



LESSON PLAN

Cultural Competence and Cultural Humility in Cross-Cultural Exchange

After he retired from his career in opera, Jae-chang Kim relocated to the Indian city of Pune where he started the Banana Children's Choir for children living in the city's slums. Affectionately nicknamed Angry Bird by his students, Jae-chang Kim is not attempting to train his youth choir members to work as professional musicians; instead he wants to introduce them to the world beyond Pune through music and performance. But the children's parents, who are struggling in the economic margins, wonder if the time spent at choir practice could be better used studying and helping to earn money for the family.

The film *Singing with Angry Bird* follows Jae-chang Kim for a year as he attempts to involve the parents in the choir by inviting them to rehearse for and perform in a joint concert with their kids. As the project intersects with the choir families' daily challenges, Angry Bird and the singers must collaborate to find new strategies to make space for the singing they love while respecting the demanding economic and cultural responsibilities of Pune's community.

Through the following lesson for *Singing with Angry Bird*, students will understand the significance of cultural competence in cultural exchange projects like the Banana Children's Choir and assess its benefits and limitations. They will also explore the related concept of cultural humility and consider how they would integrate these approaches into theoretical cultural exchange projects of their own.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe cultural competence and the role it plays in cross-cultural communications
- Explain the value of cultural humility and its practical application
- Incorporate both cultural competence and cultural humility into a plan for a cross-cultural exchange project

GRADE LEVELS: 9-12+

SUBJECT AREAS

Language Arts

Social Studies

Professional Development

MATERIALS

- Film clips from *Singing with Angry Bird* and equipment on which to show them

- Student handouts: A: Cultural Competence, B: Discussion Prompts and C: Cultural Humility
- Whiteboard
- Pens, markers and writing paper

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED

One 50-minute class period, with homework.

FILM CLIPS

Film clips provided in this lesson are from *Singing with Angry Bird*. Access the streaming clips for free on POV's website by visiting www.pbs.org/pov/educators. Borrow the full film from our DVD Lending Library by joining the POV Community Network: communitynetwork.amdoc.org.

Clip 1: Mind of a Slum (6:03 min.)

The parents of Angry Bird's students struggle to understand the value of the choir. Angry Bird comes up with a plan to get them involved. This clip starts at 5:09 in the fish market with Sinduja's mother saying, "This fish is really fresh." It ends at 10:59 with Sinduja doing her homework and in voiceover saying, "If she's like me, she is probably a good singer."

Clip 2: Rehearsal (9:31 min.)

The parents practice for their concert with Angry Bird and at home with their children. This clip starts at 11:00 with the mothers auditioning for the choir with Angry Bird and ends at 20:18 with Rahul and his father rehearsing at home.

Clip 3: The Concert (4:13 min.)

The children and parents of the Banana Children's Choir perform at their concert. This clip starts at 49:11 with the Banana Children's Choir performing at their concert and ends at 53:11 with Sinduja answering a question in her schoolroom.

ACTIVITY

Introduction: Culture and Cultural Competence

Ask students to free-write for three to five minutes about what "culture" means to them. Divide the class into cooperative learning groups of two to three. Instruct the groups to define "culture." Using the Popcorn Sharing Method, have groups share their definitions with the full class.

Have volunteers look up and share formal definitions for "culture" (such as the following), then discuss how these definitions compare with the groups' responses:

Culture is a set of learned beliefs, traditions, principles and guides for individual and collective behaviors that members of a particular group share with each other.

Don C. Locke, *Increasing Multicultural Understanding: A Comprehensive Model* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992), 10.

Ask students to make lists of all the places they have visited (these can be different countries, states, cities, communities/neighborhoods).

Once the students have completed their lists, have each add one thing to each place that was different from their home (for example: food, dress, language).

Ask for a few examples from the class, then have the students list all the ways they learned about these differences (for example, through observation, discussion, participating, formal training, collaborating, researching, seeing depictions in media).

Have students return to their cooperative learning groups to share their responses, then discuss as a class:

- How are your experiences similar to or different from each other's?
- What did it feel like to be in a community that was different from yours?
- What learning experience did you enjoy the most (or least)? Why?
- Did you share anything from your own culture while you were there? If not, have you ever shared parts of your own culture with someone? What strategies did you use to share your culture?

