The representation of EFL context-based cultures in an international EYL textbook

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ABSTRACT

The present content analysis study intended to investigate the cultural contents of an international EYL textbook used in Indonesian private elementary schools. It examined the representation of cultural themes categorized under the big "C" and small "c" cultures and the representation of EFL context-based/Indonesian cultures in each theme. The findings of the study revealed that (1) the book covered all themes, but their representation is not balanced; (2) some aspects of local cultures were represented in the books, but the number was very limited and less varied. The implication of this study suggests that the international EYL textbook should allocate adequate space for local culture. Hence, this could be seen as an opportunity for EYL teachers and practitioners to use their authority and to empower themselves by providing supplementary materials that best suit their local needs.

Keywords: culture, themes, local, representation, EYL textbook

INTRODUCTION

English textbooks for young learners (EYL) have obtained ample attention because of teachers' high reliance (Hawanti, 2013; Pinter, 2006). Aside from the linguistic contents, the representation of cultures is one among many criteria to select textbooks (Matsuda, 2012). Some research on EYL textbooks has confirmed cultural bias (Ndura, 2014), irrelevance to local contexts (Dickinson, 2010), simplistic cultural representation (Davidson & Liu, 2020), and imbalance representation of the local and foreign cultures (Lee & Li, 2019). These arrays of studies were situated in East Asia (Japan, Hongkong, Korea, and China), Middle East (Iran), and the USA. It appears that none has been done in a multicultural country in South East Asia, such as in Indonesia. Studies above have corroborated that cultural contents in the teaching of English for young learners (TEYL) field is an under-researched (Ghosn, 2019) area and somewhat neglected (Brewster et al., 2007) despite a number of studies of cultural representation in general English textbooks (e.g., Kim & Paek, 2019; Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2017; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Shin et al., 2011; Song, 2013). Due to the significant role of EYL textbooks, the contents, particularly cultural representations of EYL textbooks, should be studied to know whether they help children acquire intercultural awareness and competence.

This study aimed to examine cultural representation in an international EYL textbook used at private elementary schools in major cities in Indonesia. This study is paramount to twofold arguments. First, the study's findings are essential to map to which extent the examined international EYL textbook demonstrates its feasibility to accommodate the cultural relevance of the EFL contexts, particularly Indonesia. This map is essential since published instructional materials are likely to demonstrate cultural fitness. Second, this study provides information on how cultural contents represented in international EYL textbooks can be expanded to expose young learners to a rich and diverse cultural setting that characterizes local contexts. Children's home culture and the cultures of people they might cross paths in the future should be well represented (Matsuda, 2012). Therefore, textbook writers and teachers should emphasize cultural presentation to enhance the pupils' intercultural competence (Lee & Li, 2019). Thus, to achieve its aim, this study was centred around the following research questions: (1) What

cultural themes are represented in the textbook? and (2) To what extent are EFL context-based cultures, particularly Indonesia, potentially represented in the textbook?

Some EYL textbooks are developed by local publishers, while others are published by international enterprises like Oxford, Cambridge, Macmillan, Heinle, and Pearson Education. International EYL textbooks (IEYLTs) have flowed into the Indonesian markets and played essential roles in the EYL classes, especially in private (and elite) elementary schools in Indonesia (Nurhayati et al., 2019). Written by professional native speakers for a global audience, IEYLTs' often represent target language cultures' values and writers' voices which sometimes conflict with the users (Brewster et al., 2007; Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and fail to meet specific local expectations and needs (Pinter, 2006). Therefore, the relevance of international textbooks is often questioned (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). The cultural norms and values embedded inside IEYLTs are exposed and transferred to children as the hidden curriculum (Chao, 2011), being suspected as a form of "hidden hegemony" (Rashidi & Meihami, 2016, 2). Therefore, in some contexts where the tension between the need to promote local cultures and vernaculars to children strongly occurs (Lauder, 2008), cross-cultural interactions are often perceived as a threat as parents, community and stakeholders perceive that home culture is more prominent.

