *culture* in some way.

### Activity Materials & Answer Keys

#### Other uses for the Culture Cards:

- Have pairs of students sort the cards into surface culture and deep culture. Students should justify their thinking.
- Have pairs of students take one surface culture card and one deep culture card and research how different cultures show/demonstrate that topic.
- Create a class book of examples from different cultures for each card.
- Have students create and add their own cards to show examples of their own cultures

Use/post these sentence frames to help students create connections between their culture cards:

- This card is similar to \_\_\_\_\_ because they both \_\_\_\_\_.
- These two cards are connected because they both \_\_\_\_\_.
- They are both examples of surface culture because \_\_\_\_\_.
- They are both examples of deep culture because \_\_\_\_\_.
- This card is an example of surface culture, but this one is deep culture so they are not connected/but they are connected because \_\_\_\_\_.
- This card is an example of deep culture, but this one is surface culture so they are not connected/but they are connected because \_\_\_\_\_.

## Iceberg Concepts of Culture

**Above the surface are  
examples of culture that we  
can see or hear**

holidays language clothing  
music religion drama  
dance language games

humor concepts of beauty  
personal space rules of conduct  
eye contact modesty dating  
ideals of raising children  
attitudes toward the elderly  
concepts of cleanliness  
concepts of time  
nonverbal communication  
facial expressions

**Below the surface are  
examples of culture that we  
cannot easily see or hear.**