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## Classroom Activities

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## Sample lesson plan

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1 Introduction

Welcome to the Teacher’s Notes for the Oxford Guide to British and American Culture. These notes have been written for teachers who are interested in including culture learning activities as part of their English language courses. Here we aim to provide an introduction to the role of culture in the language classroom and also put forward some ideas and suggestions on how to integrate the study of culture into language lessons, along with specific examples of how the Oxford Guide to British and American Culture can help in doing this. In the Classroom Activities section, you will find descriptions of a wide variety of classroom activities and practical ideas on using the Guide as a source of cultural material.

We have included suggestions for situations in which the teacher alone has access to a copy of the Guide, as well as situations in which copies of the Guide are available for use by students. The suggested activities can be modified or adapted, depending on your students’ needs and your own teaching situation or style.

2 Culture in the Language Classroom

Nowadays language teachers are being urged to make culture a part of their language lessons. More and more learners of English, especially those at the intermediate and advanced levels, are being offered courses that are directly concerned with the culture of Britain or the US. These courses vary widely with respect to what is taught in the name of ‘culture’ and how the cultural information is presented. Some teachers emphasize ‘Culture with a big C’ – the fine arts, literature and history, institutions, etc. Others emphasize ‘culture with a little c’, focusing on British and American everyday life – the norms, habits and behaviour of the people in those societies. Some emphasize the patterns of communication, verbal and non-verbal, which can be observed between members of these societies – who says what to whom, as well as how, when and where they say it, and under what circumstances. Still other teachers focus on the values and attitudes displayed by British and American people.

The study of British and American life and institutions has for a long time been a traditional part of school curricula in Europe and North America. For this reason, ‘Culture with a big C’ has benefited from a clearly identified curriculum and a wide variety of related teaching materials. On the other hand, the culturally influenced behaviour patterns that make up ‘culture with a little c’ have often been treated in an anecdotal or peripheral way, depending largely on the interest and awareness of teachers and students. The situation is changing, however, both among general EFL students, who may at some point expect to work or study in Britain or the US, and in ESL/ESOL classes where students are already immersed in and trying to integrate into the host culture. For this reason, among the more recently published language teaching texts and materials are many that focus on cultural behaviour and the role it plays in communication. Rather than presenting English in isolation, such materials
encourage students to make and share cross-cultural comparisons and to learn about British and American behaviour and customs as they practise and improve their English language skills.

Materials and approach

The areas of culture that you choose to emphasize will of course depend on the goals and needs of your students. However, no matter what area of culture you choose to focus on – high art, popular culture, behaviour, or values and attitudes – learning about culture will be more effective if it is clearly identified and systematically treated as a regular feature of the language lesson. The resources available for teaching culture are many. Besides the *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture*, they include regular language course textbooks (especially those which contain authentic materials for listening and reading), international television and radio broadcasts, magazines and newspapers, the wide range of materials available through the Internet, and all kinds of realia which can be brought into the classroom from a Hershey bar to an iPod.

However, effective use of such materials requires careful planning. Little cultural awareness will result from merely displaying a cultural artefact in the classroom, or by simply pointing out that ‘British people do this’ or ‘American people do that’. Using a task-oriented approach in which students are given opportunities to interact with or react to elements of the target language culture and then compare them with the corresponding elements of their own culture will make a more lasting impression. Such a task-oriented, cross-cultural approach is characterized by learning activities in which students:

- Work together in pairs or small groups to gather precise bits of information;
- Share and discuss what they have discovered in order to form a more complete picture;
- Interpret the information within the context of British or American culture and in contrast with their own culture.

Experiencing culture

Getting students actively involved in experiencing or interacting with some aspect of culture will also make the learning process more effective. This ‘experiential stage’ need not be very long. Relatively short experiences in which students come up with manageable amounts of data will make it easier to keep discussions on track. Experiences may be varied. They include interactive group tasks in which students work together and do something with some pieces of realia (e.g. examine a group of British cartoons and group them according to the subject matter of the humour, or study a group of US postage stamps and draw up a list of things they reveal about the country and its people), but they also include tasks that can be carried out individually (e.g. listening to a lecture, reading a magazine article, completing a questionnaire, or writing a report).

Any of these culturally related experiences can serve as a starting point as long as students are given a chance to react to and reflect on the material at some point.

