

CHAPTER 4

Culture and Socialisation

CBSE Class 11 · Sociology · Introducing Sociology · Chapter 4

CBSE · Sociology · Class 11

WHAT THIS CHAPTER DOES

A Define culture and tell material culture apart from non-material culture.

B State the characteristics of culture and explain cultural lag (Ogburn).

Boards prep that builds confidence, not anxiety.

TODAY'S MISSION

Today's mission

- 1 Define culture and tell material culture apart from non-material culture.
- 2 State the characteristics of culture and explain cultural lag (Ogburn).
- 3 Distinguish ethnocentrism from cultural relativism, and define culture shock and subculture.
- 4 Explain socialisation, its agencies, and primary vs secondary socialisation — and score 8/10 on this chapter.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Why this chapter matters

- 1 Culture and socialisation explain HOW 'society shapes the individual' (Chapter 1) actually works in practice.
- 2 8-10 marks every annual paper, across 1-mark recall, 2-mark distinctions and 4-6 mark long answers.
- 3 The concepts — relativism, ethnocentrism, agencies of socialisation — recur right through the rest of the Sociology course.

TOPIC

A

What is culture?

TOPIC

The sociological meaning of culture

MORE THAN ART AND REFINEMENT

In everyday speech 'culture' often means refinement — classical music, fine art, good manners. To a sociologist, culture means something far wider: the **WHOLE** way of life of a people. It includes their knowledge, beliefs, values, norms, customs, language, art and the material objects

THE THREE DIMENSIONS

Sociologists analyse culture along three dimensions. The **COGNITIVE** dimension is the body of knowledge and ideas a society holds — how it understands the world. The **NORMATIVE** dimension is its norms, values and rules — its sense of right and wrong and how people ought to behave

MATERIAL AND NON-MATERIAL CULTURE

A second, closely related division splits culture into two parts. **MATERIAL** culture is everything physical and tangible that humans make — tools, machines, clothes, buildings, books, vehicles. **NON-MATERIAL** culture is everything intangible — ideas, values, beliefs, norms, language and

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Culture and society are closely linked but not identical. **SOCIETY** is the web of social relationships among people; **CULTURE** is the way of life — the shared ideas, values and material things — that those people hold in common. There can be no society without culture and no culture without a society

TOPIC

B

Material and non-material culture

WORKED EXAMPLE

Sort it: material or non-material? - The smartphone test

- 1 Take an everyday object — a smartphone. Ask: is the item itself something you can physically touch and hold?
- 2 The PHONE ITSELF — the glass, metal and circuits you can hold — is MATERIAL culture: a tangible thing humans manufacture and use.
- 3 But the ETIQUETTE of using it — when it is rude to check it, the value placed on staying connected, the laws on data privacy — is NON-MATERIAL culture: intangible ideas, norms and values.
- 4 Conclusion: most cultural items have BOTH a material face and a non-material face. The skill is to separate the tangible object from the intangible meanings, norms and values attached to it — and to notice that the two often change at different speeds.

THEOREM · LOAD-BEARING RESULT

Cultural Lag (W. F. Ogburn)



Cultural lag is the gap that opens up when the **MATERIAL** part of a culture (technology, objects) changes faster than the **NON-MATERIAL** part (values, laws, customs, beliefs), so that the non-material culture 'lags behind' the material.

STATEMENT

MATERIAL culture tends to change rapidly (new inventions spread quickly). **NON-MATERIAL** culture — the norms, laws and values needed to govern those inventions — changes more

WHY THIS MATTERS

- It is one of the most examinable ideas in the chapter and a favourite 1-mark attribution (to W
- F
- Ogburn) plus a 4-6 mark application

WATCH OUT FOR

NOTE Cultural lag does NOT mean a 'backward' culture. It is about technology outpacing the values and laws **WITHIN** one culture. Always attribute the concept to W. F. Ogburn, and give a concrete example of the gap.

TRY IT · SOLVE BEFORE YOU PEEK

Smartphones with cameras spread to almost everyone within a few years, but clear social norms and laws about photographing strangers, sharing images and protecting privacy took much longer to develop. Which concept does this illustrate, and who gave it?

SOLUTION

ANSWER This illustrates **CULTURAL LAG**, a concept of **W. F. OGBURN**. The material culture (camera phones) changed fast, while the non-material culture (privacy norms and laws) lagged behind, opening a gap between the two.

