



PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS IN THE ELA CLASSROOM FOR ADULT EDUCATION TEACHERS

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Let's Chat!

1. How do you define culture?
2. What are some of your cultural beliefs?
3. What made you sign up for this class today?



OBJECTIVE

To explore strategies for promoting diversity and cultural awareness in the adult English language classroom.

- Adult learners come from diverse backgrounds, bringing with them a wealth of experience and knowledge.
- Creating an inclusive environment helps all learners feel respected, valued, and supported.
- Meeting the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards while promoting inclusivity is key to success.





WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Understanding the learner's diversity:

- **Varied cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds.**
- **Diverse perspectives enrich learning and foster global understanding.**

Impact on the learning environment:

- **Encourages mutual respect and empathy.**
- **Creates a safe space for open dialogue and collaborative learning.**
- **Promotes higher engagement and academic success.**

KEY STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS



KNOW YOUR LEARNERS

**USE CULTURALLY
RELEVANT MATERIALS**

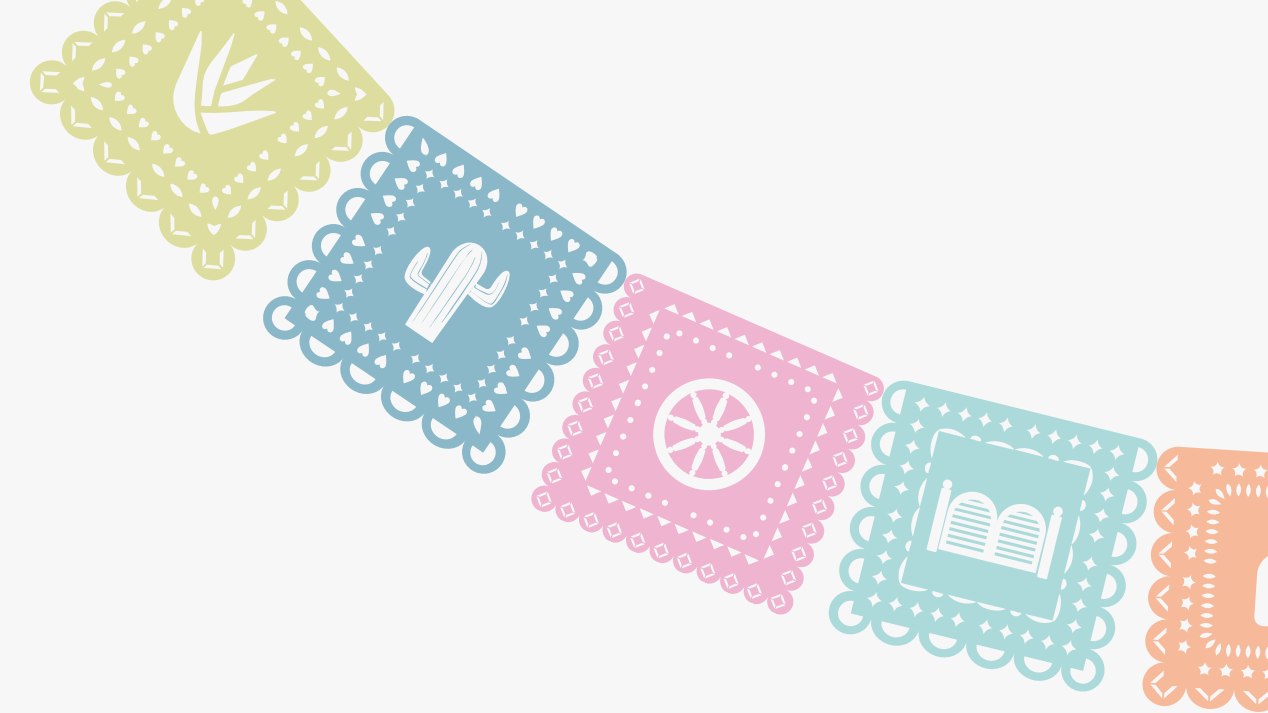
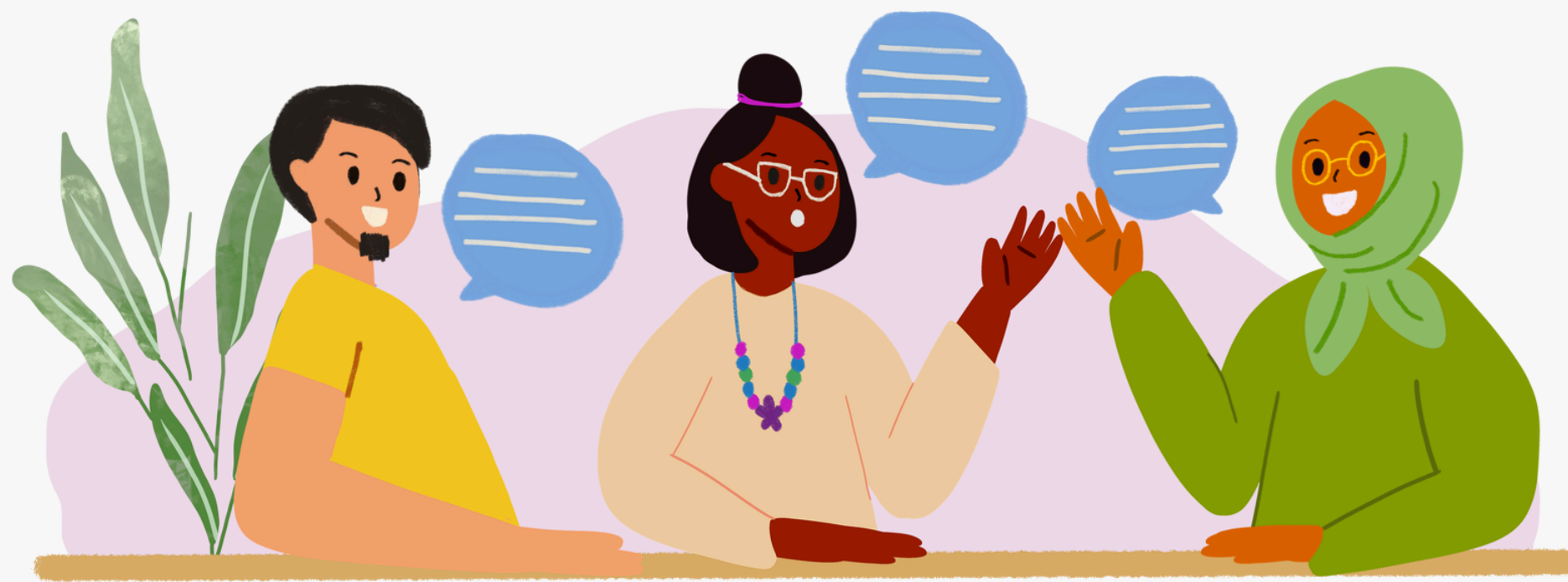
**FOSTER DIALOGUE +
RESPECTFUL CONVERSATIONS**