Processing the experience

Processing the experience is as important as the experience itself, and discussion is a primary component of the processing stage. Once students have had a chance to react to and reflect on the experience, they get together in
groups to share and talk about what they have discovered. Questions of the following type may be helpful at this point:

What did you learn about British/American culture from this experience?
What did you learn about your own culture?
What did you learn about yourself?
What other things might this experience relate to?

Whether using the type of activities described here or those from a coursebook, the educational goal is to provide students with a culture learning experience. Because so much cultural input is perceived on a subconscious level, conscious examination of cultural events or thoughtful reflection on one’s own behaviour and values does not always come naturally. We need to structure lessons for such deliberate culture learning and self-reflection to take place. By carefully choosing and planning classroom activities so that they proceed from experience through the processing phases, culture learning is more likely to take place.

3 Oxford Guide to British and American Culture

The Oxford Guide to British and American Culture is an illustrated reference book that has been designed as a resource for both students and teachers of English in the upper secondary school, at university or in adult education. The book presents alphabetically organized information on all aspects of life in Britain and the US, including the social and cultural connotations which many of the items have for British and American people. For ease of understanding, the Guide has been written within a restricted vocabulary.

How can the Guide help teachers?

The Guide is a wide-ranging collection of useful and interesting cultural information for both students and teachers of English. Besides serving as a reference book on all aspects of British and American culture, the book is useful as a resource for developing teaching material. At some time or other, most teachers attempt to develop material of their own – to supplement a coursebook, to expand upon some point, to replace or update inadequate material, or to develop a complete curriculum from scratch. For teachers who want to develop culturally based teaching material, the Guide serves as a comprehensive one-volume reference work.

In the Classroom Activities section we have given numerous examples of classroom activities that use material from the Guide, either as a starting point for a lesson or as a means of expanding lesson content.

How can the Guide help students?

The Guide will be especially helpful to upper-intermediate and advanced students of English who are in need of guidance or background information on aspects of culture that they come across in their language lessons, in their reading, on the Internet, etc. The Guide will also be useful as a source of information for culture-based classroom projects. Many students will enjoy simply browsing through the book at random, reading any articles that catch their attention. Others will want to use the book to look up and read about topics that are of personal interest to them.
Getting the most from the Guide

The Guide has a variety of useful features which teachers can exploit for classroom use, either as a supplement to a lesson in a regular coursebook or as the starting point for a completely new and original lesson. These include:

Entries

The Guide contains almost 10 000 encyclopedic entries on British and American history, literature and the arts, legends and customs, people, places, institutions, sport, entertainment and everyday life. Because they are written within a limited vocabulary, they are suitable for students as well as teachers. Many of the biographical entries are also followed by well-known quotations from film stars, politicians and historical and fictional characters.

Extended entries

Besides the shorter entries, there are almost 200 extended entries (indicated by the symbol ▶️) which give fuller information about topics ranging from credit cards to churches, from the Stars and Stripes to student life, and from place names to political correctness. These provide more general background information about the topics and their significance within British or American society.

History and Institutions

A 32-page section in the centre of the book has extended coverage of British and American geography, history, peoples and major institutions. These pages cover key themes in British and American history, including timelines and sections on topics such as Roman Britain and the American Revolution. They also present clear explanations about some key institutions in the two countries, such as the government, politics and the education and legal systems. These pages are in full colour and include numerous photographs, illustrations and diagrams.

Photographs and tables

The book is illustrated throughout with more than 300 photographs. There are also a number of tables presenting more detailed information in a clear form. These include a list of Shakespeare’s plays, a table of British Prime Ministers and of American Presidents, and the winners of major literary prizes such as the Booker Prize and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Topic-specific vocabulary

In the longer entries and in the centre section, topic specific vocabulary is highlighted in bold type.
Classroom Activities

There is a wide range of ways in which the Guide can be used to create classroom activities focused around cultural topics. These activities may form the major part of a lesson, they could provide a follow-up activity to other classroom materials which touch on culture or they could just be used as interesting 5-minute ‘fillers’.

Task sheets and questionnaires

The extended entries or centre-section articles from the Guide can be used as a basis for developing task sheets and questionnaires to use for pair work, or in discussion involving small groups or the whole class. To be most effective, the items should either encourage students to use information presented during other class activities or tap students’ background knowledge.

Is it true that…?