Culture is a dimension of social life that bears a vast array of human behavior (Brown, 2000; Goode et al., 2000). Therefore, the varied aspects of behavior result in a broad and complex culture spectrum that young learners might have constraints to learn. Their potential constraints are bridged by incorporating themes related to children's culture and heritage and enhancing their thinking and learning (Dubosarsky et al., 2011). Since intercultural awareness is part of 21st-century learning skills (Binkley et al., 2012), exposing children to the cultural spectrum in an English class is advantageous. It helps shape cultural sensitivity, i.e., understanding the self and other cultures' needs and emotions (Goode et al., 2000), and cultural awareness, i.e., understanding that culture affects people's actions (Kubanec – German 2000). Children's intercultural awareness, in turn, advocates their dispositions, knowledge, and skills to function well in their own "micro-culture, mainstream culture, and the global community" (Sinagatullin 2003:114).

The concept of Big "C" and small "c" or little "c "has been used to analyze cultural elements (Lee 2009; Paek & Kim, 2015; Sadeghi & Sepahi, 2017). Big 'C' culture represents formal culture such as a set of facts and statistics relating to the arts, history, geography, business, education, festivals and customs of a target speech society (Brody 2003), the media, literature, music (Adaskou et al., 1990). Small "c" deals with daily routines and covers everything as a total way of life (Lee, 2009); organization and nature of family, home life and interpersonal relations; material conditions, work, and leisure; and customs and institutions (Adaskou et al., 1990).

Yuen (2011) conceptualizes cultural dimensions as 4Ps, that is, "a system of code (products) used, to signify thoughts (perspectives), for communication (practices), by different people (persons)". Setyono and Widodo (2019) equalize products with Big "C" and practices with small "c." Sadeghi and Sepahi (2017) classify the four themes of daily life, value and belief, customs/norms, and food under small "c" culture and the six themes of history, music, art, economy, geography, and government/politics within big "C" culture. Their classification is broader and more flexible to use as a framework to analyze cultural categories/themes. So, big C refers to "formal culture" indicated by the representation of formal (social, political, economic) institutions, the significant figures of history, literature products, and fine arts and sciences. Small "c" culture has to do with people's ways of life, including housing, clothing, food, and appropriate and essential behavioral patterns.

Cultural themes embedded in a textbook are rooted in different cultural sources. Cortazzi and Jin (1999) categorize cultural sources into target culture, source culture, and international culture. Meanwhile, Matsuda (2012) divides it into global culture, culture (s) of learners' future interlocutors, and learner's own culture. She further elaborates that global or international culture includes worldwide themes, e.g., environment, health, science, world peace, pop culture, and education. The target culture includes life in countries where English is spoken as the first language, as in the inner circle of English-speaking countries (Kachru, 1988). The term future interlocutor cultures refer to cultures of people with whom the learners will communicate. It is somewhat problematic, especially for young learners learning English in a country where English is a foreign language, because their future interlocutors would be

very broad and unpredictable. As English has now "intricately intertwined" with various cultures (Matsuda, 2012:176), resulting in intercultural communication, diversifying the content of the materials with diverse cultures is highly suggested.

Particular researchers such as Alptekin (1993) and Renner (1993) reported that most current EFL textbooks in the 90s focus on features of Western culture (Shin et al., 2011). The postcolonial thoughts perceive that in terms of academic life, "the West has furthered its vested interests by propagating western knowledge and belittling local knowledge about language learning, teaching, and teacher education" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012:7). He further explained that this domination has come under scrutiny due to intensive contact among cultures in the globalization era, leading to better intercultural awareness and intention to preserve and protect one's linguistic and cultural heritage. The postcolonial perspective depicts colonial representations which are ever-present in educational enterprises. Hence, the trace of colonialism should be identified, explained, criticized, and altered to achieve social transformation and reconstruction. It could be done, for example, by examining the possibility of unfair representation of local cultures in western-made resources such as textbooks.

METHOD

This content analysis study selected an EYL international textbook entitled Super Minds (Special Edition) Student's Book for Grade 3 of elementary school written by Herbert Puchta, Gunter Gerngross, and Peter Lewis-Jones, published by Cambridge University Press in 2016. This book was selected because it is used in many elementary schools in Indonesia. For example, it is used as a compulsory book in private and 'elite" elementary school groups operating as a franchise and has about a hundred branches all over the country.

Researchers are the key instrument. In addition, the two types of data collection checklists were used to gather data (see table 1 and table 2). The interpretation of unit data was based on the coding guidelines proposed by Sadegi and Sepahi (2017) (see appendix A).

Table 1. Data Collection Checklist

No	Unit	Tasks/ instructions		Categories									
				Big "C"						Small "c"			
			music	history and figures	geography	economy	arts	govt./ politics	daily life	goods	custom and norms	value and belief
Total number													
			…						….				