**DIVERSIFY TEACHING
METHODS**

TAKE ACTIONABLE STEPS

KNOW YOUR LEARNERS

A cultural inventory assessment for learners could include questions about their family background, heritage, traditions, important celebrations, language spoken at home, values, beliefs about education, preferred learning styles, comfort levels with discussing personal experiences, and how they navigate cultural differences in the classroom - allowing teachers to better understand their diverse backgrounds and cater instruction accordingly.





GENERAL BACKGROUND

- Where were you born?
- Where did you grow up?
- What countries are your parents/grandparents from?
- What languages are spoken in your home?

FAMILY & COMMUNITY

- What are some important traditions or celebrations in your family?
- How does your family typically celebrate holidays?
- What are some important values that your family teaches you?
- Describe your family's typical mealtime practices

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- What are some community events or activities that are important to your culture?
- Do you participate in any cultural clubs or organizations at school?
- How do you feel about discussing social issues related to your cultural background in class?

LEARNING & COMMUNICATION

- How do you learn best?
- How do you like to be addressed by teachers?
- Do you have any specific needs or preferences regarding classroom communication?
- Are there any topics or discussions that might be sensitive for you based on your cultural background?

CULTURAL IDENTITY

- How do you identify culturally?
- What aspects of your culture are most important to you?
- Have you ever experienced challenges related to your cultural background?
- Do you feel comfortable sharing your cultural experiences in the classroom?