TOPIC

C

The characteristics of culture

TOPIC

What every culture has in common

CULTURE IS LEARNED

Culture is not inherited biologically — it is **LEARNED** through the process of socialisation. A newborn has no culture; it acquires the language, values, beliefs and habits of the society that raises it. A child born to parents of one culture but brought up entirely within another grows up with the **SECOND** culture

CULTURE IS SHARED

Culture is **SHARED** by the members of a group — it is not the private possession of any one individual. The language you speak, the festivals you celebrate, the values you hold are meaningful precisely because others share them; a 'culture' of one person would be unintelligible to everyone else. This sharing is what

CULTURE IS TRANSMITTED

Culture is **TRANSMITTED** from one generation to the next. Each generation passes its accumulated knowledge, beliefs, values and skills to its children, mainly through socialisation by the family, school and other agencies. This transmission gives culture continuity across time so that a society's

CULTURE IS DYNAMIC

Culture is not fixed — it is **DYNAMIC** and continually changing. New inventions, contact with other societies, new ideas and the actions of reformers all reshape a culture over time, so that the way of life of one generation differs from that of its grandparents. This is why some parts of culture (technology)

TOPIC

D

Judging cultures

**—
ethnocentrism,
relativism,
culture shock**

TOPIC

Three ways we encounter other cultures

ETHNOCENTRISM

ETHNOCENTRISM is the tendency to judge another culture by the standards of one's OWN, treating one's own culture as superior and as the natural, correct yardstick against which all others are measured. To the ethnocentric eye, an unfamiliar cuisine looks 'disgusting', an unfamiliar custom looks

CULTURAL RELATIVISM

CULTURAL RELATIVISM is the opposite, corrective stance. It means understanding a culture on ITS OWN terms and in its own context, without imposing the standards of an outside culture. Instead of asking 'is this custom right or wrong by MY culture's rules?', the relativist asks 'what does

CULTURE SHOCK

CULTURE SHOCK is the sense of disorientation, confusion or anxiety a person feels on suddenly entering a culture very different from their own — for example a student migrating to a distant region or country where the language, food, customs and social rules are unfamiliar. Familiar cues for how to behave

WHY THESE MATTER TOGETHER

These three concepts belong together because they describe our reactions to cultural DIFFERENCE. Ethnocentrism is the natural but flawed first reaction — judging by our own standards. Culture shock is the emotional jolt of difference. Cultural

TOPIC

E

Cultural diversity and subcultures

TOPIC

Diversity within and between cultures

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

CULTURAL DIVERSITY refers to the wide variety of cultures that exist — between societies and WITHIN a single society. India is a striking example: many languages, religions, regional traditions, foods and festivals coexist within one country. Diversity arises because culture is learned and

WHAT A SUBCULTURE IS

A SUBCULTURE is the distinctive culture of a GROUP within a larger society — a group that shares the wider culture but ALSO has its own particular values, styles, language or practices. Regional communities, religious groups, professional communities and youth groups can all form subcultures. The

SUBCULTURE IS NOT OPPOSITION

A frequent error is to imagine a subculture as rebellious or 'below' the main culture. That is a different idea — a counter-culture actively opposes and rejects mainstream values, whereas a subculture simply has its own distinctive character within the shared culture.

DIVERSITY, UNITY AND INDIA

Cultural diversity raises a central sociological question: how does a society hold together despite deep internal differences? India's motto of 'unity in diversity' captures this — a shared national framework coexisting with enormous cultural variety. Sociology studies

TOPIC

F

Socialisation

TOPIC

How we learn our culture

WHAT SOCIALISATION IS

SOCIALISATION is the lifelong process through which an individual learns the culture of their society — its language, norms, values, beliefs and skills — and so becomes a functioning member of it. It is the precise mechanism by which 'society shapes the individual': a biological human being is turned

PRIMARY SOCIALISATION

PRIMARY socialisation is the earliest and most crucial phase, occurring in early childhood mainly within the FAMILY. Here the child first learns language, basic norms, the difference between right and wrong, and how to relate to others. Because it happens when the child is most impressionable and most

SECONDARY SOCIALISATION

SECONDARY socialisation continues throughout life in wider settings BEYOND the family — the school, the peer group, the workplace and the mass media. As a person takes on new roles (pupil, friend, worker, citizen), they learn the norms and expectations attached to

RESOCIALISATION

RESOCIALISATION is a further process in which a person sheds previously learned patterns of behaviour and takes on new, often very different ones. It happens when someone enters a sharply new social world — joining the armed forces, entering a strict boarding institution, migrating to a

TOPIC

Who socialises us

THE FAMILY

The FAMILY is the first and most important agency of socialisation. It is where primary socialisation takes place: the infant learns language, basic norms and values, emotional bonds and a sense of self from those closest to it. Because the family reaches the child earliest, most intimately and most

THE SCHOOL

The SCHOOL is a central agency of secondary socialisation. Beyond formal knowledge, it teaches discipline, punctuality, cooperation and how to relate to non-kin and to figures of authority such as teachers. In school the child encounters, often for the first time, impersonal rules that

THE PEER GROUP

The PEER GROUP — companions of roughly equal age and status — is a distinctive agency because it socialises among EQUALS rather than between generations. Within the peer group, often beyond the direct control of adults, individuals learn cooperation, competition, loyalty and how to