This is an activity for helping students develop the ability to evaluate and refine information about British and American culture. The teacher decides upon a topic and then uses a related article or extended entry in the Guide to create a list of 8-10 statements about British and American culture. Some of the statements should be true and some false. Students working in pairs read each statement and mark each statement A (probably true), b (probably false) or C (don’t know).

In cases where students write A or B, they make brief notes on the evidence that supports their answer. Where they mark C, they indicate what specific information they need to make a judgement. Here is a sample list based on information in the extended entry for weddings:

1. In the US, a wedding ceremony can take place anywhere the couple choose.
2. If British couples are not religious, they can be married by a judge.
3. A stag party is hosted by the bride and groom to celebrate their engagement.
4. In Britain, a couple often send a list of presents they would like to receive to people who are invited to the wedding.
5. The bride usually enters the church with the best man who gives her away.
6. During the ceremony, the groom places a ring on the third finger of the bride’s left hand.
7. Guests usually throw rice or confetti (= small pieces of paper) over the bride and groom as they leave the church.
8. The person who catches the bride’s bouquet of flowers when she throws it will have good luck.

Answer key

1T, 2F, 3F, 4T, 5F, 6T, 7T, 8F

As a follow-up to the pair work, students report their answers and supporting comments to the class. The teacher can indicate whether the students’ comments are strong enough to support their judgements and use information in the weddings entry to correct any misconceptions based on limited evidence.
Same or different?

Using extended entries and articles in the Guide, you can create task sheets for students to use as a starting point for making cross-cultural comparisons. The following sample is based on information in the entry for driving.

The numbered statements below give information about driving and the role of cars in Britain and the US. Are these things the same or different in your culture? Mark each statement either S (the same) or D (different). If something is different in your culture, write brief notes explaining the difference.

1. In the US, more than 90% of households have a car or other vehicle.
2. American life often centres around the car and there are drive-in banks, post offices, restaurants and movie theatres.
3. In Britain people can start driving aged 17 and in most US states the minimum driving age is 16.
4. In Britain and the US, drivers have to pass a test, usually including a written test and a practical test, to get a full driving licence (BrE)/driver's license (AmE).
5. In Britain, the government imposes heavy taxes on fuel and charges a road tax to all road users each year.
6. In Britain, traffic drives on the left-hand side of the road.
7. Driving after drinking alcohol is a major cause of accidents in both countries, although there are laws against drink driving (BrE)/driving while intoxicated (AmE).
8. The police take many steps to try to prevent speeding, such as police patrols and speed cameras.

Agree/disagree/unsure

Students react individually to a series of statements related to a cultural topic. The students work in groups, comparing responses. Finally, they write a report, article or essay commenting on a statement with which they either strongly agreed or strongly disagreed. (See Activity 3 in the Sample lesson plan and the follow-up discussion for an example.)

Reading activities

Any of the extended entries or articles in the Guide can of course be used as a reading text by students. To take the greatest advantage of entries as reading material for a class, the topic can be introduced first through a pre-reading activity such as brainstorming, semantic webbing, student-generated questions and K-W-L charts, all of which are described below. The nature and length of each activity used will depend on the entry selected, the students’ needs, language proficiency levels and lesson objectives, as well as the more mundane concern of the time available.

Brainstorming

In preparation for reading about a topic in the Guide, students, working in groups, consider questions related to it and jot down any related ideas, in random order as they think of them. A fast-paced activity like this one activates students’ background knowledge and motivates interest in the reading. (See Activity 1 in the Sample lesson plan for an example.)

Semantic webbing

As a whole class, students brainstorm the probable content of one of the extended entries by looking at the headword, any accompanying illustrations or
quotations. While the students brainstorm, the teacher draws a semantic web on the board or the overhead projector to show how the ideas the students suggest can be grouped into meaningful networks. The visual imagery of the web further activates the students’ background knowledge, leading to increased vocabulary retention and better understanding of the topic.

For example, to introduce the extended entry on **law enforcement**, write ‘law enforcement’ on the board and ask students to call out their ideas about what they think the entry will be about. As the students call out words and phrases, create a semantic web on the board by arranging the ideas into meaningful groups. When there are plenty of ideas, ask the class to think about what the groups have in common and suggest appropriate labels. A completed semantic web for **law enforcement** might look something like this:

```
GROUPS
the police
a police force
the police department
CID
the FBI
Special Branch
the Met
```

```
LAW ENFORCEMENT
```

```
PEOPLE
police officer
constable
detective
special agent
deputy
sheriff

OBJECTS
police car
patrol car
truncheon
gun
uniform
plain clothes
```

**Student-generated questions**

Students make up questions of their own about the possible content of an entry. The teacher writes the selected headword on the board and students, working in groups, consider the topic and write down at least three questions they think will be answered by the entry. These can be yes/no or wh-questions. If students have trouble thinking of questions, the teacher can give them a model question as a starter.