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- **Sensitivity:** Ensure questions are respectful and avoid assumptions about cultural practices.
- **Open-ended questions:** Allow learners to share their experiences in their own words.
- **Confidentiality:** Emphasize that responses will be kept private.
- **Adapt to context:** Tailor questions based on the specific cultural demographics of your learner population

CULTURALLY RELEVANT MATERIALS

Culturally relevant materials in an ELA classroom refer to **books, poems, stories, and other texts that reflect the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and cultures of the learners in the class**, allowing them to see themselves represented in the curriculum and connect their own lives to the learning material, creating a more inclusive and engaging learning environment.

Representation of diverse cultures:

Including texts by authors from various ethnicities, racial backgrounds, genders, and socioeconomic levels.

Reflection of lived experiences:

Stories that resonate with students' personal experiences, including cultural traditions, holidays, challenges, and everyday life.

Avoiding stereotypes:

Being mindful of not perpetuating harmful stereotypes about any cultural group.

"Mirrors and windows":

Providing texts that act as "mirrors" reflecting students' own cultures and "windows" to explore other cultures and perspectives.



Resources for Sourcing Culturally Relevant Materials

<u>The Zinn Project</u>	<u>United Federation of Teachers</u>
<u>Colorin Colorado</u>	<u>Scholastic</u>
<u>Edutopia</u>	<u>SABES (Mass Adult Ed)</u>
<u>North Carolina DPI</u>	<u>Los Angeles Unified School District</u>



Promoting diversity in the classroom is essential for creating an inclusive and enriching environment for all adult learners. One effective way to foster diversity is by encouraging open dialogue and respectful conversations. These conversations can occur when a safe and welcoming environment has been established.

Start by establishing ground rules for respectful communication. Encourage learners to listen actively, respect differing viewpoints, and express their ideas without fear of judgment. This creates a foundation for open dialogue.

Examples:

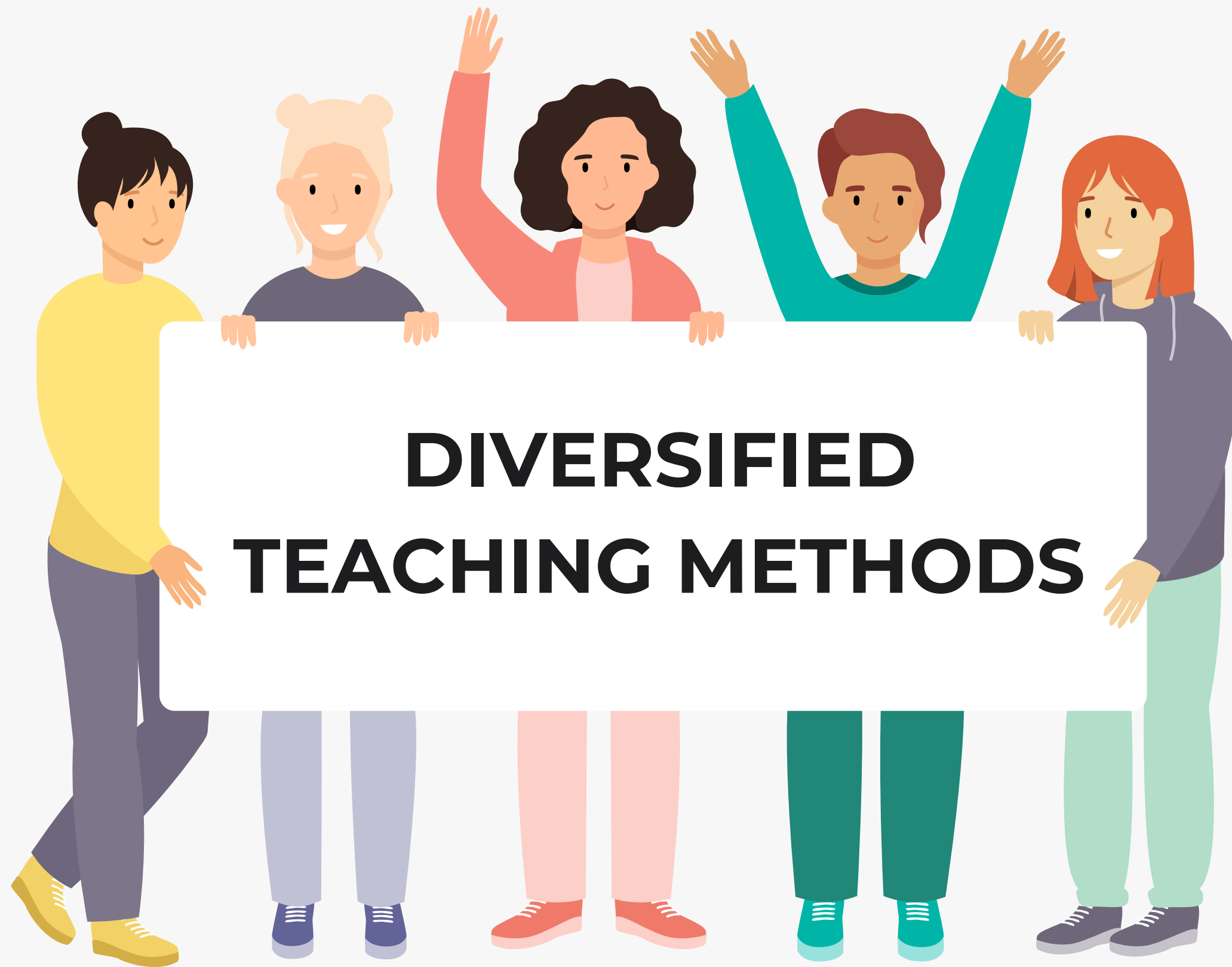
1. Active listening
2. Respecting different opinions
3. Staying on topic
4. Agreeing to disagree
5. Acknowledging others contributions