Write the words "cultural competence" on the board and ask the class the following: Based on our discussions so far, what do you think the term cultural competence refers to? How might it relate to the personal experiences you discussed?

Read the following description of cultural competence and ask for a few volunteers to re-state the definition in their own words:

Cultural competence describes our ability to interact effectively with people who have cultural experiences, beliefs, practices, values ways of communicating and traditions that are different from our own.

Explain:

Developing cultural competence is an ongoing process and our level of cultural competence changes in response to new situations, experiences and relationships. It's helpful to think of cultural competence as a combination of three elements:

1. Awareness
2. Knowledge
3. Skills

Distribute Student Handout A: Cultural Competence and review the descriptions for the three elements of cultural competence.

Bridging the Cultural Gap

Explain: Today we will watch the film *Singing with Angry Bird* and examine how cultural competence is demonstrated in a cross-cultural choir program for children and their parents in Pune, India.

Share the following summary of the film to provide additional context:

Jae-chang Kim, a retired Korean opera singer, relocated to the Indian city of Pune, where he started the Banana Children's Choir for children living in the city's slums. Affectionately nicknamed Angry Bird by his students, Jae-chang Kim is not attempting to train his youth choir members to work as professional musicians, but instead wants to introduce them to the world beyond Pune through music and performance.

The film *Singing with Angry Bird* follows Jae-chang Kim for a year as he attempts to involve the parents in the choir by inviting them to rehearse for and perform in a joint concert with their kids. As the project intersects with the choir families' daily challenges, Angry Bird and the singers must collaborate to find new strategies to make space for the singing they love while respecting the demanding economic and cultural responsibilities of Pune's community.

Explain that while watching the film, students should complete Student Handout A: Cultural Competence (page 2) by noting scenes and quotes that demonstrate awareness, knowledge and skills. Share the following guiding questions with the class as needed:

- Awareness: Do the film's subjects make assumptions about each other based on stereotypes, preconceptions, or cultural misunderstandings?
- Knowledge: Able to identify specific information about each other that helped improve communication and mutual understanding?
- Skills: Are there examples of Angry Bird and the project participants building bridges through collaboration, research, tutoring and participation?

Play Clip 1. After watching the clip, check in via a brief class discussion using the prompts below before breaking out into discussion groups:

- What surprised you most in this story? What stood out for you? Why?
- What are some examples of cultural competence that were illustrated in the film? (Ask for examples of the parents and children as well as Jae-chang Kim.)

Have students organize into small groups to discuss the clip using Student Handout B: Discussion Prompts (Discussion questions from the handout are included below):

- Which scenes demonstrated some of the challenges that Jae-chang Kim and the choir community faced as they engaged in their cultural exchange?
- Sinduja's parents shared their concerns that the choir was taking time away from her ability to contribute to her family and focus on her education. Jae-chang Kim described these concerns as the "slum mind." What did he mean by that? Do you think that was accurate? Why or why not? Is this an example of cultural competence? Explain and discuss your response.
- How does this scene demonstrate a lack of cultural understanding between Jae-chang Kim and Sinduja's parents?
- What is Jae-chang Kim's misunderstanding about the culture, values and experiences of Sinduja's family? What does he need to know in order to be more culturally competent in his interactions with them?
- What is Sinduja's parents' misunderstanding about Jae-chang Kim's culture, worldview and goals? What do they need to know in order to understand why Angry Bird believes the choir is valuable for the children?
- What was your reaction to Jae-chang Kim telling Sinduja's parents that she was half their daughter and half his daughter? What did he mean by that?
- What are the unique cultural benefits and challenges that Sinduja, Rahul and the other children experience as a result of participating in the choir? (Examples: The children need to act as intermediaries between their parents and Angry Bird. They are translating back and forth across the two different languages and cultures. They demonstrate the most cultural competence throughout the film and become the teachers for the adults in their lives.)

Reconvene the class and discuss:

- Do you think that Jae-chang Kim's decision to include the parents in the choir will help to bridge the cultural gaps or cause more challenges for the parents and children? Why or why not?
- What will Jae-chang Kim and the choir parents need to do/learn/understand to bridge their cultural gap?

Cultural Humility

Discuss: So far, we have examined the definition of "culture" and the meaning and function of cultural competence. Based on our discussions, what do you think "cultural humility" might mean? (Ask for volunteers to share their responses.)

