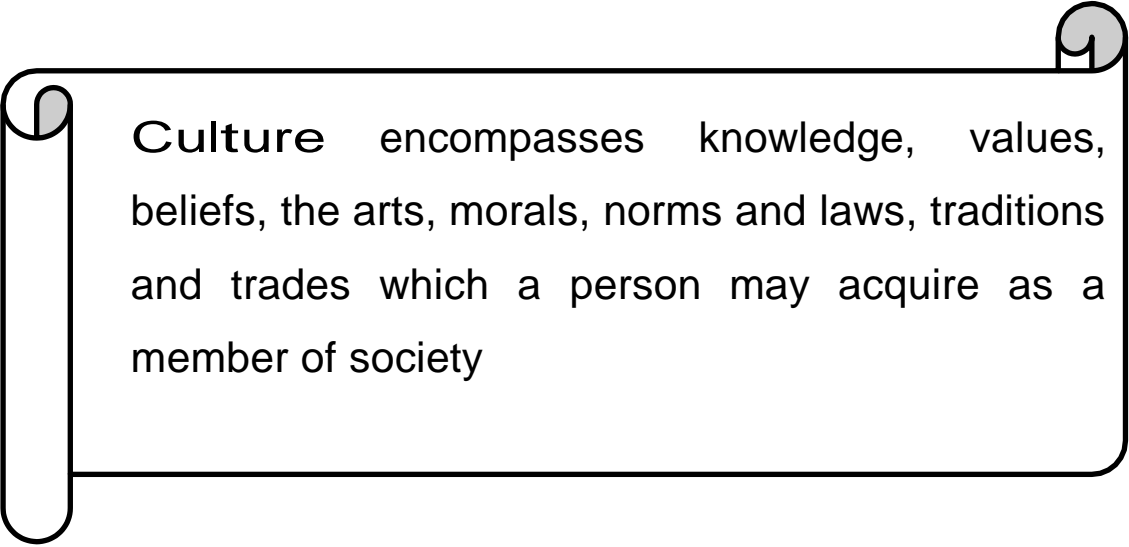


Malta's way of Life

- The influence of the media, emigration and tourism on the Maltese way of life
- Irregular immigration in Malta
- The development of a multicultural society
- Local, European and Global identity
- Entertainment activities
- The difference between past ways of entertainment and today'

What is culture?

Culture is the reality that makes us individuals, society and a nation. It encompasses within itself all that a person does in their life – it is a way of life. Culture is the mark that makes us who we are and which **distinguishes us from other societies**.



Culture encompasses knowledge, values, beliefs, the arts, morals, norms and laws, traditions and trades which a person may acquire as a member of society

Every society has its own culture. Culture is a **process which is alive and dynamic**, because culture changes and develops. However whilst changing it continues to retain its basic traditional elements.

Therefore we talk about:

1. **cultural change** (when a culture develops and changes)
2. **cultural continuity** (when a culture retains particular elements which have been inherited and passed down from one generations to another).

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Example - the Maltese language has been created over the years and its basis, with the alphabet and Maltese grammar, remains what it always was, but over the years many words have been added to the vocabulary as well as writing rules have been changed.

In fact culture is a **social heritage**. We who are living today, are leaving our own influence on the environment. However apart from this we are also enjoying influences left by our forefathers. Hence we talk about **cultural heritage** – something we found already in place before we, ourselves started to leave our mark on it.

The **transmission of culture** takes place when it is received and passed on through a process of learning at a particular time (**socialisation**). This starts from the moment of birth within the environs of the family and continues to develop further when we meet other different people.

A country's culture develops also according to the **physical environment** and the **geographic position** of that country. Ex. Countries surrounded by sea will have a culture where the sea, swimming, boat races etc. are very common and popular.

