

LEARNING STRATEGIES:

Think-Pair-Share, Marking the Text, Word Maps, Discussion Groups

My Notes

Literary Terms

Voice is the way a writer or speaker uses words and tone to express ideas as well as the writer's persona or personality.

Learning Targets

- Compare and contrast how a theme or central idea of a text is developed in an academic and a literary nonfiction text.

Before Reading

1. Look at the picture on the opening page of this unit. What do you notice about the photo?

During Reading

2. Writers express their **voice** through their use of language. As you read the two texts in this activity, identify stylistic differences that establish one voice as academic and the other as informal.
3. As you read each text, underline or highlight information that helps to define the concept of cultural identity. Then use your Reader/Writer Notebook to consolidate a list of all the cultural terms and cultural elements introduced or discussed in the texts.

Informational Text

What Is Cultural Identity?

by Elise Trumbull and Maria Pacheco, Brown University

Children begin to develop a sense of identity as individuals and as members of groups from their earliest interactions with others (McAdoo, 1993; Sheets, 1999a). One of the most basic types of identity is ethnic identity, which entails an awareness of one's membership in a social group that has a common culture. The common culture may be marked by a shared language, history, geography, and (frequently) physical characteristics (Fishman, 1989; Sheets, 1999a).

Not all of these aspects need to be shared, however, for people to psychologically identify with a particular ethnic group. Cultural identity is a broader term: people from multiple ethnic backgrounds may identify as belonging to the same culture. For example, in the Caribbean and South America, several ethnic groups may share a broader, common, Latin culture. Social groups existing within one nation may share a common language and a broad cultural identity but have distinct ethnic identities associated with a different language and history. Ethnic groups in the United States are examples of this ...

Exploring Cultural Identity

My Notes

women's participation in a rapidly developing job market. The changing experience of work is shifting cultural attitudes towards family and marriage. These different experiences and the new values, beliefs, and ideas they produce contribute to the dynamic nature of culture.

References

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- Philips, S. (1983). *Cultural differences among students: Communication in the classroom and community in the Warm Springs Indian Reservation*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
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- Schwartz, T. (1978). Where is the culture? Personality as the distributive locus of culture. In G. Spindler (Ed.), *The making of psychological anthropology* (pp. 429–441). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

After Reading

- Using the My Notes space, write an objective summary of each section of this text. How does each section contribute to the development of ideas about cultural identity? Be sure to note how ideas are developed and refined throughout the text.
- What is your understanding of cultural identity based on this text?
- Reflect on invisible aspects of your culture. What differences exist between you and your culture?
- What are some examples of your culture? Explain how these aspects are dynamic.

Personal Essay

Ethnic Hash

by Patricia J. Williams from *Transition*

Recently, I was invited to a book party. The book was about pluralism. “Bring an hors d’oeuvre representing your ethnic heritage,” said the hostess, innocently enough. Her request threw me into a panic. Do I even have an ethnicity? I wondered. It was like suddenly discovering you might not have a belly button. I tell you, I had to go to the dictionary. What were the flavors, accents, and linguistic trills that were passed down to me over the ages? What are the habits, customs, and common traits of the social group by which I have been guided in life—and how do I cook them?

My last name is from a presumably Welsh plantation owner. My mother chose my first name from a dictionary of girls’ names. “It didn’t sound like Edna or Myrtle,” she says, as though that explains anything. I have two mostly Cherokee grandparents. There’s a Scottish great-grandfather, a French-Canadian great uncle, and a bunch of other relations no one ever talks about. Not one of them left recipes. Of course the ancestors who have had the most tangible influence on my place in the world were probably the West Africans, and I can tell you right off that I haven’t the faintest idea what they do for hors d’oeuvres in West Africa (although I have this Senegalese friend who always serves the loveliest, poufiest little fish mousse things in puff pastries that look, well, totally French).

Ethnic recipes throw me into the same sort of quandary as that proposed “interracial” box on the census form: the concept seems so historically vague, so cheerfully open-ended, as to be virtually meaningless. Everyone I know has at least three different kinds of cheese in their fondue. I suppose I could serve myself up as something like Tragic Mulatta Souffle, except that I’ve never gotten the hang of souffles. (Too much fussing, too little reward.) So as far as this world’s concerned, I’ve always thought of myself as just plain black. Let’s face it: however much my categories get jumbled when I hang out at my favorite kosher sushi spot, it’s the little black core of me that moves through the brave new world of Manhattan as I hail a cab, rent an apartment, and apply for a job.