Acknowledge and validate the diverse identities and experiences of your learners, such as their cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives. By doing so, they will feel seen and valued.

Encourage Active Participation - Ensure that all learners, regardless of their backgrounds, feel comfortable sharing their perspectives. Create opportunities for every adult learners to speak, whether in small group discussions, class debates, or one-on-one interactions.





**DIVERSIFIED
TEACHING METHODS**

A diversified teaching approach can make learning more accessible for learners with different cultural, linguistic, or educational backgrounds. It creates an inclusive environment where everyone has an opportunity to engage with the material in a way that resonates with them and ultimately fosters inclusivity.

You can achieve this by using cooperative learning, group work, and role-playing to encourage peer interactions. These methods have benefits beyond fostering cultural inclusivity; they also provide differentiation for learners with different learning styles and varied educational backgrounds, enhance engagement, and promote critical thinking.

Repetition through varied approaches—such as using different forms of media, interactive activities, or peer teaching—can also help to reinforce concepts and improve learners' ability to retain and recall information.



The College and Career Readiness Standards



The College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) for Adult Education report presents a set of college and career readiness standards that reflect the content most relevant to preparing adult students for success in colleges, technical training programs, work and citizenship—in the areas of English language arts/literacy and mathematics.

In very simple terms...

Reading: Students should be able to analyze texts, cite evidence, and support claims

Writing: Students should be able to analyze sources and conduct research

Speaking and listening: Students should be able to contribute relevant information about ideas they have studied

A central globe with blue oceans and green continents is surrounded by several colorful, rounded rectangular shapes and circles in shades of orange, grey, blue, yellow, and red, arranged in a circular pattern around the globe. The shapes vary in size and orientation, creating a sense of movement and diversity.

Combining Cultural Relevant Practices with CCRS?

Connecting with Real World Content

Prompt Examples: "How do the media or school textbooks represent your culture? Do you feel this representation is accurate?" "Write about a time when you noticed cultural stereotypes in a book, movie, or advertisement."