THE MASS MEDIA

The MASS MEDIA — television, films, newspapers, the internet and social media — have become an increasingly powerful agency of socialisation. They expose individuals to ideas, images, lifestyles and values from far beyond their immediate family and locality, shaping tastes

TOPIC

Ethnocentrism vs cultural relativism

TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism mean roughly the same thing — both are about respecting other cultures.
- ✓ **CORRECT** They are OPPOSITES. ETHNOCENTRISM is judging another culture by the standards of one's OWN culture, treating one's own as superior and the 'natural' yardstick ('their food is disgusting, ours is normal'). CULTURAL RELATIVISM is the opposite stance — understanding a culture on ITS OWN terms, in its own context, without imposing outside judgements. Cultural relativism is the corrective for ethnocentrism, not its synonym. Mixing the two is the single most common Class 11 error in this chapter.

TOPIC

Cultural lag

TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** Cultural lag means a culture is backward or undeveloped.

✓ **CORRECT** Cultural lag, a concept of W. F. OGBURN, means that MATERIAL culture (technology) usually changes FASTER than NON-MATERIAL culture (values, laws, customs), so the non-material part 'lags behind' and a gap opens up. For example, cars and the internet arrived quickly, but the laws and social norms to govern them took far longer to catch up. It is about the UNEVEN pace of change WITHIN a culture, not about any culture being inferior.

TOPIC

Material vs non-material culture

TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** Culture means only customs, beliefs and traditions — physical objects are not 'culture'.
- ✓ **CORRECT** Culture has TWO parts. MATERIAL culture is the physical, tangible things humans make and use — tools, buildings, clothes, machines, books. NON-MATERIAL culture is the intangible — ideas, values, beliefs, norms, language, knowledge. Both are equally part of culture; a temple (material) and the beliefs it expresses (non-material) are two faces of the same culture.

TOPIC

Culture is learned

TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** Culture is inherited biologically — we are born with our culture in our genes.
- ✓ **CORRECT** Culture is LEARNED, not inherited through biology. A child born in one society but raised in another grows up with the SECOND society's culture, language and values — proving culture is acquired through SOCIALISATION, not transmitted in the genes. Instincts are biological; culture is social learning. This is why culture varies so widely between societies.

TOPIC

Primary vs secondary socialisation

TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** Socialisation finishes in childhood — once you grow up, socialisation is over.
- ✓ **CORRECT** Socialisation is a LIFELONG process. PRIMARY socialisation happens in early childhood, mainly within the family, where the child learns language and the basic norms of society. SECONDARY socialisation continues throughout life in wider settings — school, peer group, workplace, mass media — as the person takes on new roles. RESOCIALISATION is a further stage where a person sheds old patterns and learns new ones (e.g. on joining the army or migrating). The process never truly ends.

TOPIC

Subculture

TRAP → TRUTH

- × **MISTAKE** A subculture is a culture that is against or below the main culture — it is rebellious or inferior.
- ✓ **CORRECT** A SUBCULTURE is the distinctive culture of a GROUP WITHIN a larger society that shares the wider culture but ALSO has its own particular values, styles or practices — for example a regional, religious, professional or youth group. It is a PART of the larger culture, not opposed to or beneath it. (A counter-culture, which actively opposes the mainstream, is a different, narrower idea.) Subculture is about distinctiveness within shared culture, not inferiority.

TOPIC

Agencies of socialisation

TRAP → TRUTH

× **MISTAKE** The family is the only agency that socialises a child.

✓ **CORRECT** The family is the FIRST and most important agency of PRIMARY socialisation, but it is not the only one. SCHOOL teaches formal knowledge, discipline and how to relate to non-kin; the PEER GROUP socialises among equals, often beyond adult control; and MASS MEDIA (TV, internet, social media) increasingly shape values, tastes and worldviews. A full answer names all four agencies and the distinct role of each.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

5-6 mark question: 'Distinguish between material and non-material culture, and explain

1 DEFINE BOTH KINDS OF CULTURE WITH EXAMPLES

2 m

Open cleanly: 'MATERIAL culture consists of the tangible, physical objects a society creates and uses — tools, machines, buildings, clothes, books. NON-MATERIAL culture consists of the intangible — ideas, values, beliefs, norms, language and knowledge.' Give one concrete example of each (a smartphone vs the etiquette of using it) to anchor the distinction.

2 STATE CULTURAL LAG AND ATTRIBUTE IT TO OGBURN

2 m

Define precisely: 'CULTURAL LAG, a concept of W. F. Ogburn, is the gap that opens when MATERIAL culture (technology) changes faster than NON-MATERIAL culture (values, laws, customs), so the non-material part lags behind.' Naming Ogburn earns the attribution mark examiners look for.

