

## Focus On: Points of View—Cultural Differences

Read this imaginary conversation between a Frenchman and an Iroquois. Each is attempting to explain his culture. Start by reading what the Frenchman says.



### Frenchman

In France, our society is organized by a class system based on power and status. The class into which you are born determines your power and status. Many of us think it is very important to acquire power and wealth.

Our system of land ownership only allows certain classes to own land.

Permanent buildings and cities are part of our way of life in France. The most powerful people have the largest and most expensive buildings.

We have a state and a government headed by a ruler. We call our ruler a king. Our ruler and advisors make all of the governmental decisions for all of the people.

Business and industry are important in France. We have merchants who buy and sell goods. Through trade we accumulate wealth.

It is important for us to explore and conquer new lands to acquire raw materials and markets for our manufactured goods.

Our laws are written down. We also have a legal system with courts, judges, and jails.

Most of us are Christians. We build churches in which we worship our God.

Then read the Iroquois reply directly across the page. Then read what the Frenchman says next. You could try reading with different voices to create a better dialogue.



### Iroquois

Our society is organized around a belief that all are born equal. Power and wealth mean different things to us than they do to you.

We believe that we are the Keepers of Mother Earth; the land is not ours to buy, sell, or claim.

Some of our people have permanent homes, but they are unlike yours. Many of us move with the seasons and animals, so our homes are portable.

We have non-state societies. This means that the power is not in the hands of one group or one person. As a result, we hold group meetings to discuss important topics and make decisions. Our leaders may try to persuade us, but they do not have the power to make the final decision. Decisions are based on the wishes of the people. Arriving at a consensus is important.

We produce enough to meet our needs and share with our kin. We also trade with other tribes. Gift-giving is an important part of trading. Accumulating possessions is not important to us.

We believe that there is plenty of land for all. We do not need to take over new land to gain power and wealth.

Our laws are not written down. We have no need for courts, jails, or judges because wrongs are dealt with by families or individuals.

Spirituality is central to our lives, but we do not have special buildings in which to worship. We believe in a Creator.