Although it’s true, I never have tried hailing a cab as an *ethnic*. ...

So let me see. My father is from the state of Georgia. When he cooks, which is not often, the results are distinctly Southern. His specialties are pork chops and pies; he makes the good-luck black-eyed peas on New Year’s. His recipes are definitely black in a regional sense, since most blacks in the United States until recently lived in the Southeast. He loves pig. He uses lard.

My mother’s family is also black, but relentlessly steeped in the New England tradition of hard-winter cuisine. One of my earliest memories is of my mother borrowing my father’s screwdriver so she could pry open a box of salt cod. In those days, cod came in wooden boxes, nailed shut, and you really had to hack around the edges to loosen the lid. Cod-from-a-box had to be soaked overnight. The next day you mixed it with boiled potatoes and fried it in Crisco. Then you served it with baked beans in a little brown pot, with salt pork and molasses. There was usually

**WORD CONNECTIONS****Foreign Words**

Hors d’oeuvre is a French term that is often used to describe appetizers served before a meal.

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What does the metaphorical title suggest about Williams’s cultural identity? How else does she use food as a central idea to explore the balance between her cultural heritage and her cultural inheritance?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Williams’s style is relatively informal, creating a casual, engaging voice. What rhetorical strategies does she use that distinguish this from an academic voice?

Exploring Cultural Identity

My Notes

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Tone is the writer's or speaker's attitude toward a subject. What tone does Williams establish in the first few paragraphs? What stylistic choices contribute to this tone? How and where does the tone shift during the essay? Or does it?

some shredded cabbage as well, with carrots for color. And of course there was piccalilli—every good homemaker had piccalilli on hand. Oh, and hot rolls served with homemade Concord grape jelly. Or maybe just brown bread and butter. These were the staples of Saturday night supper.

We had baked chicken on Sundays, boiled chicken other days. My mother has recipes for how to boil a chicken: a whole range of them, with and without bay leaf, onions, potatoes, carrots. With boiled chicken, life can never be dull.

The truth is we liked watermelon in our family. But the only times we ate it—well, those were secret moments, private moments, guilty, even shameful moments, never unburdened by the thought of what might happen if our white neighbors saw us enjoying the primeval fruit. We were always on display when it came to things stereotypical. Fortunately, my mother was never handier in the kitchen than when under political pressure. She would take that odd, thin-necked implement known as a melon-baller and gouge out innocent pink circlets and serve them to us, like little mounds of faux sorbet, in fluted crystal goblets. The only time we used those goblets was to disguise watermelon, in case someone was peering idly through the windows, lurking about in racial judgment.

I don't remember my parents having many dinner parties, but for those special occasions requiring actual hors d'oeuvres, there were crackers and cream cheese, small sandwiches with the crusts cut off, Red Devil deviled ham with mayonnaise and chopped dill pickles. And where there were hors d'oeuvres, there had to be dessert on the other end to balance things out. Slices of home-made cake and punch. "Will you take coffee or tea?" my mother would ask shyly, at the proud culmination of such a meal. ...

QUADROON SURPRISE

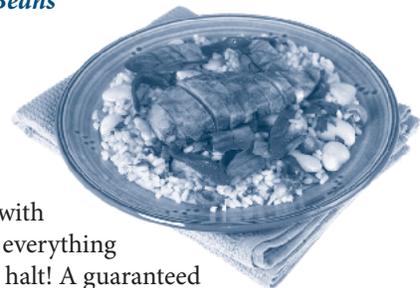
Some have said that too much salt cod too early in life hobbles the culinary senses forever. I have faith that this is not the case, and that any disadvantage can be overcome with time and a little help from Williams-Sonoma. Having grown up and learned that you are what you eat, I have worked to broaden my horizons and cultivate my tastes. I entertain global gastronomic aspirations, and my palate knows no bounds. After all, if Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben¹ can Just Get Over It, who am I to cling to the limitations of the past? Yes, I have learned to love my inner ethnic child. And so, I leave you with a recipe for the Twenty-first Century:

Chicken with Spanish Rice and Not-Just-Black Beans

- *Boil the chicken*
- *Boil the rice*
- *Boil the beans*

Throw in as many exotic-sounding spices and mysterious roots as you can lay your hands on—go on, use your imagination!—and garnish with those fashionable little wedges of lime that make everything look vaguely Thai. Watch those taxis screech to a halt! A guaranteed crowd-pleaser that can be reheated or rehashed generation after generation.

Coffee? Tea?



¹ African American advertising icons that some consider to be offensive.