3 ILLUSTRATE WITH A WORKED EXAMPLE

2 m

Use a clear case: 'For instance, the motor car and the internet spread rapidly (material change), but the traffic laws, safety norms and data-privacy rules to govern them took far longer to develop (non-material change) — that gap is cultural lag.' A fresh, contemporary example (AI, social media) earns a presentation edge over the textbook one.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

4-mark question: 'Distinguish between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism with

1 DEFINE ETHNOCENTRISM WITH AN EXAMPLE

2 m

'ETHNOCENTRISM is the tendency to judge another culture by the standards of one's OWN, treating one's own culture as superior and the natural yardstick. For example, regarding an unfamiliar cuisine or dress as "strange" or "wrong" simply because it differs from one's own is ethnocentric.' Stress the judging-by-one's-own-standards core.

2 DEFINE CULTURAL RELATIVISM AS THE OPPOSITE, WITH AN EXAMPLE

2 m

'CULTURAL RELATIVISM is the opposite stance: understanding a culture on ITS OWN terms and in its own context, without imposing outside judgements. For example, studying why a community follows a particular custom within its own meaning-system, rather than dismissing it. Cultural relativism is the sociologist's corrective for ethnocentrism.' Naming relativism as the antidote clinches the contrast.

TOPPER TEMPLATE · MARK-BY-MARK

6-mark question: 'Describe the main agencies of socialisation and the role each plays.'

- 1 DEFINE SOCIALISATION BRIEFLY**
1 m
'Socialisation is the lifelong process through which an individual learns the culture of their society — its language, norms and values — and becomes a functioning member of it.' One crisp sentence frames the whole answer.
- 2 DESCRIBE THE FOUR AGENCIES, ONE ROLE EACH**
4 m
Cover all four: 'The FAMILY is the first and most important agency, the site of primary socialisation, where the child learns language and basic norms. The SCHOOL provides secondary socialisation — formal knowledge, discipline, and learning to relate to non-kin and authority. The PEER GROUP socialises among equals, shaping behaviour and identity often beyond adult control. The MASS MEDIA (TV, internet, social media) increasingly shape values, tastes and worldviews.' One labelled sentence per agency = full marks here.
- 3 CONCLUDE ON THEIR COMBINED EFFECT**
1 m
'Together these agencies transmit culture across generations, though they may also send conflicting messages, which the individual must negotiate.' A synthesising line lifts the answer above a mere list.

PYQ PATTERNS








Top PYQ patterns to drill

#1	Distinguish between material and non-material culture with examples, and explain cultural lag. (4-6 marks)	Almost every SQP and annual paper
#2	Explain the main characteristics of culture (learned, shared, transmitted). (4 marks)	Recurring
#3	Describe the agencies of socialisation and the role each plays. (6 marks)	Recurring long-answer
#4	Distinguish between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism with examples. (4 marks)	Recurring
#5	What is socialisation? Distinguish primary from secondary socialisation. (2-4 marks)	Common 2-mark / 4-mark

MARKS DISTRIBUTION

10-year marks distribution

10-YEAR PYQ MARKS DISTRIBUTION

Definition and dimensions of culture (cognitive / normative / material)		12%
Material vs non-material culture + cultural lag (Ogburn)		12%
Characteristics of culture (learned / shared / transmitted)		10%
Ethnocentrism, cultural relativism and culture shock		12%
Cultural diversity and subculture		8%
Socialisation — process, primary vs secondary, resocialisation		14%
Agencies of socialisation (family / school / peer / mass media)		12%

RECAP · MEMORISE THESE

5-line revision

1 Culture — Culture = the whole way of life of a people — cognitive, normative and material dimensions; MATERIAL (tangible objects) vs NON-MATERIAL (ideas, values, norms). It is learned, shared, transmitted and dynamic.

2 Key concepts — Cultural lag (Ogburn) = material changes faster than non-material. Ethnocentrism (judge by one's own) vs cultural relativism (understand on its own terms). Plus culture shock, diversity and subculture.

3 Socialisation — Socialisation = lifelong learning of culture; PRIMARY (family, childhood), SECONDARY (school/peer/work/media), RESOCIALISATION (new settings). Four agencies: family, school, peer group, mass media.

WHAT'S NEXT

What's next

- Chapter 5 — Doing Sociology: Research Methods (how sociologists actually study culture and society).
- Sit the 15-MCQ Quick Drill (companion PDF) — under 20 minutes, target $\geq 12/15$.
- Then the full annual-pattern paper — a 30-mark school mini-paper with full model answers.

You can now see how culture is made and passed on.

Now prove it. Take the drill, sit the paper, master Chapter 4.

[readyforboards.com](https://www.readyforboards.com)

Helpline: +91 70330 05444

Boards prep that builds confidence, not anxiety.