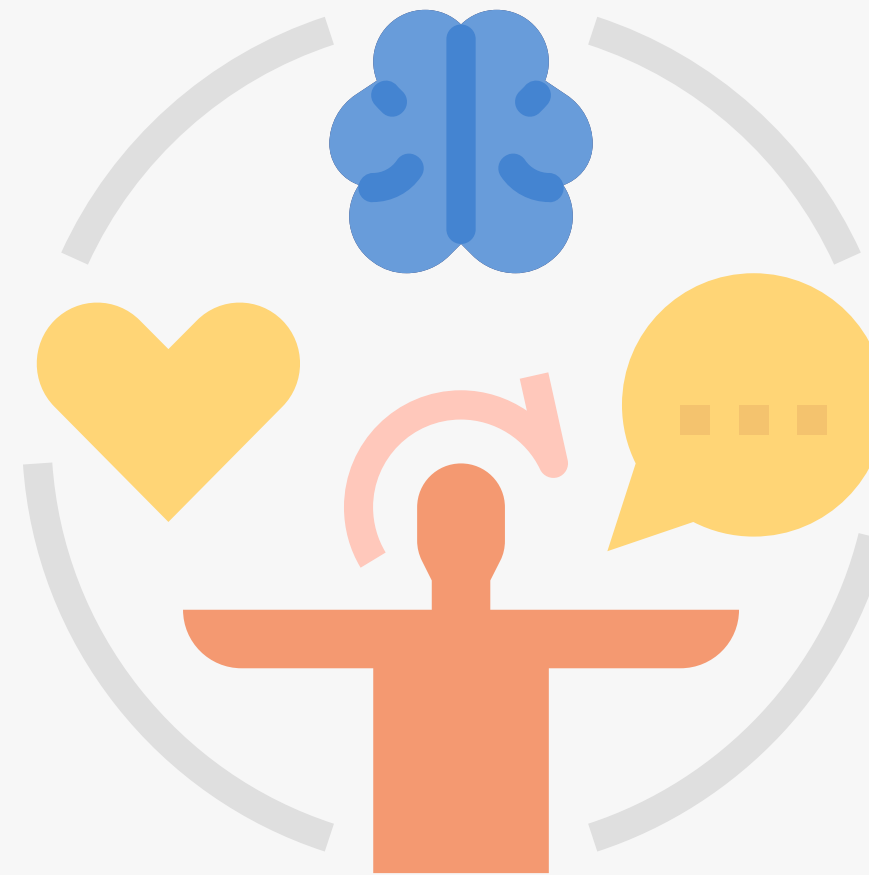
Purpose: Learners can explore how different cultures are portrayed in media and literature, developing critical thinking skills about the ways culture is represented and misrepresented in society.



