

Overview:

This lesson plan will challenge participants to make meaning of their study abroad experience. They will choose a song that they feel is representative of their study abroad and analyze the song in relation to their experiences based on the four levels of cultural awareness.

Objectives:

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

1. Increase self-awareness.
2. Strengthen their emotional resilience.
3. Help others understand both the study abroad journey and its impact on them.

Background Information:

This exercise was created in 2015 by Katherine N. Yngve as part of Purdue's Engineering 397 (Intercultural Mentoring Course).

Time:

30 minutes

Group Size:

Pairs

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).

Empathy

- To interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview.
- To demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group perspectives.

Other Skills:

Leadership

Materials:

Instructions (in [Downloads](#)) and use of the website in [Links](#).

Activity Instructions for Participants:

When you return from study abroad, many people will ask you “So, how was {insert country name here}? This is a typically a question to which mere words will not do justice. So, in this assignment, we invite you to prepare for that question by choosing a song which represents your semester of study abroad (or an aspect of it) and using it to explain “how it was.”

For example, consider the Wallflowers 1996 song “One Headlight” which states that “nothing stays the same” as well as “I ain’t changed but I know I ain’t the same.” For some people this is a perfect metaphor for study abroad. For others, it would be the third verse of Paul Simon’s “You Can Call me Al” (“A man walks down the street, it’s a street in a strange world, maybe it’s the 3rd world...he looks around, looks around...he says Amen! and Hallelujah!”).

1. Pick a song in English or any other language you now comprehend, which represents your study abroad journey better than a mere essay ever could. It could be something that’s been playing in the background at the local coffee shop. It could be a favorite song from your past that has gained new meaning. It could be something that you learned from a host family member. It could be something that just really captures your first few weeks of culture shock.
2. Write an essay or blog post about why this song speaks to you and answer at least four of the following prompts:
 - What is the overarching tone of your semester –and the song?
 - What’s the important lyric, tune or memory that the song helps you express?
 - What cultural value, for you and/or for your host culture, does the song express?
 - Did the song teach you something & if so, what?
 - Have you changed even though you’ve stayed the same? In what ways?
 - Who does/did this song help you connect to?
 - How will it help your friends and/or family understand the new, globalized you?
3. Read this description of The Four Levels of Cultural Awareness at: https://www2.pacific.edu/sis/culture/pub/1.6.2-the_four_level_of_cul.htm
 - Which phase of cultural awareness and/or your study abroad experience does this song represent?
 - Has your cultural awareness come a long way since arrival & how can you tell?
4. Send your instructor (or friend) the name and title of the song; perhaps also a link to a sound clip or lyric sheet. If the song is not in English, add a translation of the most meaningful sentences or a synopsis of the lyrics.

Note: This exercise can be even more meaningful if shared with a host-family member, someone else who shared your experiences abroad or your home-country loved ones!

Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- [Dancing Through Reentry](#)
- [Four Levels of Cultural Awareness](#)
- [We Americans by The Avett Brothers \(song\)](#)