

Engaging with anthropology

IB DP Social and Cultural Anthropology Engaging with anthropology full package

1. Anthropology at a glance

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IB Social and Cultural Anthropology: engaging with anthropology, examined in paper 1 (unseen text, big questions) - the nine key concepts, participant observation, and anthropological thinking.

Must-know: concepts as lenses argued with evidence; participant observation as the distinct method; ethnography read comparatively so assumptions become explicit; the observer positioned reflexively.

2. The nine concepts

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Belief and knowledge, change, culture, identity, materiality, power, social relations, society, symbolism: a concept is a lens, not a label. Arguments run concept PLUS evidence: naming power explains who bows to whom; naming symbolism explains why the same bow can mean respect or mockery.

Worked: the lunch queue read three ways (culture: the learned rule; power: who may bend it; symbolism: the tray as the individual-portion marker).

3. Observation and comparison

Observation and comparison

Participant observation: living the group's life while watching it, long enough for the strange to become legible and the familiar strange. Comparison is the engine: ethnography read against ethnography until cultural assumptions stand exposed.

Worked: the shared-table student finds the queue cold; the queue student finds the shared table chaotic: same room, different assumptions, and anthropology says so out loud.

4. Reflexivity and big questions

Reflexivity and big questions

Reflexivity turns the lens on the observer: age, role and expectation shape what the field shows. Paper 1's unseen text carries the big questions (sameness and difference; local and global), answered by connecting the passage, a named concept and ethnographic material.

Worked: the sameness-and-difference answer on a queueing passage: all groups order access to scarce things (same); the rule, its meaning and who may bend it differ (different).

Check yourself

Check yourself

Nine concepts, each a lens with evidence.

Participant observation as the distinct tradition.

Comparison exposing assumptions; ethnography not read alone.

The observer positioned; the big questions answered with the passage.