Invite Reflection on the Role of Culture in Modern Society

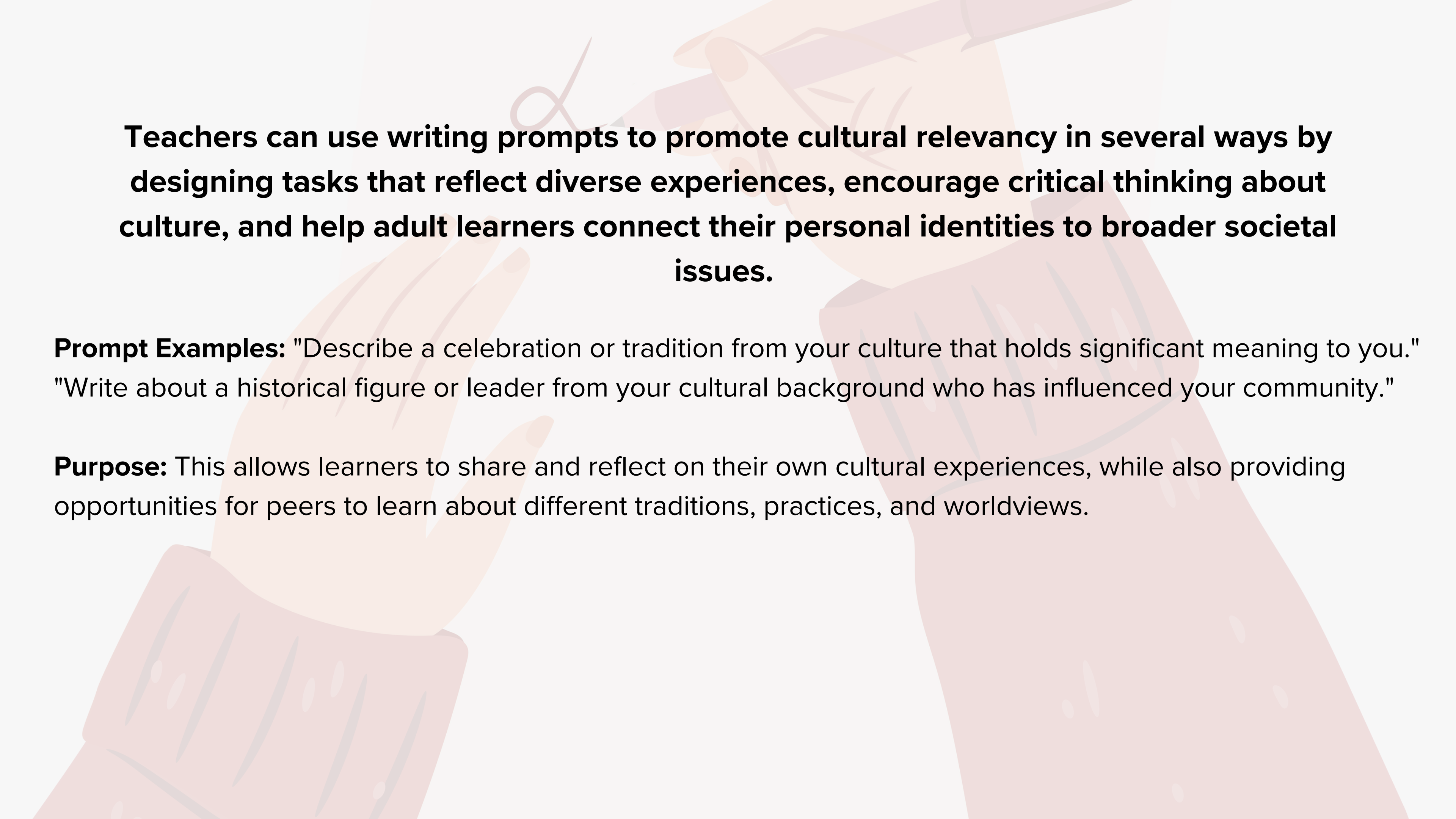
Prompt Examples: "How do you see your culture adapting to the changes of the modern world?" "Write about the ways in which cultural exchange has shaped your community."

Purpose: These prompts encourage learners to think critically about how cultures evolve and interact in contemporary contexts, encouraging them to consider both the preservation and adaptation of cultural traditions.



Actionable Steps



A faint, stylized illustration in the background shows two hands. One hand is holding a pen, and the other is positioned as if writing on a surface. The illustration is in shades of light pink and orange.

Teachers can use writing prompts to promote cultural relevancy in several ways by designing tasks that reflect diverse experiences, encourage critical thinking about culture, and help adult learners connect their personal identities to broader societal issues.

Prompt Examples: "Describe a celebration or tradition from your culture that holds significant meaning to you."
"Write about a historical figure or leader from your cultural background who has influenced your community."

Purpose: This allows learners to share and reflect on their own cultural experiences, while also providing opportunities for peers to learn about different traditions, practices, and worldviews.

An illustration of two hands, one larger and one smaller, holding a pen together. The hands are rendered in a soft, painterly style with warm tones of peach and pink. The larger hand is on the right, and the smaller hand is on the left, both reaching towards the center where the pen is held. The background is a light, neutral color.

Create Opportunities for Storytelling

Prompt Examples: "Write a story about a significant event in your family's history." "Describe a time when a cultural tradition helped you overcome a challenge."

Purpose: Storytelling allows learners to share important narratives that reflect their cultural backgrounds, strengthening connections between personal identity and broader societal histories.

Promote Diverse Voices

Inviting community members and former students to share their experiences in the English classroom is a powerful way to promote diversity and enrich students' understanding of different perspectives.

- Seek out individuals from various backgrounds, including different cultural, ethnic, professional, and personal experiences. This could include local business owners, artists, immigrants, activists, or even individuals from different socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Consider inviting former students who may have gone on to pursue careers or educational paths that reflect diverse experiences, as their stories can offer inspiration and insight into how education intersects with broader life paths.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

- ✓ Professional learning for instructional routines and teaching tools
- ✓ Assistance locating resources to address specific needs
- ✓ Individualized support for lesson planning and design



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