



**COURSE INTRODUCTION:
GETTING GROUNDED**

L.1

WHAT I EAT

Note to Teachers

Students consider and compare the profiles of two people from different backgrounds to discover the variety of diets and eating habits around the world and to explore the factors that impact choice and eating behaviors. This lesson illustrates how even the most elementary discussions about food can include a clear emphasis on content and skills development.

Goals *In this lesson, students will*

- learn that there is an impressive diversity of dietary habits and norms that exist across the world.
- explore the richness of images as a source of information.
- engage in the process of framing productive questions that will guide the course throughout the semester.

Objectives

- Students will practice the skill of careful observation and analysis of an image through a series of photographs that illustrate one eater's food on a single day.
- Students will distinguish between observation and inference using a series of questions to guide observation and analysis.
- Students will consider what information an image can provide and frame questions that would help them to learn more. In doing so, students will begin to create a (necessarily fragmentary) picture of the food system in which that eater lives and learn what kinds of questions we can ask about food.
- The exercise consciously steers away from judgments about food choices in order to focus on their diversity and the factors that shape those choices.



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Please use the provided margin to notate how to best adapt this curriculum to your students.

Materials

Profile pairs from Peter Menzel and Faith D’Aluisio’s *What I Eat: Around the World in 80 Diets* (Napa, California: Material World, 2010). For this exercise, the only part of the profile that students need to access is the central photograph on the first spread of each profile, the caption for that photo, and the list of food consumed on that day. The goal is not to “find answers” in the text, but to carefully examine and ask questions of the photographs.

Instructions

1. Divide class into pairs and explain to students that they will receive a pair of pictures, with a section of the accompanying text. The pictures portray what an individual somewhere in the world eats over the course of a day.

2. Observation

Remind students that it takes time to study an image we need to carefully observe the images before they can offer up their insights.

This exercise is focused on the images and on the richness of information available in an image. Please discourage the students for this first part of the exercise from referencing any part of the text at all.

Observation comes before analysis. In this stage of the exercise, we might use the language of “I notice” or “I see.”

- a. Ask students to take two full minutes to look, silently, at the pair of images. Ask them to note what they observe in their journals, beginning with “I notice...”
- b. Ask students then to share their observations with their partner(s), to see what else they notice, and to use the profiles to help clarify any questions that come up. They should take notes on these conversations. If students seem unsure, feel free to model it for them: “I notice that most of the food is packaged.” “I notice that the eater eats mostly fresh vegetables.” “I notice that the eater seems to eat at work rather than at home.” Etc.

Ask students to share some of their observations with the group as a whole, prefacing each observation with the country and occupation of the eater.

3. Analysis Phase I

Once students have a body of information about their images, they are ready to begin analyzing them.

The images and profiles are limited in the information they provide; they are not sufficient to answer all questions we may wish to ask about them. One key reminder for students is to consider whether/how they can know what they assert about an image.

Give students at least five minutes to consider the following questions, and ask them to be specific in supporting their answers with concrete information from the image or profile:



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- a. How limited or expansive do food options seem to be for these eaters? Do their situations seem more similar or different, and on what criteria do you base your claims?
- b. On the basis of what you see, can you speculate on any of the priorities or values that motivate the eater? Does the eater seem to value convenience, for example, or base his/her choices on an understanding of what it means to eat healthily?

4. Analysis Phase II

Here, the exercise asks students to move to a more abstract level of thinking. Students will help to generate questions that we can return to over the course of the semester.

- a. Give students a few minutes to respond in their journals to the following questions:
 - Let's imagine that you are a researcher observing and interviewing the eaters in your profiles. What kinds of questions would you want to ask these particular eaters on the basis of what you have noticed about their food?
 - How might you re-phrase those questions in ways that would help you learn about food consumed by any group of people?
- b. Ask students to share their questions, recording them on the board, poster paper, or projected computer screen.

These questions may include the following:

- What types of food predominate in a given diet? Does the diet seem varied or associated with a few key foods?
 - What kinds of factors are most common in influencing choice (occupation, class, notions of health, religion, etc.)?
 - Where does the food come from? Does the eater grow or purchase it? Is the food more or less processed? Is it more locally produced or likely to come from further away?
 - Who likely cooks the food? Is the eater likely involved or separate from its preparation?
 - Is the food likely shared, or eaten by an individual?
 - Is the food likely to meet to the individual or group's caloric needs (not too much, not too little)?
- c. As you close the discussion and the class period, review key themes you notice in the questions, and remind students that their questions are key to the issues the class will discuss in the coming weeks.



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