Table 2 Tabulation Instrument

No	Unit/ statement	Cultural themes	Category

Following the conceptualized categories of culture by Sadeghi and Sepahi (2017), the textual analysis of the cultural representation in the selected EYL international textbook was classified into big "C" and small "c" and perceptive themes of culture. The unit analysis of this study was the learning activities/tasks represented in instructions and visuals in 6 targeted units (Units 1, 2, 5,6, 8, and 9), representing the front, middle, and end parts. The audio was excluded from the analysis. The components of tasks and verbal and visual texts were categorized based on their compatibility with the description of the cultural themes. Hence, one task could represent more than one cultural theme. Finally, all items would be counted. Then, a general quantitative analysis (percentage) was generated to scrutinize culture-related themes in the textbook.

Here is a sample of the data collection process. All instructions for learning activities in Unit 1 were read, selected, analyzed, interpreted, and documented in Table 1. The researcher should pay attention to the task's context. When the instruction said*: "3. Match the pictures with the school subjects. Listen and Check,"* the cultural content was interpreted as children's daily activities, which fall into a small" c" culture category. It means that Task 3 represents the small" c" culture. Then, the researcher would reanalyze to see if this task also represents the context-based/local culture. If it did, the analyzed task would be recorded to represent the small "c" local culture in Table 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

Overall, as shown in chart 1, the percentage of the small 'c" cultural themes in the tasks of the book is higher than the big "C" themes. In other words, the representation of small "c" culture outperformed the big "C" one. Almost three third of the themes (65%) were related to people's ways of life, including housing, clothing, food, and appropriate and essential behavior patterns, while only 35 of them represented big "C" cultures. In total, there were 246 cultural themes identified in 6 units. The most frequent big "C" themes were geography (41 0%), arts (19), and economy (17%); the least was politics/government. Meanwhile, the most frequent small "c" theme was daily life (59%), custom and norm (19 %), and foods (16%); the least was beliefs and values.

In total, the most frequent themes were daily life (39%), followed by geography (14%), customs and norms (12%), and foods (11%). In contrast, the least were belief and value (3%) and politics and government (1%).
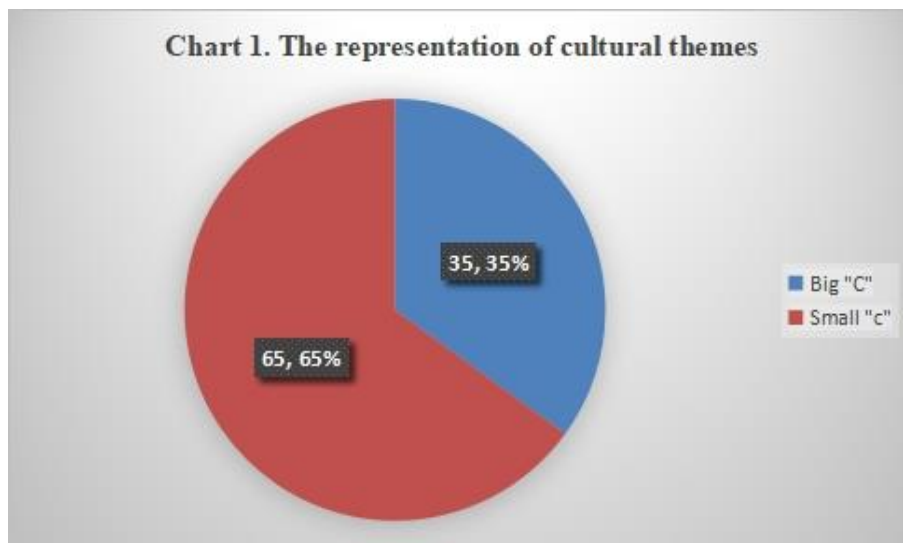

Figure 1. The representation of cultural themes

The result showed that the number of context-based (Indonesian) cultural themes presented in the book is relatively small (5 %). Only 12 units of data belonged to the themes of daily life, geography, and norms/costumes (small "c" culture). In other words, this global textbook inadequately conveys the local culture theme. Of ten categories, local culture only appears in two categories.

Discussion

The data suggest that although the percentage of each theme was varied and not balanced, the book has covered a wide range of cultural themes, namely economy, geography, history, arts, music, politics/government, customs and norms, foods and beverages, and beliefs and values. Nevertheless, the representation of local culture in the book is relatively small. The following describes themes frequently presented in the book and how local culture is embedded in each theme.