For example, students might come up with the following questions about the entry for **homelessness**:

- Are there many homeless people in Britain/the US?
- What type of people become homeless?
- Where do they sleep?
- What help is available for them?
- Do people beg for money on the street?
**K-W-L charts**

Introduce the topic which students are going to read about, then give out a K-W-L chart (What we **know**, What we **Want** to know, and What we have **Learned**). Students, working in groups, discuss the topic, write its name on the chart, and fill in the first two columns (**What we KNOW** and **What we WANT to know**) based on their existing knowledge. The small-group discussion activates background knowledge and generates interest in the topic.

A chart on the topic **Native Americans** – an entry and the subject of a page in the centre section – might look like the one below.

**Topic:** Native Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What we KNOW</strong></th>
<th><strong>What we WANT to know</strong></th>
<th><strong>What we have LEARNED</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Also called ‘Indians’</td>
<td>Where do most of them live?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in America when Columbus arrived</td>
<td>How many different tribes are there?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have different tribes</td>
<td>Are they US citizens?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students can fill in the third column of the chart (**What we have LEARNED**) after they have read the corresponding entry/article in the *Guide*.

**General reading**

The most obvious use of the *Guide* is as a source of further information about a topic introduced through independent or classroom reading or as a part of a language lesson. For example, in classes where students have come across some aspect of British or American culture through authentic materials – in a reading text, on the Internet, on video/TV, etc - a teacher might follow this up by getting students to use the *Guide* to read an entry that deals with the same aspect. Students can talk about the entry in a discussion group, and later write about it as a class or homework assignment.

**Quick reference**

As all teachers know, getting students to read and discuss current written texts from British and American newspapers, magazines or websites is a good way to increase their interest in and awareness of contemporary cultural topics. Such articles typically contain culturally significant words and phrases that are necessary for comprehension but not necessarily defined in ordinary dictionaries. For example, students reading an article on terrorism in the US might come across terms such as 9/11, the World Trade Center, Ground Zero, the Pentagon, the Department of Homeland Security and Rudy Giuliani.

Students can not only use the *Guide* to look up any or all of these terms, they can also use the cross-references within the entries to locate other terms related to the topic.

**Culture journals**

Students can keep individual journals in which they write brief (or, if they wish, longer) notes about cultural information they have read in the *Guide* or have learned about from other sources. They can also use their journals to write down questions they have about other cultural issues, or to make notes about cultural topics they would like to investigate further.
Written reports

Students can use the Guide and other available resources to prepare a written report on some aspect of British and American culture. Wherever appropriate, students compare and contrast the information about Britain and the US with practices in their own culture, and suggest reasons for any similarities or differences.

Culture flowcharts

Students can use the information in some of the entries and articles in the Guide to create flowcharts illustrating a typical sequence of events in British or American culture. Examples of topics that could be presented in flowchart form include going to school, which could be based on the articles on Education in Britain and the US in the centre section or what happens in an election based on the extended entry on elections.

Listening activities

General listening

This activity is extremely useful when you only have one classroom copy of the Guide available. Read out a longer entry from the Guide, and students listen for general information which is essential for comprehension. To aid comprehension, as well as a means of motivating interest in the topic, any of the pre-reading activities described above (Brainstorming, Semantic webbing, Student-generated questions, Title discussion, K-W-L charts) can be adapted and used as a pre-listening activity in preparation for general listening.

