

## Overview:

This lesson plan will challenge participants to consider the idea of “belonging” and what that means to them and others. They will listen to an episode of the Radiolab podcast, “For Whom the Cowbell Tolls” and discuss/reflect on the concepts of naturalization, individualism, collectivism, assimilation, and xenophobia.

## Background and Information:

This activity was adapted from an episode of the *Radiolab* podcast. The episode, “For Whom the Cowbell Tolls,” details the story of Nancy Holten, a Dutch woman whose mother moved her to Switzerland when she was 8 years old. Nancy is famous because she is “apparently so annoying that her Swiss town denied her citizenship” (Prime & McEwan). In this episode, Kelly Prime travels to Gipf-Oberfrick, Switzerland to talk with Nancy and the townspeople and ask, “What does it mean and what does it take to belong to a place?”

## Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Discuss the process of naturalization.
2. Discover how individualism, collectivism, assimilation, and xenophobia factor into naturalization.
3. Explain the idea of “belonging” to a place and outline their own sense of “belonging.”

## Time:

45 minutes

## Group Size:

Entire group

## Materials:

The podcast, the Hofstede culture tool, U.S. citizenship naturalization test (all [Links](#)), activity instructions (see below), internet access, functioning sound equipment, paper, and pens/pencils

## Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

## Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks:

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

## Other Skills:

Diversity & Inclusion, Leadership

## Activity instructions:

1. At the start of the session or preceding it, ask the participants to do some research to discover the requirements to become a naturalized citizen in a country other than the one from which they are a citizen.
2. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has information on their website about the Naturalization Test and study materials.
3. Ask participants to get into groups and discuss/reflect on the following questions:
  - In groups to which you belong, what are the rules for membership? Who gets to decide them?
  - Do you know the requirements to be a naturalized citizen in your country?
  - How do the qualifications for naturalization reflect the history and/or values of the country? For example, what does it say about a country's values or history if a candidate for naturalization must have basic knowledge of the country's language, traditions, customs, and culture? Must denounce any attachment to the Communist party? Must be approved by the members of the community in which they live?
4. Listen to the podcast from Radiolab entitled "[For Whom the Cowbell Tolls.](#)"
5. After listening to the podcast, ask participants to discuss/reflect on the following questions:
  - How do the concepts of individualism and collectivism, assimilation and integration, democracy and xenophobia play into the conflict within this story?
  - Using the [Hofstede culture tool](#), are you surprised at the response of the villagers to Nancy Holten's desire for naturalization?
  - At "[For Whom the Cowbell Tolls.](#)" the introduction says that the question posed by the podcast is: "What does it mean and what does it take to belong to a place?" If you were to write the dominant question addressed by this podcast, what would you write?
  - Why did Holten wear "sparkly, sequin-y, silver shoes" at the end of the story?

## Optional resources/component:

6. The president of Purdue University—Mitchell "Mitch" Daniels—proposed in January 2019 that undergraduates be given a [civics test](#) as a requirement for graduation. Is this a good idea?

## Related Tools:

### *Similar tools:*

- [Adapt or Be Yourself](#)
- [Civil Discourse — Smarter Every Day](#)
- [Danger of a Single Story](#)
- [Emojis and Culture](#)
- [Empathy for Those We Hate](#)
- [How Rude Was That?](#)
- [Limits of Empathy, The](#)
- [My Emotional Hot Buttons](#)
- [Tribalism and Empathy](#)
- [We Americans by The Avett Brothers \(song\)](#)