Daily Life

The first and most frequent theme represented in the analyzed textbook was daily life (small "c"). This theme is mainly related to schools, home, and leisure activities, transformed into school subjects, school and home activities, leisure activities, family, and occupation. This finding is not surprising because daily life is a safe and highly recommended topic to be incorporated into EYL textbooks. After all, it is very close to the children's personal life, and all learners would have sufficient prior knowledge to deal with this type of topic. Cortazzi and Lin (1999) suggested three cultural sources to be promoted in English classes, namely learners' home culture, target culture (TL), and international culture (IC). The TL they meant was first-language English-speaking cultures (e.g., the American or British cultures), while the IC refers to cultures of all countries worldwide. Children will find learning meaningful when the topics are close to their lives, and the images show something they are familiar with.

Since children are active explorers (Paul 2003) and not the miniature of adults (Linse, 2005), they have got their life routines such as going to schools, studying, playing, and doing activities with friends/families. These have been well represented in the book. However, the culture sources used for daily life were primarily non-local cultures; they tend to represent the daily lives of international and target language cultures. Schooling has become a global culture, but each country has a different schooling culture regarding scheduling, uniform use, subjects, etcetera. For example, in the book (page 10), a school timetable exposed schooling hours that is slightly different from Indonesian cultures. The majority of schools in Indonesia start at seven a.m., not nine a.m., as shown in the book.

Geography

The second most frequent theme was geography (big "C"). They were realized in the unit data as cities, countries, seasons, and weather. This theme also contains a minimal representation of Indonesia. The names of countries mentioned were Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Malaysia, China, Japan, India, Turkey, Egypt, Spain, Italy, France, England, New Zealand, and Australia and the cities mentioned were Madrid, New York, Barcelona, Malaga, London, Rio de Janeiro. Nevertheless, the name of Indonesia and its cities were not explicitly mentioned in the book.

The next geographic themes included a picture of a map and landmarks. There was the image of the pyramid of Egypt (page 100), and the phrase mentioning the liberty statue of America (page 97). On page 114, there was a picture of a globe depicting the image of the Indonesia map. The name of Japan, Malaysia, and New Zealand were written but Indonesia. However, a question asking the location of the pupils' country beside the picture would direct learners to identify Indonesia on the map.

Another example of geographic position is illustrated in the description of different climates, seasons, and weather. The geographic position often causes vast cultural differences. For example, people living in sub-tropical countries have different eating habits, fashions, season-based traditions, and the like, from those who live in tropical countries. On page 115, information about seasons in England was given together with time and typical activities during each season. On page 107, some types of weather familiar to Indonesian children are mentioned and illustrated (e.g., sunny, foggy, rainy, cloudy, and windy). Indonesian seasons, dry and rainy, were not mentioned in the book; however, the task given on page 115 provides opportunities for children to explore these.

Culture and geography are closely related. Each country, even each city, represents a specific cultural identity. For example, when Madrid is mentioned, football lovers might associate it with Real Madrid, a famous football club in the city. Geography helps children learn about their country, the world, and society from different viewpoints (Klein, 2001). So, this is a perfect theme to be inserted in an EYL textbook. Exposing children to the geography of the IC and TC would improve children's cross-cultural knowledge and awareness, but showing them the geography of the place where they belong would help them be more well-informed about their own cultures.

Customs and Norms

This book also promoted themes concerning customs and norms. Understanding cross-cultural dissimilarities in rules, norms, conventions, practices, and verbal/ nonverbal communication are the first step in cultural learning (Lee & Li, 2019). Some topics implicitly and explicitly mentioned were the

school rules, norms in public places, eating traditions, family traditions, clothing norms, and interaction with younger/older people. School rules included wearing a uniform and schedule. Children should be introduced to the socio-cultural norms that surround them because they influence expected behavior. However, this book did not expose much of the Indonesian customs and norms. Indonesia alone is a diverse country with various cultural customs and norms that children need to know and respect. The books exposed some pictures of women and girls wearing hijab/veil (e.g., page 24), which indicated some Indonesian clothing customs, but it was not enough. Indonesia, with hundreds of ethnicities, is very rich in local traditions, family traditions, and clothing customs that can also be promoted during English learning.