Guided note taking

Read out a longer entry from the Guide, while students listen for information about specified issues. For example, while listening to the teacher read the centre-section article on American elections students make notes in a grid such as the one below about the stages of US elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Presidential elections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elections to Congress</td>
<td>Primaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Congressional convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Voting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Culture mini-presentations*

The longer entries in the Guide can be used as the basis for mini-presentations on particular aspects of British or American culture. Choose a topic and divide your talk into segments that will take one and a half or two minutes each. You could use a mix of information from the Guide and your own knowledge and experiences. After talking about the topic for no longer than two minutes, stop and ask the students to summarize what you’ve said. If the students have any difficulty, ask prompt questions to help them. For example, following a mini-lecture on newspapers in the US, using information from the extended entry for newspapers: How many national newspapers are there?
**Cross-cultural dictations**

Choose a one-paragraph entry from the *Guide* which describes an official policy that involves culturally-based British or American values. Write the headword of the entry on the board and then dictate the entry to the class, substituting the word ‘blank’ for 10–12 key words in the entry. Students write down what you dictate, leaving a blank at any point where you use the word ‘blank’. When you’ve finished dictating, students work in pairs, discussing the entry and filling in the blanks with any words they feel are appropriate. Next, read out the complete version of the entry (or tell students to consult the entry in the *Guide*). Finish off with a whole-class discussion centring on these questions:

- In what ways does the original paragraph reflect British/American culture?
- In what ways does your version of the paragraph reflect your own culture?

The following is a sample cross-cultural dictation based on the entry for *habeas corpus* in the *Guide*:

A writ saying that a __________ person who is being held by the __________ or in __________ must be brought before a court of law so that the __________ can decide whether he or she is being __________ legally. Habeas corpus is one of the most important ways of __________ people’s personal __________. It formally became part of the law in Britain in 1679. Article 1 of the American Constitutions says that a person’s __________ to get a writ of habeas corpus can __________ be taken away except in cases of __________ or __________.

**Answer key:** particular, police, prison, court, held, protecting, freedom, right, never, rebellion, invasion.

Other entries which might reflect the way in which British or American values shape the countries’ policies and institutions include:

- the First/Second/Fifth Amendment
- freedom of speech/freedom of the press
- the Pledge of Allegiance
- the welfare state, National Insurance
- gun laws
- Sunday trading
- Green belt
- ASBO

**Oral presentations**

**Culture capsules**

Individual students can research a British or American custom and prepare a short presentation consisting of a paragraph or so of explanation about one difference between the British or American custom and the equivalent custom in their own culture. The students should also collect pictures and/or photos which illustrate the custom in the two countries (from magazines, the Internet, etc). Students take turns presenting their *capsules* to the class in five or ten minutes at the end of the lesson.
**Culture mini-presentations (student version)**

As an extension of the Culture capsules activity (described above) students can prepare their own mini-presentations on their chosen topic and deliver them to the class.

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**Project work**

**Audio and video reports**

Students can use the information in the Guide to create audio and video scripts which are used as a basis for student-produced audio and video reports on aspects of British and American culture.

**Cultural wallcharts**

Students can use some of the longer entries or centre-section articles in the Guide to create wallcharts with information about specific aspects of British and American culture. For example, the extended entry for superstitions could be divided into good luck, bad luck, rituals and predicting the future. Divide the class into as many groups as there are sub-topics and then assign one sub-topic to each group. Each group can be responsible for creating a panel of the wallchart, using magazine, newspaper or Internet photos and articles and any other suitable materials they can assemble. For the superstitions example, students might collect examples of magazine horoscopes, pictures of lucky charms, examples of popular sayings or stories about bad luck on Friday the 13th.

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**Writing activities**

**Cultural summaries**

Students can identify the main points of a longer entry or centre-section article in the Guide and produce a short written summary.

**Cultural comparisons**

Students can write essays comparing cultural practices in Britain and the US with the corresponding practice in their own culture.

**Written reports**

Either individually or in small groups, students can use magazines, books, newspapers and the Internet to find out more about one of the topics presented in the Guide and then write a report summarizing the information they have gathered.

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**Games**

**Guess who?**

In this variation of ‘Twenty Questions’, look through the Guide to find an entry for a famous British or American personality. Students try to discover the identity of the personality by asking you questions that can only be answered yes or no. The idea is to narrow down the choices and guess the personality. Some sample questions might be:

- Is it a man?
- Is he/she American?
- Is he/she living?
- Is he/she a writer?
If students are struggling to guess, you can give them a limited number of hints using the biographical information in the Guide, for example, their date of birth, or the letter of the alphabet at which you found the entry.

