

# Cultural Introduction

## Human Family by Maya Angelou

### Objectives & Outcomes

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The students will be randomly assigned a stanza of Maya Angelou's Human Family Poem. Working in a small group, the students will decipher the stanza and their interpretation of what the stanza is offering in relation to culture as a whole. Never letting on what they are truly working on, the students will define culture for themselves and others through poetry.

### Materials Needed

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Human Family poem, in cut out stanzas (should be 10), directions enough for one set per group, one piece of white computer paper for each group, and colored pencils or crayons.

Prepare ahead of time: The instructor must make a copy of the poem in order to separate into stanzas and a set of directions to pass out to the class. The instructor will need another full copy of the poem will be needed to read at the end.

Suggested videos for the teacher to show:

Human Family Video – You Tube -

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL\\_ofpwicsc&list=PLmziECKu\\_rPgQVwzulmnwX4RZtb3XIKHG&index=14&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL_ofpwicsc&list=PLmziECKu_rPgQVwzulmnwX4RZtb3XIKHG&index=14&t=0s)

### Procedure

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#### Opening to Lesson

- Teacher will separate the class into small groups. This could be as few as 5 and as many as 10. Preference would be groups of 3 or 4.

- On the back of each stanza, number them in order 1-10. Pass out the slips of the stanzas without explaining what the end will look or sound like.
- Hand out direction page for each group.
- Give the directions to the class to discuss and work together to formulate their response, but do not talk to other groups until the proper time.

## Body of Lesson

### Modeling

- Allow the students approx. 15-20 min to formulate their findings.
- Have each group present their findings, discussions, visual interpretation of each stanza. At this time, do not elaborate on their findings.
- Once each group is complete, have one person from each group stand with their stanza. Have each group read, in order, the entire poem. Open up for discussion what the poem means in general. What does the poem have to do with our world? What is the definition of culture? What does it mean, look like, sound like, etc?
- Show the video  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL\\_ofpwicsc&list=PLmziECKu\\_rPgQVwzulmnwX4RZtb3XIKHG&index=14&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL_ofpwicsc&list=PLmziECKu_rPgQVwzulmnwX4RZtb3XIKHG&index=14&t=0s)
- Allow time for the students so see how the inflection of May Angelou's voice may change their personal ideas of the poem. Did the differences in readings make a change in their thought process concerning the meanings?
- The discussion can be as long or as short as the instructor needs it to be.

### Closing

Discuss with the class their overall impressions of culture throughout the world as seen by various people from different walks of life. What did they learn about the culture and lifestyle?

## Human Family - Poem by Maya Angelou

I note the obvious differences  
in the human family.

Some of us are serious,  
some thrive on comedy.

Some declare their lives are lived  
as true profundity,  
and others claim they really live  
the real reality.

The variety of our skin tones  
can confuse, bemuse, delight,  
brown and pink and beige and purple,  
tan and blue and white.

I've sailed upon the seven seas  
and stopped in every land,  
I've seen the wonders of the world  
not yet one common man.

I know ten thousand women  
called Jane and Mary Jane,  
but I've not seen any two  
who really were the same.

Mirror twins are different  
although their features jibe,  
and lovers think quite different thoughts  
while lying side by side.

We love and lose in China,  
we weep on England's moors,  
and laugh and moan in Guinea,  
and thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,  
are born and die in Maine.  
In minor ways we differ,  
in major we're the same.

I note the obvious differences  
between each sort and type,  
but we are more alike, my friends,  
than we are unlike.

We are more alike, my friends,  
than we are unlike.

We are more alike, my friends,  
than we are unlike.

## Human Family Project Directions

In your group:

- You will be assigned a stanza.
- Have each person read the stanza and write down what the words mean to them.
  - Share the thoughts amongst your group.
  - Come up with a decision on what the stanza is trying to portray to the reader.
- Using a blank sheet of computer paper, illustrate (color) pictures or ideas that represent what your stanza means.
- Decide the following:
  - One person to read the real stanza aloud.
  - One person to explain the meaning, in real terms, to the class.
  - One person to explain the illustration to the class.
  - One person to explain how this stanza alone relates to culture.