

# Example of essay on cultural differences between saudi arabia and the united stat...

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



I am from Saudi Arabia presently studying in the USA. In this essay, I will try to compare and contrast the cultural differences in food, dress, art, music, language, education, lifestyle and government between the two countries. My purpose for doing so is for me to share with you my views and experiences with cultural diversity. It is a fact that cultural differences and preferences exist for a number of reasons, such as, in the following:

**Food:** Just like in the US, Saudi Arabia also has pizza, fast food and restaurant chains. However, under the Islamic dietary laws, pork is forbidden for consumption. Some of my favorite foods are Bukhari, Mandi, Kabsa, Al-Mathbi, to name a few. During the Ramadam, which is the Islamic month of fasting, I neither consume food nor drink from dawn to dusk. Nonetheless, my family gets up before dawn and prepares heavy breakfast, which is repeated daily each sundown until the end of the Ramadan.

In the US, all throughout the year, I observed that Americans and peoples of various nationalities can order food from fast food chains, restaurants, malls, etc. During the holiday seasons such as Thanksgiving Day, roasted turkey serves as the main traditional course. During Christmas and New Year's eves, all sorts of food are served. In the US, food preparation for most, if not all, the holidays is done prior to and anywhere during the day for mealtime and snack time. It depends on an individual whether he/she will refrain from consuming food anytime he/she wants to.

**Dress:** Saudi men can wear attire intended for them, even shorts in public. However, for religious reason, in Saudi Arabia, our women must wear decent clothes known as abaya (black coat); they cannot just about wear anything. American women, on the contrary, can wear just about anything they are

comfortable with. Every time I open my TV or surf the Internet, women have different styles of wearing apparels, not to mention cosmetics that they apply to their faces. Sometimes, it is no longer the apparel that really counts, but the style – or how they look to the public, especially, among celebrities. Even women, for the most time, who already have husbands and kids seem to be always in fashion like the younger generations.

Art: Saudi's art has been preserved despite of modernization as can be viewed from the daily life of our people. The art symbolizes the rich cultural heritage of my fellow Saudi Arabians. As I learned from our history subject, Islamic “ Golden Age” was a dynamic era of great learning in the arts, as well as, in science, philosophy and culture of the Arab people.

In America, I observe that it is for art's sake that there are names for all types of arts. Although there are beautiful paintings, sculptures, etc. that are present everywhere, I have a mixed feelings about the portrayal of human bodies. Some are simple art while others, if you will ask me seem not to count as art anymore. Anyway, whether in my country of origin or in a foreign country such as the US, I always find beauty the way I see things.

Music: I find Saudi's music as entertaining, especially, simple traditional (rhythmic percussions) ones from Arabic channels because they are imbedded in me as part of my cultural heritage. Hence, I prefer listening to music that are soothing to the soul – so to speak. In the US, I like mellow songs because, as I just mentioned, they are relaxing, especially while studying or doing my assignments. So, whether in KSA or US, I know that music help me concentrate on what I do.

Language: When I use my native language, I extemporaneous express

myself at the very details of things. Unlike the English language, I still have to think twice or thrice, and even have doubts sometimes, whether I used the appropriate word or not for a particular context. I know that this feeling is also shared by most non-native speakers. What I truly admire with the English language is that, since it is internationally spoken by most people, I can interact not only with Americans and fellow Arabs, but across the world (whether online or in person). I believe that it is to my advantage that I learned the English language early in life and thus able to share my views as if I am using my native tongue.

Education: As an Arab, I like Saudi's educational system – whether from public or private institution – because it values quality, excellence and efficiency. I am a product of Saudi's good education because I have learned about our culture, tradition and values at a very young age. Similar in the US, Arab students are allowed to choose the school where they will attend to just in my case now. Moreover, the increasing number of women enrolled in our universities takes up various courses. Thousands of Saudi women have earned their baccalaureates and then doctorates locally, especially in Princess Nora bint Abdul Rahman University, and from Western universities. Most of the graduates are employed as professors/teachers, health care practitioners and public sector employees.

I experienced how American education is considered first class in the world because of the various course offerings and foreign students being catered by their schools or universities. There are also myriad approaches in teaching the subjects and not just teaching/learning within the four walls of the classrooms. In the US, although kindergarten to high school is free – it is

not with university studies where tuition is so expensive; hence, parents work hard for their children's good education.

Lifestyle: In Saudi Arabia, individuals prefer group activities than doing things alone. For instance, in business or work, people prefer financing a business instead of getting other individuals to invest in it. In comparison to the US, most American people prefer doing things independently. Hence, people in my country of origin give more importance to collectivism than in American society. This is because Saudi people believe in group efforts as members of a collective whole. Thus, they work together even in a competition for the welfare of one another – even when any one of them become more successful than others. In American society, people seem to be more individualistic or autonomous in the face of competition.

In terms of family relationship, I prefer those of Saudi's because they are usually bigger in number, live with and care for each other until such time that they are old enough and can fend for themselves. Contrariwise, I see most American families as small in number where children are taken care of until they are matured enough or dependent on themselves. American family members are not as close as the Saudi family members are.

When it comes to greeting people, I like how Saudi people do it wherein they kiss or hug each other on the cheeks between individuals of the same gender; whereas most Arab men show their sign of nose-to-nose greetings.

In comparison, Americans will greet each other through handshakes.

Sometimes, they will simply give you a pat on the back just like I experienced with some of my American friends.

Architecture: What I like most with our Saudi Arabian architecture is that

most of our cultural heritage has been preserved, despite the emergence of modern building technologies (e. g., malls, grocery stores , hypermarkets, etc. with all the popular brands worldwide). Still, the design and ornamentation of Saudis building is dependent not only on aesthetic effects, but also on the environment. As an Arab, there are no churches or religious buildings other than our Islamic mosques. Moreover, there are no cinemas, bars, clubs and related establishments.

In America, most houses are big, although extended families are not practiced. It is mostly for aesthetic reasons that houses are furnished with amenities for a growing family of four or five, at the most. When it comes to building designs, there are tall skyscrapers for business or commercial purposes. American schools, where there is no separation between gender inside the classroom, usually don't have high walls, although with guard posts.

Government: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a monarchy founded upon the tenets of Islam. Our King is both head of the government and the state. The Qur'an is the Constitution of our country. Because my country is rich in oil, our government provides some of our basic needs such as free basic education, hospitalization and so on. This is the reason I love so much my country because the government takes care of its constituents. The US, on the other hand, is a democratic form of government where people vote for their representatives. America also has a justice system that is based on the rule of law. I have known American people as freedom-lovers. American citizens exercise their suffrage or right to vote. Although I do not know much about the legislative branch of the US government, I can see how people also

abide by their laws.

My beloved Saudi and US have a few similarities and some differences in cultures. This is exactly what cultural diversity is around the world. Hence, I can see that one's culture, no matter how unique, is not above any one else. I believe that people like me has to learn how to live in harmony with other people whose beliefs, mores, traditions, values or culture differs from my country of origin. I know it is always a part of my formal education to learn the culture of other country so that I can live peacefully with other people. I have come to know how to respect other people's beliefs so that they, too, will respect my own freedom, religion, beliefs, culture, etc. Now if you will ask me the differences between Saudi and US culture, it really does not matter. What is really important for me is that the culture of Saudi is for Arabs and the culture of the US is for its people; thus, people should learn how to understand and adopt with all these cultural diversities/differences. At present, what I know as a student is that I should keep on learning how to be good with what I believe in.