

Halloween costumes (worksheet)

Activity 1

Discuss the questions with your partner.

1. Do you celebrate Halloween?
2. Do you know any Halloween traditions?
3. Do you have an interesting idea for a costume?
4. Should there be guidelines for Halloween costumes?

Activity 2

These days, people don't just wear scary costumes. They wear costumes based on many things including popular news stories and politicians. This comes along with many controversies including a debate on whether it's appropriate to wear costumes representing other cultures.



Read the article. Do you agree with the author's approach? Discuss with your partner.

In early August, my 5-year old daughter declared that she wanted to be "Elsa" from "Frozen" this Halloween, and "Moana" the following Halloween.

I had some reservations about both costume choices:

"There is one thing I don't like about the character of Elsa. I feel like Elsa is a White princess, and we see so many White princesses, her character sends the message that you have to be a certain way to be "beautiful" or to be a "princess"...that you have to have white skin, long, blonde hair, and blue eyes. I'm not sure I like the idea of you changing your hair color to dress up as Elsa—because I think Elsa's character could also be a short, brown-haired character like you."

"No," my daughter refuted. "I want you to make me a long, blonde braid like Elsa's."

I also had some reservations regarding cultural appropriation. “Elsa is an imaginary or made-up character. Moana is based on real history and a real group of people... If we are going to dress up as a real person, we have to make sure we are doing it in a way that is respectful. Otherwise, it is like we are making fun of someone else’s culture.”

I considered whether my daughter and I could find Polynesian artists that made traditional clothing and both learn about and support their work — but I wasn’t coming up with such artists... And, moreover, it still felt problematic to “dress up” as another culture, (even while trying to learn about and honor it).

“Anyway,” I added, “I don’t like the idea of dressing up using the same traditional clothing that someone from Moana’s culture may have worn because that feels like we are laughing at her culture by making it a costume. A child whose family is Polynesian could dress up using that type of traditional clothing but Moana’s culture is not our culture. If you want you could dress up as someone from one of your cultures, you could be a tango dancer from Argentina... (or as Che Guevara!). Otherwise, maybe you could be a modern-day Moana and dress up in the clothing you think Moana might wear today.”

After a few days of the same conversation, my daughter decided that she would, instead, dress up like Mickey Mouse for Halloween 2018.

Adapted from “*Moana, Elsa and Halloween*” by Sachi Ferris

Activity 3

Read article again and choose True or False.

1. The author thinks that dressing up as Elsa promotes whiteness and white standards of beauty. **T/F**
2. The mother would have had no problem with her daughter dressing up as Moana if they had been able to find Polynesian artists to make her an authentic costume. **T/F**
3. The daughter agreed to dress up as a modern-day Moana but then changed her mind. **T/F**
4. The mother thinks you should only wear costumes from your own culture. **T/F**
5. The mother and her daughter have Argentinian roots. **T/F**

Activity 4

The article “*Moana, Elsa and Halloween*” went viral and was even discussed on British television. Watch the [video](#). Which side won the argument? Discuss with your partner.



Activity 5

Watch the video again. Put the ideas expressed by the two speakers in chronological order.

- A.** A little girl dressing up as Moana wouldn't be her mocking or being disrespectful of Polynesian culture. That would be her dressing up as brilliant, strong female role-model from a film.
- B.** Constantly seeing everything in the prism of race is dangerous.
- C.** To dress up in someone's native dress and use it as a costume is just mockery. It's offensive and disrespectful.
- D.** On the one hand little girls can't dress up as Polynesians because that's racist. On the other hand they can't dress up as somebody of their own ethnicity (a white princess) because that's superior.
- E.** Children at some point need to become aware of race.
- F.** If you are not from a specific culture, don't wear their costumes.
- J.** Dressing up in native dress from different cultures is celebrating those cultures.

Activity 6

Write a letter to the author of the article "Moana, Elsa and Halloween" and express your opinion on the issue.