Through Whose Eyes?

How cultural viewpoints can support or harm a community

S.6.7 "Define ethnocentrism and cultural relativism and explain how they can be beneficial or destructive to a culture."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the meaning of each viewpoint, circle one possible benefit of each, and write E or C beside a possible harm of ethnocentrism or cultural relativism.

At the Neighborhood Dinner

1 At a neighborhood dinner, families bring dishes and take turns serving one another. When Maya sees guests eating from a shared platter, she says, "At my house everyone has a separate plate. Our way is more civilized." Her comment shows ethnocentrism: judging another culture by the standards of your own and assuming yours is better. Ethnocentrism can strengthen pride in a group's traditions and encourage members to keep them alive. Yet Maya's judgment could make guests feel unwelcome, even though everyone washed their hands before eating. A custom may look strange from the outside without being unsafe or wrong.

2 Jules asks why the shared platter matters instead of rejecting it. A host explains that offering food this way expresses trust and belonging in their family. Jules is practicing cultural relativism: trying to understand a practice in its cultural setting rather than measuring it only against personal habits. This approach can help neighbors listen to one another and protect a tradition from unfair criticism. Cultural relativism does not require Jules to eat from the platter or to approve of every practice. It asks for careful questions before judgment, not silence about possible harm.

3 Later, a teen volunteer says younger people are expected to clean up while adults relax. Some teens enjoy helping, but others feel unable to refuse. Maya says, "In my family, adults and teens clean together. These customs are backward, so cancel the dinner." Jules asks whether the cleanup rule teaches responsibility and whether teens can choose not to help. Strong loyalty to a group's ways might keep neighbors working together, but it might also silence those who object. Understanding the rule's history can reveal its purpose; it cannot, by itself, prove that pressure on teens is fair. Ignoring their concerns could let the rule continue unchanged.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why is Maya's first reaction ethnocentric? Explain one possible benefit and one possible harm of that viewpoint.

2. How does Jules respond to the shared platter with cultural relativism? What benefit could that response bring?

3. How might ethnocentrism shape Maya's plan to cancel the dinner? What could the community lose?

4. How could Jules consider the cleanup rule through cultural relativism without ignoring possible harm?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a school or neighborhood custom not mentioned in the passage. In five or six sentences, explain how an ethnocentric outsider and a culturally relativistic outsider might react, and give one possible benefit and one possible harm of each reaction for the community.

Through Whose Eyes?

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the meaning of each viewpoint, circle one possible benefit of each, and write E or C beside a possible harm of ethnocentrism or cultural relativism. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why is Maya's first reaction ethnocentric? Explain one possible benefit and one possible harm of that viewpoint.	**Maya treats her family's separate plates as the better standard. Loyalty to that custom could help preserve it, but calling the shared platter less civilized could make guests feel unwelcome.**
2	How does Jules respond to the shared platter with cultural relativism? What benefit could that response bring?	**Jules asks what the platter means to the family before judging it. That question could build understanding and protect the tradition from unfair criticism.**
3	How might ethnocentrism shape Maya's plan to cancel the dinner? What could the community lose?	**Maya judges all the dinner's customs against her family's way of dividing cleanup work. Canceling the dinner could end a gathering that brings neighbors together, even though some teens value helping.**
4	How could Jules consider the cleanup rule through cultural relativism without ignoring possible harm?	**Jules could ask why the rule exists and whether teens can refuse. Understanding its purpose should not become an excuse to ignore teens who feel pressured.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At my imagined school, students decorate classroom doors with messages in their home languages each spring. An ethnocentric visitor calls the displays confusing because their school uses only one language. That reaction might strengthen the visitor's loyalty to a shared school language, but it could make multilingual students feel unwelcome. A culturally relativistic visitor asks students what the messages mean and why they chose them. This response could protect the celebration and help classmates learn about one another. If the visitor refuses to question a rule requiring students to share private family stories for the display, that response could ignore students' discomfort.

Accept other passage-supported benefits and harms. For Part 3, look for a new custom, two distinct reactions, and a plausible benefit and harm of each reaction.