



Task Title: Write an Opinion Paper

OALCF Cover Sheet – Learner Copy

Learner Name: _____

Date Started (m/d/yyyy): _____

Date Completed (m/d/yyyy): _____

Successful Completion: Yes ☐ No ☐

Goal Path:

Employment	☐	Apprenticeship	☐
Secondary School	☐	Post Secondary	☐
		Independence	☐

Task Description: The learner will read and develop an understanding of context, then write an opinion paper.

Main Competency/Task Group/Level Indicator:

- Find and Use Information/Read continuous text/A1.3
- Communicate Ideas and Information/Write continuous text/B2.3
- Use Digital Technology/D.2

Materials Required:

- Pen/paper and/or digital device

Learner Information

This task set will help you gain skills to understand words in context, state the main ideas of text, summarize text and develop opinion papers based on different texts. There are three parts to this task (Part A,B and C) with each part referencing a separate article.

Work Sheet

PART A

Read the article "The West is Best".

"The West is Best" by Carroll Bogert

...Over the centuries Russia has vacillated¹ between admiration of the West and belief in its own superiority. With the collapse of the xenophobic² Soviet state, Westernization is winning. But Russian self-abasement³ could prove as dangerous as the old chauvinism. "The degradation of culture is always related to a higher degree of aggressiveness," says Russian scholar Dmitry Likhachev. Warns Abbott Gleason, professor at Brown University: "This present humiliation is going to be paid for."

...Western products have always been highly prized in Russia, but now consumer mania is in full swing. Rock groups like Metallica draw big crowds. English mystery novels sell out instantly. Children worship Hollywood icons like Donald Duck and teens throng⁴ the new slot-machine arcades. "For years they were fed an exaggerated official line," says one Western diplomat. "They compensate by believing the opposite. The government told them everything in the West was bad, so now they believe everything in the West is good."

...Could Russia turn its back on the West again? Technological advances have made that harder than in the days when a czar could squelch a book or a speech by decree⁵. And damping the consumer frenzy⁶ would prove hardest of all. The main source of Russia's westward yearnings⁷ is economic hardship, and until Russian nationalists can offer a convincing program for prosperity, they stand little chance of widespread support. In the meantime no one else seems able to cure Russia's economic woes, either. And a proud people cannot tolerate forever the feeling that they're at the bottom of the heap⁸.

Task 1: In the selections from the article "The West is Best", give the meaning for each of the eight (8) numbered words. Do not use or provide a dictionary definition for these words. (Note: The numbers appear at the end of the words, for example: vacillated¹)

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Answer:

Task 2: In one sentence per paragraph, summarize the main idea for each paragraph.

Answer:

Part B

Read "Living as Strangers in Japan."

Living as Strangers in Japan

by Leslie Helm

[A customer at a grocery store in Oizumi, Japan, says,] "If they [foreigners] keep coming in, Japan will be ruined."

The foreigners *do* keep coming in. Many of them are Brazilians of Japanese ancestry – brought here to work in the plants that make this community of 36,000 people a thriving manufacturing center. With young Japanese workers scarce and unwilling to work long hours in dimly lit factories, business leaders – working with subsidies from the town treasury – have aggressively recruited foreign labourers.

As a result, Oizumi has the largest proportion of foreign residents of any Japanese community. About 10 percent of the population is foreign – a proportion that takes on a much larger significance in a nation that celebrates its homogeneity and acknowledges no minorities.

The town's only previous experience with foreigners was the Koreans and Chinese forced to work here during World War II . . . and a small group of Americans who took over a factory site for an Army hospital during the Korean War. In both cases, the foreigners were unobtrusive.

But the thousands of Brazilians, Pakistanis, Nepalese, Bangladeshis, and Iranians here now are all too visible and their presence has been profoundly disturbing to town residents. The fear and unease Oizumi feels, while at the same time acknowledging its need for labour, brings into sharp focus the raging debate in Japan over whether the nation should continue to import foreign workers.

Throughout Japan, a labour shortage brought on by a declining birthrate, the unwillingness of young Japanese to do "dirty" work, and the nation's slowness in integrating women into the labor force threaten to slow Japan's remarkable economic growth. Foreign labourers have been brought in to fill the void. Pakistani accountants do manual labor on Japanese roads and Iranian computer programmers work at demolition sites. Here in Oizumi, former owners of Brazilian businesses spray-paint train seat parts in factories.

Los Angeles Times, 21 July 1991, *Newsbank*, 1991

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Task 3: Summarize the article "Living as Strangers in Japan".

Answer:

Part C

Read "Communication in a Global Village.

Communication in a Global Village

by Dean C. Barnlund

It is differences in meaning, far more than mere differences in vocabulary, that isolate cultures, and that cause them to regard each other as strange or even barbaric. It is not too surprising that many cultures refer to themselves as "The People," relegating all other human beings to a subhuman form of life. To the person who drinks blood, the eating of meat is repulsive. Someone who conveys respect by standing is upset by someone who conveys it by sitting down; both may regard kneeling as absurd. Burying the dead may prompt tears in one society, smiles in another, and dancing in a third. If spitting on the street makes sense to some, it will appear bizarre that others carry spit in their pocket; neither may quite appreciate someone who spits to express gratitude. The bullfight that constitutes an almost religious ritual for some seems a cruel and inhumane way of destroying a defenseless animal to others. Although staring is acceptable social behavior in some cultures, in others it is a thoughtless invasion of privacy. Privacy, itself, is without universal meaning.

Note that none of these acts involves an insurmountable linguistic challenge. The words that describe these acts – eating, spitting, showing respect, fighting, burying, and staring – are quite translatable into most languages. The issue is more conceptual than linguistic; each society places events in its own cultural frame and it is these frames that bestow the unique meaning and differentiated response they produce.

. . . We need, more specifically, to identify what might be called the "rulebooks of meaning" that distinguish one culture from another. For to grasp the way in which other cultures perceive the world, and the assumptions and values that are the foundation of these perceptions, is to gain access to the experience of other human beings . . .

"Public and Private Self" Intercultural Press, 1975

Task 4: Do people in all cultures consider staring to be acceptable behaviour? Explain.

Answer:

Task 5: Is it acceptable for people in some cultures to drink blood? Explain.

Answer:

Task 6: How are people in different cultures taught to show respect?

Answer:

Task 7: Do all people think that bullfighting is a cruel sport? Explain.

Answer:

Task 8: List three (3) different reactions to death and funerals listed in the article.

Answer:

Task 9: Why does the author, Barnlund, give many examples of people doing certain acts differently in various cultures?

Answer:

Task 10: Write a paper expressing your opinion about one of the following topics:

- **Kissing in public is a behaviour that is commonly accepted by many Canadians.**
- **Spitting on the street is a behaviour that is not commonly accepted in any culture.**
- **There is little, if any, negative association with two adult males who hold hands in public.**
- **Dancing at a funeral is a way of celebrating death.**
- **Many people have trouble understanding the actions of people who are different from themselves.**

Answer:

