

Art, Culture and Public Humanities Writing Prompt Responses

Prompt 1:

Culture is defined as shared values, behaviors, beliefs and attitudes that distinguish a group of people from other groups of people. Describe a particular culture in which you are apart (family, school, race, ethnicity, sports group, etc.) by sharing some of the shared values, beliefs and attitudes among its members. Make sure to also discuss some ways that your culture is distinctive in terms of behavior, such as its language, creative styles of dress, traditional foods, or celebrations of certain holidays and rituals.

Prompt 2:

A “cultural stereotype” is an oversimplified idea about a group of people that leaves little room for exception or complexity. Discuss why you think it is important to challenge cultural stereotypes that promote oversimplified ideas about a particular cultural group. How might art be used as a way to resist cultural stereotypes and provide more accurate depictions and images of a cultural group?

Prompt 3:

Among all of the art pieces we have seen today, which one spoke to you the most? Did it challenge any previous assumptions you held or did it resonate with your beliefs or experience? How so, and/or why not? Discuss some of the ways in which the piece expressed certain ideas about culture and cultural heritage. If applicable, also discuss some of the ways that that the piece might promote the resistance of cultural stereotypes. If none of the artwork you saw today inspired you (positively or negatively!), name your favorite piece of creative art (whether a visual art piece, song, novel, etc.). Make sure to also name who the piece was created or performed by. Discuss a way in which your favorite piece of creative art expresses certain ideas about culture and cultural heritage.

SCARBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

Joel A. Lopez, Scarborough High School (Prompt 1)

The culture I am a part of is the Chicano culture, the descendant of two parents from Mexico. Although I fully embrace the Mexican culture, the American culture conflicts with my own. Growing with Mexican views, but learning the American way of life that so greatly conflict with everything my parents have taught me ultimately losing appreciation for my own native culture.

I was raised in a house of Spanish speakers, and it was my first language. Only learning English in school, is how I developed my American Tongue. While it was extremely useful to learn English, this was the begging of assimilation. The school I attended taught me little of my own culture so I began to drift further and further away from my own Mexican culture. My parents duty expose me of my ancestors and views my people couldn't since I went to school and they worked. The beliefs, views, customs, and sound of my Mexican heritage ended at me.

I was not taught of the beauty of our language. Instead I was taught to harvest the meaning out of the Spanish words my mother thought were so beautiful. I was taught to use our language as a cash crop, only learning it so I could get a better job. But, I was never taught of the beauty, I wasn't taught to appreciate it and instead became frustrated by it since I had low grades in Spanish class. The class struggled with me even if they were only 2nd or 3rd generation Hispanics unable to roll their tongues to make the "r" sound. The immediate assimilation this country puts on my culture was clearly very effective.

Our customs are obscure to many but they are so comfortable that I couldn't imagine it any other way. I have always celebrated Christmas on Christmas Eve, huge family gatherings at my aunt's house. We stand around a freshly picked giant tree with gifts under it. Seeing all my family together is possibly my favorite part, since I mostly get socks now. But, my father was forced to miss the special celebration because we hold it on Christmas Eve and not the actual day. I know Christmas Eve to be the main holiday, but others

don't see that day as one. It ruined my Christmas not being able to spend time with my father, because his job didn't see the importance of our holiday. The government has not announced it as a holiday but I am unsure why that should devalue our holiday. My uncle was also unable to attend the Christmas celebration. My uncle was deported after not being able to become an official resident of the United States due to the fact that he couldn't sing the "Pledge of Allegiance" in English, his thick accent hid the words of the Pledge. Because of words, because the people testing him were unable to see the beauty in this foreign language, but I fear I am just as blind. The language that hurts us and puts us at a disadvantage is all we have left. All my mother kept from her mother and mothers after that. The only thing my father can leave me, but I will not be able to carry on the legacy because of my American Tongue.

I've learned a lot of American customs at the expense of abandoning my own. Ultimately learning that I should have tried to save my own dying culture. Realizing the conflict between my two cultures left one unknown and mysterious to me. But now that I am an adult I can now see the value they both possess even if they intersect. The cultures collectively define who I am, even more they help me see the value I couldn't see when I was younger. I am now able to see the beauty in heritage and my American life.

Moniqua Nash, Scarborough High School (Prompt 2)

Cultures are placed in stereotypical boxes, and are belittled by small, simple, beliefs from people outside of the culture being targeted. Cultural stereotypes is an oversimplified idea about a group of people that leaves little to no room for exceptions nor complexity. It is extremely important to challenge these horrific burdens, because if a culture insist on the acceptance of this cruel behavior, it will somewhat become "true" to many others who are viewing the culture. The simple stereotypes will rapidly become a threat to that cultural and its entirety. Everything that the culture stands for will eventually be based on the views and perceptions of outsiders, but art is one way to express honesty, and

truth. Art is a form of expression that enables the human mind to expand in creativity, inferences, and ideas.

Art is one of the most expressive languages, used in our society today. Many see art as an imaginative escape from the world. For example, I love to draw and do artistic things. I draw when I am feeling lonely, sad, or out of place. I have been drawing for five years now, and I use my passion for relaxation and a peace of mind. Being an African American female in America, I need something that would give me a peace of mind. Blacks in my opinion, are the largest community that are targeted by cultural stereotypes, we always have been. I am a perfect example that opposes the common black stereotypes created in America, by several different cultures. For instance, I despise watermelon, I rarely eat fried chicken, I do not steal, I am educated, and more importantly, I am not a bad person. There are dozens of black music artists who oppose the cultural stereotypes.

Many rappers express their feelings through their music, to speak to their culture and community. Kendrick Lamar stated in his song *Black Boy Fly*, "A boy touring the country with money from mic recording. The only way out the ghetto, you know the stereotype." This is one of the biggest stereotypes involving the black culture; the only thing we can do is rap, sing, and play sports. Rap is a very informative expression of art, it discusses all aspects of living. Many other artists such as J. Cole, and Eminem. Art can branch out to many different creative forms, and is loved for their powerful and emotional connection to each individual.

Sandra Estrada, Scarborough High School (Prompt 2)

It is important to challenge stereotypes because we are all more than just labels. As society we should all challenge stereotypes, because we won't ever get anywhere by harming others that are part of our society. We need to learn to accept some of us are different and embrace our similarities. It is time to be realistic, and open minded, it is impossible for a stereotype to label a group of people. Art is an interesting, and a great contributor that can change the world by challenging stereotypes. Artists should pay more attention to the message

their art gives off because it can harm other individuals in ways not expected. Art can be very inspiring, yet it can destroy, and cause controversy. By portraying different races, religions, and gender on Art it teaches society that it is okay, allowing them to be more open minded. More stereotypes can lead to racism and other ways of harming, however, by conveying a nice message through Art it allows the mind of individuals to be more accepting and see it as something normal. Since art is so common amongst many, it allows the artist to convey a message for everyone to have a change of mind and heart.

Antonio Rivera, Scarborough High School (Prompt 2)

Challenging cultural stereotypes through art is important because it is a creative way to convey messages to people in society. Things like paintings, sculptures, murals, etc. can all serve as visual representations of an artists' inner feelings about something specific be it a person, place, thing, or idea. In reference to addressing stereotypes, artists' have the power to create something that can appeal to people in various ways. Examples such as songs that cover topics such as race and discrimination can cause people to have a change of heart on the topic introduced in the song. I know artists will continue to make countless things that will address race and cultural stereotypes because more and more artists are making things each and every day. Along with the creation of these things, people will continue to view and listen to all of the things that are created by these artists. Overall, once any piece of art is released to the public eye, it is up to the viewer to determine whether or not they will take the message to heart.