



Culture and Traditions

Multiple choice: cultural identity | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0510/0511

1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner before you read.

1. What food traditions are important in your family or community?
2. Can a recipe teach someone about culture?
3. Why do some traditions change over time?
4. Would you rather learn from a video or from an older relative?

Exercise 4 at a glance

Read one longer text and answer six multiple-choice questions. Choose A, B or C. The correct answer may depend on attitude, purpose or a detail across a whole paragraph, not just one matching word.

2. Read for overall understanding

Read the article. What did Leo understand after learning the recipe?

Learning a family recipe

by Leo Mendes

Every summer, my grandmother makes a rice dish that everyone in our family talks about as if it is famous. I had eaten it many times but never helped cook it. When she asked me to learn the recipe, I expected a clear list of ingredients and timings. Instead, she handed me an onion and said, 'Cut this smaller than you think.' That was the first sign that the recipe lived more in her hands than on paper. I had imagined cooking as a set of instructions, but she treated it more like a conversation with the food.

I tried to record everything on my phone. How much spice? How long should the rice cook? How brown should the onions be? My grandmother answered with phrases like 'until it smells ready' and 'not too much, unless the tomatoes are weak'. At first, this annoyed me because I wanted exact instructions. Then she told me that her mother had cooked the dish over a different stove, with different rice, in a different country. Exact instructions had never been the point. She was not trying to be difficult; she was showing me that ingredients behave differently depending on heat, freshness and even the size of the pan.

As we cooked, she told stories I had not heard before. The dish had changed when certain ingredients became expensive, and again when part of the family moved to a city where fresh herbs were harder to find. One uncle preferred it hotter; my mother added more vegetables when we were younger. I began to see the recipe as a family map. Each change showed where people had lived, what they could afford and who they were cooking for. The stories also made the meal feel less like a dish from one place and more like something that had travelled with the family.

My first attempt was not perfect. I stirred the rice too often, and the texture became softer than usual. I expected my grandmother to be disappointed, but she laughed and said every cook must ruin it slightly once. She was more concerned that I had tasted as I cooked and noticed what changed. That made me less afraid of making mistakes. I was learning judgement, not only instructions. That response helped me understand why she had wanted me beside her in the kitchen rather than simply sending me a recipe.

Now I have written a version of the recipe, but it includes questions as well as steps: taste the sauce, check the rice, ask who is eating. I still want the dish to remind people of my grandmother's kitchen, but I no longer think tradition means freezing something in time. A tradition survives because people care enough to repeat it and flexible enough to adjust it. When I cook it now, I still hear her voice telling me to notice before I decide.

3. Strategy focus

Track a change in thinking

Some questions ask how the writer's view changes. Compare what the writer expected at first with what they understand later.

4. Exam-style multiple-choice questions

For each question, choose the correct answer, A, B or C.

Question 1

What surprised Leo when he first tried to learn the recipe?

- A The dish required more ingredients than he expected.
- B His grandmother did not begin with exact written instructions.
- C His family had stopped making the recipe regularly.

Question 2

Why did Leo become annoyed during cooking?

- A His grandmother refused to let him use his phone.
- B The ingredients changed before he could record them.
- C He wanted exact measurements but received flexible advice.

Question 3

What did Leo learn from the family stories?

- A The recipe had changed with family circumstances.
- B The original dish was no longer possible to make.
- C Most relatives disagreed about the recipe's importance.

Question 4

How did his grandmother react to Leo's first attempt?

- A She valued what he noticed more than a perfect result.
- B She was disappointed by the softer rice.
- C She asked him to follow the recipe more strictly next time.

Question 5

Why does Leo describe the recipe as a family map?

- A It lists where ingredients can be bought.
- B It shows family movement, choices and memories.
- C It explains which relatives cook most often.

Question 6

What does Leo finally suggest about tradition?

- A It should be protected from modern habits.
- B It depends mainly on accurate written records.
- C It can stay meaningful while still changing.

5. Follow-up tasks

1. Discussion: Which tradition would you like to learn properly?
2. Strategy: Choose one wrong option and explain why it is tempting but not correct.
3. Writing: Describe a tradition, object or food that carries family or cultural meaning.
4. Vocabulary: Circle words and phrases connected to culture, cooking and identity.

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2. Read for overall understanding

Suggested answer: He understood that traditions are kept alive through stories, small choices and adaptation, not just by copying exactly.

4. Exam-style multiple-choice questions

1. B; 2. C; 3. A; 4. A; 5. B; 6. C

1. B - He expected a clear list but received practical guidance instead.
2. C - He wanted exact instructions, but she used judgement-based phrases.
3. A - The stories show changes linked to cost, places and preferences.
4. A - She cared that he tasted and noticed what changed.
5. B - Each change reflects where people lived, costs and who they cooked for.
6. C - He says tradition survives through repetition and flexibility.