Foods and Beverages

Learners can learn about foods and beverages of some cultures. In this book, Indonesia was not mentioned explicitly, nevertheless, some types of food exposed in the book are mostly already recognized by learners in EFL settings, including Indonesia. They include basic foods such as fruits (tomatoes, orange, pineapple, mango, watermelon, and banana), vegetables (potato, bean, peas, carrot, and onion), fish, eggs, and chicken. The book showed children from different countries (Britain, Mexico, Brazil, and Turkey) their typical breakfast (page 29). This part seemed to promote more international foods such as sausage, cheese, rolls, sandwiches, rice, toast, pizza, chips, and *salchicha con huevo* and tortilla. Although pizza is part of global culture, this food is originally from a western country (Italy). Typical Indonesian local meals (such as *nasi goreng, nasi padang, rendang, papeda, sate, soto,* etc.) are not well-represented, but this book opens an opportunity for children to tell the meals in Indonesia (e.g., page 29). Learners in elite schools in Indonesia are already familiar with most international foods such as sausages, pizza, and sandwiches; possibly, they have been part of their daily meals. However, for some learners with lower-middle economy backgrounds, some of the international foods mentioned are not their cup of tea, and having them would be a luxury.

Art

The book contained art products such as drawings and paintings. Stories were presented in comic strips and graphic stories and were primarily narrative, for example, on page 105, it mentioned Picasso (his image, and his painting), and Akira Yoshizawa, a Japanese origami artist, on page 102. The culture learning in this book was also done by making arts/crafts, such as origami (pages 102-103), collage (p. 25), and maracas (page 19). However, Indonesian-related art was not found in the book.

Music

Some tasks represented the music in songs and the names and pictures of musical instruments; however, the frequency was low. The transformation of music themes into songs and rhymes is of any help to children to start learning culture (Brewster et al., 2007). The scenario of inter-culture learning proposed in this book was to engage children in playing games and singing songs.

History

The representations of history were the story of an ancient kingdom, Babylon, with its *Ishtar* gate, *Etemenanki ziggurat,* and hanging gardens (page 101). It also described the history of Egypt's pyramids (page 100) and the history of origami (page 102). The integration of historical themes helps children understand the transformation process in a society that has taken place. Nevertheless, there was no Indonesia-related history mentioned in the book. In the past, Indonesia had many big and small kingdoms (e.g., Sriwijaya and Majapahit) and sultanates. Indonesia also has historical landmarks such as the Borobudur and Prambanan temples that can be incorporated into the teaching materials.

Belief and Value

The value was explicitly stated in the objective and the footnote of the book. Most of the values were implicitly conveyed in the stories embedded in all the chapters. Some values promoted were appreciating different ways of thinking, persevering, caring for nature, being resourceful, being

respectful, showing interest in other cultures, and changing perceptions. For example, page 40 states that the value instilled in the story-based activity was learning responsibility. Values among cultures often contradict one another (Kendal, 2007). However, as the values in the book tend to be universal, contradiction among values is absent in this book. The book exposed dragons considered necessary myths in Chinese and probably old English cultures. The representation of religious symbols was realized in clothes (hijab) wore by girls/women and the cross (page 52).

Government and Politics

This theme was represented by the names of countries and the images of their flags (pages 94, 96, and 99). The book also mentions king Nebuchadnezzar who used to be very powerful in Babylon. A flag is a political symbol of a country. Unfortunately, the Indonesian flag was not there.

The use and adoption of international textbooks across the globe might open an opportunity for the wholesale adoption of western approaches, which has been criticized as giving more benefits to western countries (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). After being criticized, some global textbooks were adapted and modified to meet the local needs (Gohsn, 2019). The data showed that the proportion of Indonesian cultures is relatively small and partial. This finding supports Gohsn's (2019) view that one dilemma in the global textbook concerns culture-specific content. The reasons for using more content from the target culture and international cultures are probably because producing a 'one fits all' textbook is more economical and practical for the publishers (Gohsn, 2019), and it is easier for the composers of the books to write things based on their cultures (Alptekin, 1993). However, in the context of TEYL, conveying children's home culture is essential and could bridge their English learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

Contents from international and target language cultures potentially help learners develop their cross-cultural sociolinguistic competence and internalize the cultural norms of the non-native speakers, which further leads to the development of intercultural awareness to understand self-culture and others (McKay, 2004, 2012). Yet, such content should be culturally appropriate (Gohsn, 2019; Matsuda, 2012). When local cultures are not well represented, young learners might be unable to connect to the concepts and be confused (Gohsn, 2019). Although deciding levels of appropriacy and its measurement is somewhat problematic, international publishers are supposed to attempt to balance the proportion of cultural sources promoted in the books. The textbook should represent local people, concerns, context, practices, and topics of interest to make it more relevant to the local needs and modes of use (Garton & Graves, 2014; Chau, 2011). On the other hand, they should also represent a range of global contexts and speakers (Norris et al., 2017).

