

culture

East and West

1 Reading

- Choose five words you think of when you see or hear the word EAST and five words when you see or hear the word WEST.
- Work with a partner. What words do you have? Are they the same as your partner's? Why did you choose them?
- Read the article and see if any of your words come up.

(1) _____

When we think of East and West we often come up with similar words, at least when we all come from the same country. So, for many people living in the West the word East means rice, martial arts (like kung fu and karate), Buddhism, Islam and karaoke. With the West we associate words such as capitalism, football, USA, junk food and so on.

(2) _____

No, not really. Of course, when you come from a particular region you see far more differences between the neighbouring countries than someone looking in from outside. For someone from the West it isn't difficult to lump countries such as China, Japan and Korea together under the label 'Far East'. Although people know there are differences, the perception for many people is that these countries are very similar.

(3) _____

The likely origin dates back a few thousand years when much of the world was unknown. To many civilisations in Europe there was the West – Europe – and the East – the Arabic world – and beyond that China and India. Very little was known about sub-Saharan Africa (Africa south of the Sahara desert) and the Americas hadn't been discovered. Although not a great deal was known about countries such as China and India there was still quite a lot of trade between Europe and the East, mainly along what was known as The Silk Route.

(4) _____

One reason is the way our maps of the world are made. Most maps in Europe show the USA on the left ie to the West, with Europe in the centre left and China, Japan etc to the right ie the East. Maps in Asia often have their countries in the centre and so Europe is still to the West (although the US is normally on the right!). Of course, this is all artificial as it's taking a sphere and representing it in a two-dimensional form. However, the terms now no longer just apply to geographical location, but also to religion, lifestyles and so on.

(5) _____

It does seem strange that the East-West division is used so much. What about a North-South divide? Well, in some places this is strong, for example North America (the USA and Canada) and South America, North and South Korea, South Africa and so on. However, in terms of a world divide the term North-South is rarely used.

2 Comprehension

A Read the article and match the headings (A-E) to the paragraphs (1-5).

- A Are these stereotypes justified?
- B But why is the term still used?
- C East or West – just words?
- D What about North or South?
- E Where do the terms come from?

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2 Comprehension

B Read the article again. Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 Capitalism is associated with the East.
- 2 When you live outside a particular area you often think of countries as being very similar.
- 3 There wasn't much trade between the East and West in the past.
- 4 The terms East and West don't only apply to geographical locations.
- 5 The terms North-South are as important in some places.

3 Vocabulary

Read the article again and find these words (1-8). Then match each word to the correct definition (a-j). There are two extra definitions.

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1 capitalism | a a lot or large amount |
| 2 lump together | b a view or particular way of thinking about something |
| 3 perception | c not very much |
| 4 origin | d economic system where companies are owned by people not governments |
| 5 a great deal | e made or created by people, not natural |
| 6 artificial | f not often |
| 7 representing | g put in the same group or category |
| 8 rarely | h something that is very interesting or important |
| | i the place or time when something begins |
| | j being a sign, symbol or picture of something |

4 Speaking

Work in groups and discuss these questions.

- 1 What things link countries together so they are seen as being part of the same group?
- 2 If you were asked to divide the world in a North-South division rather than the more traditional East-West divide, what would the main characteristics of each 'area' be?
- 3 In what other ways can you divide the world?

5 Writing

Choose one of the questions you answered in section 4, Speaking, and design a poster to illustrate it.