**Who said that?**
The Guide contains about 300 famous quotations from politicians, celebrities, writers and fictional characters. Choose 8-10 quotations to put together on a handout or OHP with the quotations in one column and the people who said them in another in random order. Students work alone or in pairs to try to match the quotations to the people. If you think that the people may not be known to the students, it might be necessary to give a brief description alongside the name. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotation</th>
<th>Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”</td>
<td>Henry Ford, American car maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.”</td>
<td>Neil Armstrong, first man on the moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Any customer can have a car painted any colour that he wants so long as it is black.”</td>
<td>Winston Churchill, British wartime Prime Minister</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As an alternative, the quotations and people can be written on separate pieces of card to make a game in which students work in groups with a full set of quotations and people per group. They lay all the cards out on the table and then work together to match them.

**Historical timelines**
Use the information in the timelines in the centre-section (C4-C5 British History, C18-C19 American History) to put together a serious of key historical events in either Britain or the US. These could be key events from across the whole timeline, or from a particular period in a country’s history, for example the period including the American Revolution through to the American Civil War. Either write the events on a handout or OHP in random order, or on individual cards. Students then work in pairs or groups to put the events into the correct order. Once an order has been agreed on as a class, give the students the matching dates, or get them to check the dates in the Guide.

This game makes a good follow-up activity to the study of a historical event or period, for example in a reading text, as it helps students to put the event into a more general historical framework. It could be followed by a discussion about the events which were important in the students’ own country during the same time period.

**Culture match**
Use the Guide to compile a list of pairs of corresponding British and American cultural items – places, institutions, people etc. For example:

- The City / Wall Street
- Financial Times / Wall Street Journal
Parliament / Congress
Prime Minister / President
10 Downing Street / White House
Magna Carta / Bill of Rights
Union Jack / Stars and Stripes
Winston Churchill / Franklin D Roosevelt

After making sure that the list includes as many items as there are students in the class, write each item on a piece of card. Then distribute the cards, giving one to each student. Students go round the class and find a student with a cultural item which matches their own. As students find their cultural match, they write their pair of items on the board. When all students have written their items on the board, pairs take turns reporting to the class what their items are, which one refers to Britain, and which one refers to the US. Pairs then tell the class all they know about their topics, and where appropriate they provide the equivalent event, person or institution from their own culture.

As a follow-up or homework assignment, students can be asked to use the Guide and any other available sources to prepare a brief written report in which they compare one of the pairs of items with the equivalent item in their own culture.

Sample lesson plan

**Topic: Political Correctness**

**Aim:** To raise students’ awareness of an important aspect of the way in which the attitudes of British and American society can be reflected in the language. This is a topic which is often of interest to students, especially those from very different cultures. It is particularly important for ESL/ESOL students or those hoping to work or study in Britain or America, if they want to avoid causing offence or discomfort when talking about sensitive issues to native speakers.

**Activity 1: Brainstorming**

Working in groups, students consider the following questions. One student, selected to serve as ‘secretary’, records the group’s quick responses. Before listening to the article about political correctness, groups compare lists.

- Which groups of people are often discriminated against?
- How does the language used to refer to these groups reflect prejudice against them?
- What examples do you know of words or phrases that have been introduced in Britain or America to be more ‘politically correct’ (= not cause offence)?

If groups are struggling with the last question, give them an example which they might be familiar with to get them started, such as the shift in the US from Negro > black > colored > African American.

**Activity 2: General listening**

Read out the article on political correctness (page 367-368 of the Guide) to the class. While listening to the article, students listen for additional information (not mentioned in the brainstorming session) about the topic.
Activity 3: Agree/disagree/unsure

Elicit general reactions to the article and encourage discussion of any additional information gained from the listening activity. As part of this feedback session you might write up some of the politically correct terms which the students noted. Next students complete the agree/disagree/unsure task sheet individually. In groups, students then discuss their answers. If all the students in a group respond in the same way, they must decide whether they did so for the same reasons. If some members of a group disagree on any point, they try to explain and understand differing points of view.

Homework assignment: Essay

As a homework assignment, students review the agree/disagree/unsure task sheet, choose a statement with which they strongly agreed or disagreed, and comment on it in a written essay.

Task sheet: Political correctness

Read each of the following statements and indicate whether you agree (A), disagree (D), or are unsure (U) about it.

1. The language we use influences the way we think about people.
2. It is only sensible to use ‘gender neutral’ terms, such as chairperson, for jobs which are done by both men and women.
3. Over time, new terms just acquire the same negative connotations as the old ones.
4. It is important that official documents should not show any prejudice in the language they use.
5. Just because someone uses politically correct language doesn’t change their personal beliefs, attitudes or prejudices.