

HORSE POWER

EDUCATOR GUIDE

ACTIVITY: Thinking Like an Anthropologist



ACTIVITY 4: Thinking Like an Anthropologist

From the Film:

From the film: During the film we meet Clayson from the Diné in Arizona. The Diné, also known as the Navajo, have a deep ancestral connection to the horse and Clayson himself comes from a long line of horse healers. In the film, he uses his ancestral knowledge to help orphaned wild mustang, Jedda, and pass his knowledge down to his daughter, Zonnie, along the way. Through his connection to his daughter and through the healing of Jedda, we see how important culture is and how the Diné pass it down through generations.

Activity Overview:

Begin by introducing anthropology in student-friendly terms:

Anthropologists are scientists who study human cultures. They look at how people live, what they believe, how they learn from each other, and how they relate to the world around them. One important tool anthropologists use is careful observation. They watch how people do things, ask questions, and compare different cultures to understand each one.

Anthropologists learn by comparing different cultures. The same thing, like a horse, can mean very different things to different groups of people. In this activity students look at how several different cultures view horses.

Students will practice the comparative method by exploring how different cultures throughout history and around the world have understood horses.



Photo by Yasmin Tajik

MATERIALS

- "Cultural Perspective" station cards (5-7 stations)
- "Cultural Comparison Chart" worksheet (one per student)
- "Anthropological Analysis Guide" (one per student)
- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Colored pencils or markers for visual representation

GAME SETUP

- Arrange 6 stations around the room with enough space for small groups
- Post cultural perspective cards at each station
- Write key vocabulary on the board

Key Vocabulary:

- Culture: The beliefs, practices, and ways of life that a group of people share
- Ethnography: Carefully observing and documenting how people live and what they do
- Cultural perspective: How a group of people sees and understands the world
- Knowledge transmission: How information and skills are passed from one generation to the next
- Cultural resilience: When a culture maintains its traditions even during hard times
- Comparative method: studying multiple cultures side-by-side to understand both human diversity and common patterns
- Worldview: A culture's fundamental beliefs about reality, including the relationship between humans, animals, nature, and the spiritual world
- cultural relativism: trying to understand each culture on its own terms rather than judging it by the standards of another culture.



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Cultural Comparison Chart: Human-Horse Relationships



PROMPT

How They See Horses
(What kind of beings?)

Human-Horse Relationship
(Partnership? Property? Sacred? Athlete?)

Knowledge Transmission
(How is it learned/taught?)

Key Values Reflected

Environmental /Historical Factors

Diné (Navajo)

Mongolian Herders

1800s American Ranchers

Arabian Horses & Bedouin Culture

Modern Veterinary Science

Modern Equestrian Sport

PART 2A: UNDERSTANDING ONE CULTURE IN DEPTH

Choose one cultural perspective that interests you and analyze it anthropologically:

Culture: _____

If I were part of this culture, I might believe...

From the outside, I notice that...

PART 2B: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Choose two very different cultural perspectives to compare:

Culture 1: _____

Culture 2: _____

Major Differences:

View of horses:

Human-horse relationship:

Knowledge system:

Values reflected:

Purpose of horses:

What Explains These Differences? (Consider: environment, economy, spirituality, history, technology, whether horses are necessary for survival)

Can Both Be Valid? From an anthropological perspective of cultural relativism, can you understand why each culture developed its perspective, given their context?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**WHAT DID STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT HUMAN CULTURES:
(WHAT DO THESE DIFFERENT HORSE RELATIONSHIPS
TEACH US ABOUT HUMAN DIVERSITY, VALUES, AND HOW
CULTURES ADAPT TO THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES?)**

**WHAT STUDENTS LEARNED ABOUT THE COMPARATIVE
METHOD: (WHY IS COMPARING MULTIPLE CULTURES
VALUABLE? WHAT CAN WE LEARN THAT STUDYING ONE
CULTURE ALONE WOULDN'T REVEAL?)**

**WHAT STUDENTS LEARNED ABOUT CHANGE OVER
TIME: (HOW HAVE HUMAN-HORSE RELATIONSHIPS
EVOLVED? WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT HOW
CULTURES CHANGE?)**