

## Culture shock as seen through the eyes of an immigrant

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### Pre-Reading

Reflection Questions:

1. What were your thoughts and emotions during your first few months in Canada?
2. How did your thoughts and emotions change the longer you lived in Canada?
3. What aspects of adjusting to life in Canada (other than finding employment) surprised or challenged you the most?

### Pre-Reading

Immigrating to Canada was an adventurous and transformative experience for me, filled with moments of both excitement and bewilderment. After I landed in this country, I encountered an unexpected culture shock. I also started to learn how people are different, how there are different ways of living life, and the many possibilities that exist in Canada. This helped me to be more open-minded and ultimately grow as an individual.

One of the most surprising aspects of Canadian culture is its multiculturalism and diversity. China is a comparatively traditional and homogeneous society; I was awestruck by Canadian multiculturalism and open-mindedness. In downtown Toronto, I met people from different countries and religions, and I was shocked by how people dressed to express their individuality and personality. I appreciated the opportunity to learn about different cultures and make friends with people from various backgrounds, which let me gain a deeper awareness of the richness of human experiences.

However, other than the excitement, I also encountered moments of difficulty. The language barrier proved to be a significant challenge initially. I could handle basic conversation but had difficulty engaging in deep conversations. Also, I lacked common knowledge about Canadian cultures such as hockey and baseball. Sometimes attending social gatherings with local people became daunting as I

struggled to express myself adequately. However, through watching YouTube videos, chatting with local friends, and all-day immersion in an English-speaking environment, I gradually improved my language skills and gained confidence in my ability to communicate effectively.

Another aspect of culture shock that proved challenging was adapting to Canadian social norms and customs. I had to navigate a new set of social etiquette that was different from China's. I was accustomed to using diplomatic language in China, where people tend to be more outspoken. In addition, I used to use deferential language when I spoke with people who were older than me; however, people here address one another by their first names. In the past seven years, by observing and learning from the local community, I gradually adapted to these cultural nuances, finding a balance between my own cultural background and the new environment I found myself in.

Throughout this journey, I learned valuable lessons and became more empathic, open-minded, resilient, and confident. I discovered that cultural differences are catalysts for personal growth and inclusiveness. Engaging with people from diverse backgrounds allowed me to broaden my horizons and foster a deeper sense of empathy and acceptance.

### **Comprehension Questions**

1. In your opinion, is the tone of the article positive or negative about the author's experience adapting to Canada? Select the parts of the article that support your answer.
2. What aspects of adapting to life in Canada were the most challenging for the author?
3. What are some of the difference between Canada and China that the author describes in the article? What are some of the differences between Canada and your own original country?

**A. Based on the reading, decide if the following statements are True or False:**

1. The author immigrated to Canada and had a transformative experience.
2. The author did not experience any culture shock after immigrating to Canada.
3. Canadian culture is known for its multiculturalism and diversity.
4. The author was not surprised by the open-mindedness of Canadians.
5. The author found it easy to make friends with people from different backgrounds in Canada.
6. The language barrier was not a significant challenge for the author.
7. The author was familiar with Canadian social norms and customs before immigrating.
8. The author found it easy to adapt to Canadian social etiquette.
9. The author became more empathic, open-minded, resilient, and confident after immigrating to Canada.
10. The author did not learn any valuable lessons from their experience in Canada.

**B. Find the right word form:**

1. She is \_\_\_\_ (adventure) and loves to explore new places.
2. The trip was \_\_\_\_ (transform), it changed my perspective on life.
3. Each \_\_\_\_ (individuate) has their own unique personality.
4. \_\_\_\_ (diverse) in the workplace leads to better problem-solving.
5. \_\_\_\_ (comparative) speaking, this restaurant is more expensive than the others.
6. Learning a new language can be a \_\_\_\_ (challengingly), but it's worth it.
7. The diplomat worked tirelessly to negotiate peace between the two countries.
8. He felt \_\_\_\_ (confidence) after acing the exam.

**C. Match the right definitions:**

- a. to make something wider or more extensive
- b. filled with wonder or amazement
- c. expressing one's opinions frankly and openly, even if they are controversial
- d. able to recover quickly from difficulties or setbacks
- e. subtle differences or distinctions in meaning, expression, or sound
- f. the coexistence and appreciation of different cultures within a society
- g. showing an ability to understand and share the feelings of others
- h. agents that stimulate or speed up a reaction or change
- i. sufficiently or satisfactorily
- j. consisting of similar parts or having a uniform nature
- k. the practice or policy of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized
- l. the customary code of polite behavior in society or among members of a particular profession or group
- m. a feeling of confusion or puzzlement
- n. causing a marked change in someone or something
- o. willing to take risks or try new things
- p. intimidating or challenging
- q. important or meaningful

1. empathic
2. nuances
3. catalysts
4. inclusiveness
5. significant
6. awestruck
7. outspoken
8. adequately
9. bewilderment
10. etiquette
11. multiculturalism
12. transformative
13. resilient
14. daunting
15. adventurous
16. homogeneous
17. broaden

**D. Fill in the blanks with the right word:**

awestruck	transformative	multiculturalism	etiquette
adequately	empathic	nuances	daunting
inclusiveness	significant	bewilderment	homogeneous
adventurous	outspoken	broaden	catalysts

1. My cousin is very ( ) and likes to travel to different countries.
2. The book she read was ( ) and changed her way of thinking.
3. The maze caused ( ) for all who attempted it.
4. Living in a big city like Toronto allows you to experience ( ).
5. This small town is very ( ) everyone knows each other.
6. When she saw the Niagara Falls, she was ( ) by its beauty.
7. Meeting her favorite celebrity was a ( ) moment in her life.
8. The English final exam was ( ) and caused a lot of stress for the students.
9. The student performed ( ) on the test, and passed the course.
10. It's important to learn ( ) when attending a formal dinner party.
11. The politician was ( ) about the need for better healthcare for all citizens.
12. Learning a new language requires understanding the ( ) of grammar and vocabulary.
13. Being ( ) allows you to understand how others feel and offer support.
15. Hard work and determination can be ( ) for success in achieving your goals.
16. ( ) means making sure that everyone feels welcome and included.
17. Reading books can ( ) your knowledge and understanding of different cultures.

### Extension Activities

1. Complete the chart below, comparing aspects of Canadian culture with culture from your birth county

	Canada	Birth Country
Food		
Dress		
Transportation		
Clothing		
Personal Space		
Games/Sport		
Gestures		

2. Read the article “Coping with Culture Shock”  
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/living-abroad/culture-shock>

Summarize the main ideas and key points from the article. Use point form in your summary.