

A. We've all got a **deeply rooted** cultural heritage which influences the customs and conventions that shape our lives. And we're all aware that our culture can be very different from others. What is **commonplace** in one country (for example, greeting by shaking hands) is inappropriate in another. There are, and there will always be, **long-standing** conventions that are **peculiar to** a certain culture, and unheard of, or even weird, in others. However, as the world shrinks, and people are increasingly interacting with other nationalities, our conventions and customs are blurring or feeding into and being adopted by other cultures. In addition to this, advanced technology is bringing with it a sea-change in behaviour and convention, which is producing a culture all of its own. Who would ever have thought that it would be the norm to see people sharing a table but conducting various conversations simultaneously on their phones? And no one raising an eyebrow! Fascinating, isn't it? How far will cultures merge or adapt and change over the next few decades? That is going to be interesting.

B. As I see it, our culture shapes how we view the world (and our place in it), how we approach problems, the respect we show for others and a lot more that we just don't think about. And today, the need for understanding of other cultures and learning from them is becoming ever more important if we want to solve the global problems we are facing together, such as climate change. Exposure to different cultures helps us all to appreciate the diversity in the world. It helps us understand other people and makes us realise that there is more that links us than separates us. We start to challenge our way of thinking and view life from different perspectives. Our traditional way of approaching things isn't always the best way - and definitely not the only way! Learning from other cultures helps us to establish new ways of thinking and problem solving. Above all it minimises the notion of **stereotypical** behaviour and teaches us that, **irrespective of** our cultural heritage, we are all individuals, aren't we? Understanding other cultures will eventually reduce the fear that comes with not knowing, and can play an enormous part in

reducing tensions between certain cultures that share the same space.

Exercise 1: Read the posts from an online discussion board (A and B). Decide whether the following statements are TRUE (T), FALSE (F) or NOT GIVEN (NG).

1. Greeting by shaking hands can be popular in one culture, but may not be suitable in another culture.
2. Today, the cultural difference will be much bigger as the world shrinks.
3. Over the next few decades, cultures will be completely changed, leading to cultural loss of some countries.
4. Dealing with some common global problems requires our understanding of cultures.
5. Exposure to cultural diversity can stimulate stereotype and bias.
6. The fear of having no knowledge about cultures will be an enormous part in the future.

Exercise 2: Match the words and phrases in bold in the posts with their meanings (1–7).

1. fixed thinking about certain cultures and how they act
2. done often, therefore not unusual
3. originating from far in our past
4. unaffected by
5. existing for a long time
6. special to

ANSWER KEY

Exercise 1:

1-T 2-F 3-NG 4-T 5-F 6-NG

Exercise 2:

1-stereotypical 2-commonplace 3-deeply rooted
4-irrespective of 5-long-standing 6-peculiar to