

DEMO VERSION OF OLYMPIAD ASSIGNMENTS  
CULTURAL STUDIES  
11th GRADE

to be completed within 120 minutes  
the maximum score is 100 points

**Methodological guidelines**

The assignments include three stages:

- I. An assignment to analyse visual materials (30 points);
- II. An assignment to analyse a scientific text (40 points);
- III. A creative assignment (essay) (30 points).

**I. An assignment to analyse visual materials (30 points)**

Images of different symbols are presented below. Please group the symbols in two batches according to their function, assign a name to each group, and explain the common function. The number of symbols in each of the groups must be the same. One item is an exception. Please specify the exception, and briefly explain your answer in one sentence.



Answer:

Group 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Group 2: \_\_\_\_\_

The exception here is: \_\_\_\_\_

**Answers and evaluation criteria**

The following similar statements can be suggested:

Group 1. National flags are used as a state symbol (up to 7 points depending on the statement's accuracy) – C-F-G (3 points);

Group 2. Corporate logos are used to identify a company's products on the market (7 points) – B-D-E (3 points);

Exception: A (1 point). A road sign provides specific information to the public (up to 7 points); in this case, the sign denotes a service area (2 points).

## **Guidelines for your preparation for an assignment to analyse visual materials**

Assignments of this type assess the general knowledge and erudition of Olympiad participants. You can use any encyclopaedia on the history of art when preparing for the assignment.

### **II. An assignment to analyse a scientific text (40 scores)**

#### **Please read the text and answer the questions**

Finding our feet, an unnerving business which never more than distantly succeeds, is what ethnographic research consists of as a personal experience; trying to formulate the basis on which one imagines, always excessively, one has found them is what anthropological writing consists of as a scientific endeavor. We are not, or at least I am not, seeking either to become natives (a compromised word in any case) or to mimic them. Only romantics or spies would seem to find point in that. We are seeking, in the widened sense of the term in which it encompasses very much more than talk, to converse with them, a matter a great deal more difficult, and not only with strangers, than is commonly recognized. "If speaking for someone else seems to be a mysterious process," Stanley Cavell has remarked, "that may be because speaking to someone does not seem mysterious enough."

Looked at in this way, the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse. That is not, of course, its only aim instruction, amusement, practical counsel, moral advance, and the discovery of natural order in human behavior are others; nor is anthropology the only discipline which pursues it. But it is an aim to which a semiotic concept of culture is peculiarly well adapted. As interworked systems of construable signs (what, ignoring provincial usages, I would call symbols), culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly-that is, thickly-described.

Nothing is more necessary to comprehending what anthropological interpretation is, and the degree to which it is interpretation, than an exact understanding of what it means -and what it does not mean - to say that our formulations of other peoples' symbol systems must be actor-oriented.

What it means is that descriptions of Berber, Jewish, or French culture must be cast in terms of the constructions we imagine Berbers, Jews, or Frenchmen to place upon what they live through, the formulae they use to define what happens to them. What it does not mean is that such descriptions are themselves Berber, Jewish, or French-that is, part of the reality they are ostensibly describing; they are anthropological-that is, part of a developing system of scientific analysis. They must be cast in terms of the interpretations to which persons of a particular denomination subject their experience, because that is what they profess to be descriptions of; they are anthropological because it is, in fact, anthropologists who profess them. Normally, it is not necessary to point out quite so laboriously that the object of study is one thing and the study of it another.

Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*

#### Questions:

1. What is Geertz's definition of culture?

2. What is the key task of anthropologists, according to Geertz?
  3. While describing the key goal of anthropology, Geertz notes that there are other disciplines in pursuit of the same goal. Please provide examples of such disciplines and explain your answer.
  4. According to Geertz, what is the main difficulty of anthropological description? Why? Please provide at least one example speaking in favour of your opinion.
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### **Guidelines for preparing for an assignment to analyse a scientific text**

This assignment is focused on assessing your reading skills and ability to understand scientific or academic texts. Questions 1 and 2 feature a basic level of complexity and suggest that either direct quotations or text rendering should be provided as answers. Questions 3 and 4 have a high level of complexity and require broad erudition in the history and theory of culture. The text is used in these assignments as a starting point for your own reasoning. The assignments may include questions in regards to the topics or issues discussed in the text, may touch on terms, culture-specific elements and theories explaining and summarizing cultural phenomena, etc., which are described in the text. In the answers to Questions 3 and 4, participants must not only provide their opinion in a clear and logical manner, but also support it with adequate examples showing their knowledge.

### **III. Creative assignment (essay) (30 points)**

#### **Choose the topic:**

- 1) Civilisation is a process or part of a process in which we are involved. All elements associated with civilization, i.e. mechanisms, scientific discoveries, government forms, etc., suggest that human relations and society have a special structure, and human behaviour follows a special pattern. (*N. Elias*)
- 2) The idea of “national” can be a good starting point for defining what mobility means for a culture, and how cultures travel. (*John Urry*)

#### **Guidelines to the assignment**

An **essay** is a genre for discussing the topic in writing. This genre and notion were created in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the French writer and philosopher Michel de Montaigne. His collection of *Essays* was devoted to a wide range of topics: from his own digestive system to the most universal issues of philosophy and religion. These essays are held together by the author's ambition to express his own opinion in regards to all these topics.

Therefore, an **essay** shall mean a piece of writing prepared in the first person.

#### **How to choose a topic for your essay**

Olympiad assignments suggest a certain choice of topics. The right choice of topic is important to achieve a successful result. The choice can be motivated by several reasons:

- if the topic provokes an emotional reaction: you agree or disagree with the given statement; you know that such things happen, or, on the contrary, you think that it is impossible;
- you are familiar with the topic, and it responds to your understanding, or you know the author of the statement, and you have read his/her works;
- the topic contradicts your ideas; you fundamentally disagree with the statement.

**An essay may have the following structure:**

1. Explanation of the topic (rendering it in your own words);
2. Presentation of your opinion;
3. Providing arguments in favour of your opinion;
4. A general conclusion.

**Important:** The quality of your essay (sequential order of its ideas and arguments, well-founded conclusions, accurate wording and writing skills) will be evaluated.