When local cultures are not adequately portrayed in the book, teachers can take advantage and turn this into an opportunity to instill intercultural awareness. With help from teachers, students could be encouraged to notice and observe the 'alien' cultural representation they face, and then they can compare it to their own culture. They reflect on what has been experienced related to cultural differences and construct their understanding of their own cultures (McKay, 2012). Hence, the teacher could lead the way in the end, and they should first have intercultural awareness and competencies. With this regard, only a teacher with cultural sensitivity and intercultural awareness could navigate the learners' intercultural learning through the textbook. They do not need to know everything about the target culture, but they must understand the core concept of intercultural language learning (Byram et al., 2002).

CONCLUSION

This study examined cultural themes representation in an international EYLs textbook. It revealed that the spectrums of themes promoted were relatively broad and covered central and fundamental cultural themes for children; however, they were less proportional. There was an attempt by the composers to adapt the content to the local culture, but it seems that it is not adequate. The textbook less accommodated the local cultures, in this case, Indonesia, as an EFL context-based culture. However, the books also stimulated its users to employ children's home culture in some learning activities.

By reflecting on the findings of this study, the international EYL textbook publishers are suggested to put a balanced distribution of cultural themes suiting the characteristic of young learners

of a particular culture. They should also consider the real needs of local learners. EYL practitioners could take advantage of the imbalanced representation of cultural content. It actually can be seen as an opportunity for teachers to provide relevant supplementary materials. The situation creates a space for teachers to use their skills and empower themselves to create materials that fit their learners' needs. No best textbook could fit all learners in all cultures. In the classroom, teachers are the leaders of the transformation process who should have the power and capacity to select materials to minimize conflicts resulting from cultural appropriateness. Because the scope of the current study is very small, further studies on a more significant number of global EYL textbooks are suggested. The balance between international, target, and local cultures in a textbook must be well-measured.

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Appendices

The following is the categorization of big "C" and small "c" followed by perceptive themes of culture adapted from Sadeghi and Sepahi (2017) used for coding.

Table 1. Coding guidelines for the big "C" and small "c" themes of cultures

Big "C" Themes		
Theme	Definition	Example
Music	sounds that are arranged in a way that is pleasant or exciting to listen to. People sing music or play it on instruments.	Pop music, opera, the Beatles, country, and western, musical instruments
History & historical figures	all the events that happened in the past. The past events concerned in the development of a particular place, subject, etc.	History's mysteries, natural disasters of the 20th century, the great figures living in the past
Geography	how the physical features of a place are arranged.	A geographic description of your country
Economy	connected with the trade, industry, and development of the wealth of a country, an area, or society.	The cultural impact of foreign imports, the economic impact of globalization
Art (fine arts)	the use of imagination to express ideas or feelings, particularly in painting, drawing, or sculpture.	Paintings, sculpture, surrealism, abstract art
Economy	connected with the trade, industry and development of wealth of a country, an area or a society.	Cultural impact of foreign imports economic impact of globalization
Government/ Politics	government: the group of people who are responsible for controlling a country. The activity or manner of controlling a country. politics: matters concerned with getting or using power within a particular group or organization.	A self-test of political literacy

Small "c" Themes		
Theme	Definition	Example
Daily Life	how a person or a group of people lives and works. Things happening, done or produced every day.	lifestyles in transition, day and night activities, occupation
Food	things that people or animals eat. A particular type of food.	Types of food, food and health
Customs/Norms	norm: The behavioral expectations and cues within a society or a group. When and where it is appropriate to say certain things, use certain words, discuss specific topics, wear certain clothes, and when not to.	clothing customs, family traditions, wedding traditions around the world

Value and Belief	Custom: An accepted way of behaving or of doing things in a society or a community. beliefs about what is right and wrong and what is essential in life.	Superstitions, the things people believe, values