

Read the text. Take notes of the new vocabulary. Then, answer the questions.

How we See Other Cultures

My neighbor recently came back from vacation. I guess he was in Australia because he's wearing one of those Bush Hats with corks around it everywhere he goes. I'm curious about why we identify places by things like hats. I mean, baseball caps are certainly popular in the United States, but I went to London on vacation and didn't see anyone wearing a bowler hat. And you don't see many Mexicans with sombreros or Vietnamese with straw hats in everyday life, either.

The question is, why do we think about other national groups in this way? According to psychologists, it's because people put things they see in the world into groups. We do this for several reasons. First, it means that our brain doesn't work so hard because it doesn't need to analyze every new individual thing. Another reason is that when we understand (or think we understand) something, we can make predictions about it - we know what kind of behavior to expect. Finally, it seems that we all love to feel good about ourselves and the group we belong to. This is easier when we put others into groups too.

So is it a good thing or a bad thing to have these general opinions? Perhaps the first and most important question is to ask ourselves if the things we believe about other groups are actually true. And in the case of hats, I don't think it is!



baseball cap



straw hat



bowler hat



sombrero



bush hat

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Discuss: Answer the following questions with your partners. You do NOT have to write.

- According to the author, what are three reasons why we form general opinions about other cultural groups?
- How do movies, news reports, TV shows, and the internet influence our opinions of other cultural groups?
- Is all of the influence from the media bad or inaccurate? Is it possible for the media to educate people and help reduce the existence of cultural stereotypes?

Grammar Review

▶ SIMPLE PRESENT and PRESENT CONTINUOUS

Simple present

It means that our brain doesn't work so hard.

[...] people put the things they see in the world into groups.

Present continuous

He's wearing one of those bush hats.

We use the simple present to talk about things that are permanent or generally true and we use the present continuous to talk about things that are temporary or in progress at the time of speaking. Read the examples below and mark the correct option in **bold**.

1. I WORK / I'M WORKING for a large cultural organization. My job is usually quiet, but, at the moment, I WORK / I'M WORKING extra hours - it's the busy season.
2. WE LIVE / WE'RE LIVING with my parents until our apartment downtown is ready. THEY LIVE / THEY'RE LIVING just outside the city.
3. The kids ARE / ARE BEING usually very good, but they went to bed late last night, and THEY'RE / THEY'RE BEING naughty today. Sorry!
4. I usually FIND / AM FINDING this class easy, but I HAVE / I'M HAVING some problems this semester.