Explain:

Cultural competence helps us understand the awareness, knowledge and skills that we need to collaborate successfully across cultures, but it has limitations. It takes a long time to develop full cultural competence, and it may be difficult, if not impossible, to gain a sufficient understanding of every culture we encounter, no matter how hard we try.

The concept of cultural humility was developed to help us bridge that cultural gap.

Cultural humility is a process of self-evaluation that focuses on how our culture influences our perceptions of other communities and the impact that has on our ability to participate in successful cultural exchanges. Cultural humility includes:

- Evaluating and acknowledging the limitations of our own cultural perspectives
- Recognizing and changing power imbalances
- Prioritizing mutual respect
- Accepting that developing cultural understanding is a lifelong learning process

(Note: The concept of cultural humility was originally developed by Melanie Tervalon and Jann Murray-Garcia in 1998 to address inequities in medical services, and it is now used in many fields where people from different cultures regularly interact, including education, public health, social work and international aid programs.)

Discuss: How do you think cultural humility could be incorporated into the Banana Children's Choir project? What impact do you think it would have?

Distribute Student Handout C: Cultural Humility and ask for volunteers to read the description of Cultural Humility aloud to the class. Explain that while watching the film, students should note scenes and quotes that illustrate examples of cultural competence and cultural humility. Play Clips 2 and 3. Share the following guiding questions with the class as needed:

- Do any of the characters address the limitations of our own cultural perspectives?
- How do the students, parents, and/or Jae-chang Kim acknowledge and adjust traditional roles to improve their collaboration and outcomes?
- How do the characters demonstrate mutual respect as the project evolves?
- Which characters acknowledge that cultural understanding is a life-long learning process? Why is that significant?

After watching the clips, reflect with the class using the following discussion prompts:

- What are some examples of cultural humility from the story? (Ask for examples of the parents and children as well as Jae-chang Kim.)
- Why was Jae-chang Kim frustrated with the parents who couldn't come to rehearsal? What changes did he make based on his deeper understanding of the families' circumstances?
- Why was it significant that Jae-chang Kim went to Rahul's home to connect with and instruct his father?
- Jae-chang Kim began by teaching "Western style" singing but then added an Indian pop song to their program. What are the similarities and differences between the two styles? What message was Jae-chang Kim sending to the choir by adding this song?
- Overall, what influence did acts of cultural humility have on the relationship between Jae-chang Kim and the Banana Children's Choir?

- If you were part of a cultural exchange project, what lessons would you take from *Singing with Angry Bird*? What would you want to borrow from the choir project? What would you do differently?

Essay: Competence and Humility in Action

Have students conclude the lesson by imagining they are part of a cross-cultural exchange and describing how they would incorporate lessons from *Singing with Angry Bird* (including cultural competence and cultural humility) into their own projects. Students can present their essays in written form or expand them into multi-media presentations that incorporate real-world examples of successful cultural exchange programs they would like to emulate.

Explain: Imagine you are invited to share your skills and talents with a community whose culture is different from yours. What would you like to share? What would your cultural exchange project look like? What would you like to learn through the experience?

Describe how you would collaborate with the community during all stages of the project (before, during and after) and how you would incorporate cultural competence, cultural humility and the lessons learned from *Singing with Angry Bird* using the following prompts to guide your writing:

- What would your cultural exchange project be? What would you teach?
- How would you organize the project?
- What role would the community play in shaping the project?
- How would you incorporate cultural competence and cultural humility?
- What do you want to learn from the community? What do you want to learn from this experience?
- What outcome would you hope to achieve for you and the community?

EXTENSIONS

Cultural Diplomacy

What is cultural diplomacy and how does the Banana Children's Choir project from *Singing with Angry Bird* demonstrate the skills and goals of cultural diplomacy? Have students research the history of cultural diplomacy and how it is employed in international relations. Have them identify examples of cultural diplomacy from the past or present that relate to their own interests and/or talents and examine how this method of cultural exchange is used to build cultural and political bridges between individuals, communities and countries.

Cross-Cultural Communication

How does *Singing with Angry Bird* illustrate challenges (and successful strategies) related to cross-cultural and inter-generational communication and understanding?

Use scenes from *Singing with Angry Bird* to spark dialogue around forms of cultural difference within the students' own lives (in the classroom, community, families) and to strengthen their understanding of diversity and multiculturalism within and beyond educational settings.

Have students identify barriers and issues that might prevent them from effectively engaging across cultures and collaborate to develop strategies to bridge difficult cultural chasms. They can reflect on effective techniques demonstrated in *Singing with Angry Bird* and identify how to apply these lessons in their own lives.

RESOURCES

This is a list of organizations, websites, articles and other materials that may be helpful to teachers in developing the lesson, or for students as they are researching.

POV: *Singing with Angry Bird*

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/singingwithangrybird>

The film's official POV site includes a discussion guide with additional activity ideas, steps to borrow the DVD from the POV Lending Library and other resources.

POV: Media Literacy Questions for Analyzing POV Films

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php>

This list of questions provides a useful starting point for leading rich discussions that challenge students to think critically about documentaries.

Georgetown University National Center for Cultural Competence

<https://nccc.georgetown.edu/>

This website offers resources and programs for advancing and sustaining cultural and linguistic competency.

My Love, Don't Cross That River

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/mylovedontcrossthatriver/>

This documentary follows an elderly Korean couple as they navigate the challenges of aging in a changing world

PBS: Homeland: Immigration in America

<http://www.ninenet.org/homeland/>

This PBS series offers personal insights into America's immigrant experience and explores how much we, as a country and a community, value assimilation, inclusion and cultural diversity.

PBS: "Toward a More Perfect Union in an Age of Diversity: Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges"

<http://www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html>

This paper explores how various groups within our society have related to each other and how we open the channels for cross-cultural communication.

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

- CCSS.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence clearly, concisely and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and task.
- CCSS.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed and the organization, development, substance and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and a range of formal and informal tasks.
- CCSS.SL.9-10.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning and evidence and to add interest.
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[Content Knowledge](#): a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning).

- Language Arts Standard 8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.
- Language Arts Standard 9. Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.
- Thinking and Reasoning Standard 1. Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument.
- Thinking and Reasoning, Standard 3. Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allison Milewski has developed media education resources for a range of award-winning filmmakers and national media organizations, including PBS LearningMedia, Independent Television Services (ITVS), Latino Public Broadcasting, HBO Documentaries and Tribeca Film Institute. She is also the founder of the international media education program *PhotoForward.org*.

“Cultural competence” describes our ability to interact effectively with people who have cultural experiences, beliefs, practices, values ways of communicating and traditions that are different from our own.

Awareness:

- Being comfortable with the differences that exist between ourselves and people we encounter and not presuming our values and expectations are superior.
- Understanding that we cannot make assumptions based on our very limited sets of cultural experiences
- Seeking assistance from a member of a new culture who can help us understand the community and how to interact respectfully

Knowledge:

- Understanding the cultural, political and social factors that influence how people from another culture interact and communicate
- Being aware of and navigating the power structures related to social class, gender, race, caste and so on
- Identifying specific information about another culture that will improve communication and mutual understanding

Skills:

- Learning about multiple aspects of a culture through research, tutoring, participation and collaboration
- Communicating accurately and appropriately through speech, gestures and writing (including seeking assistance from community members when necessary)

STUDENT NAME _____

Instructions: Watch the film and note characters, scenes and quotes who/that demonstrate the three elements of cultural competence:

AWARENESS

KNOWLEDGE

SKILLS

Singing with Angry Bird Student Handout B: Discussion Prompts

Instructions: Use the following questions to guide a group discussion about *Singing with Angry Bird*:

1. Which scenes demonstrated the challenges that Jae-chang Kim and the choir community in Pune faced as they engage in their cultural exchange?
2. Sinduja's parents share their concerns that the choir is taking time away from her ability to contribute to her family and focus on her education. Jae-chang Kim described these concerns as the "slum mind."
 - a. What does he mean by that? Do you think that is accurate? Why or why not?
 - b. Is this an example of cultural competence? Explain and discuss your response.
3. What is Jae-chang Kim's misunderstanding about the culture, values and experiences of Sinduja's family? What does he need to know in order to be more culturally competent in his interactions with them?
4. What is Sinduja's parents' misunderstanding about Jae-chang Kim's culture, worldview and experiences? What do they need to know in order to understand why Angry Bird believes the choir is valuable for the children?
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CULTURAL COMPETENCE

CULTURAL HUMILITY