Factors which influence Maltese Culture:

The four elements which form culture are:

- ✓ Language
- ✓ Traditions
- ✓ Technology
- ✓ Values

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1. Although Malta is a small island it has still developed its own particular language. It is a Semitic language with a mixture of words adopted from Italian and English.
2. The Maltese islands have a unique culture, ex. typical Maltese food such as bigilla, tomato puree and Maltese bread; traditions such as Imnarja and the Regatta.
3. Religious influence is very obvious in Maltese culture, ex; celebrations connected with baptism, Holy Communion and marriage; the village feasts; and a number of national feasts which are also religious.
4. We have trades and particular tools which are typically Maltese. Due to the fact that Malta is very poor in natural resources, the Maltese have really developed their human resources and gained a reputation for being a hardworking people.
5. We find typical Maltese norms and values, ex. The Maltese are generous, hardworking, careful and thrifty.



How is Maltese Culture Changing?

Gradually we can see a continuous change between traditional Maltese culture and modern culture. There are a variety of factors which effect culture amongst which we find:

- ❖ Mass media
- ❖ Emigration
- ❖ Tourism

Through the introduction of **radio, television and the internet** to the Maltese islands, the Maltese started to be exposed to ideas and cultures different to their own. They started to see different lifestyles, and because of this food which is not typically Maltese was introduced, different styles of clothing, traditions and also different values. Many people, especially youths, imitate what they see in the media and in this way new elements where introduced to our culture.

Malta has passed through periods of migration. In the case of Maltese people leaving for good from their country to settle in another country, which is called **emigration** whilst in the case of foreign people coming to settle in Malta which is called **immigration**. Both emigration as well as immigration leave an impact on Maltese culture.

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Another element which helps provide a cultural change as well as cultural continuity is the element of **tourism**. The influx of tourists brings about change because these bring with them new ideas and we are exposed to different cultures (cultural change) ex: style of clothing, feasts which are celebrated like Halloween,



etc. At the same time because of tourism certain trades and other aspects of our culture do not die out because tourists create a demand for this cultural heritage (cultural continuity) ex: Typical Maltese evenings are organized where traditional clothes are worn and typical Maltese food is sold, filigree work is for sale as well as ganutell, etc.

Some activities which have remained typically Maltese:

- * The village feast
- * Firework displays
- * Band clubs
- * Horse races
- * Imnarja (traditional feast)
- * The Regatta (traditional boat races)
- * Agricultural shows
- * Carnival
- * Wine bars
- * L-għana (traditional folk singing)



1. Differences between past types of entertainment and today's

The change in the way of life from the traditional to that of today has brought about changes in the way we entertain ourselves. Our standard of living has also contributed towards this change.

We find that in the past many families used to go out on Sundays for a day to the beach, with a homemade piece of Maltese bread or else waiting for the village feast to go out, and to buy a new change of clothes. Whilst today many families eat out very often and buy clothes when they feel like it.

Many Maltese families have started to enjoy themselves through travelling or when they go for a weekend to Gozo, something they never did in the past.

Children in the past used to play with marbles or beads, with a ball or passju in the streets whilst nowadays children have been won over by technology. Hence very often these are to be found playing at home on computer, Wii, x-box, and play station.

Hence we find a total change in the mode of entertainment.



2. Irregular Immigration in Malta

A recent factor which is effecting Maltese lifestyle and culture is the phenomenon of immigration. This is because a large number of people from different cultures, perforce leave a big impact on the culture of the country. We can also note this change where values are concerned ...whilst many Maltese people are very generous towards immigrants we are finding others who forget this value and instead preach racism.

Primarily we have to draw the distinction between a **refugee** and an **irregular immigrant**.

We use the word '**refugee**' when we refer to a person who escaped from their country as a consequence of circumstances which they had no control over, and which made it impossible for the person to go on living there.



Refugees are people who escaped from their homes and countries due to wars, hunger, poverty, drought, persecution or violations of their fundamental human rights and who seek refuge in some other country.

It is important that one understands that this word has a clear and precise legal meaning. In the eyes of the law not everyone who escapes from their country, even if they do this for a very valid reason, is considered a refugee.

Irregular migrants would have also left their country for reasons of war or persecution, but they would have left their country secretly and without any official documents. During the last few years the number of immigrants to arrive in Malta by boat and who travelled in an irregular way has grown drastically.

Those irregular migrants who enter into Maltese waters, are detained upon arrival in Malta.

After an extensive medical check-up, the

migrants are purposely detained in detention centres (like that in Hal Safi) and not imprisoned with people in prisons.

Once they are released from detention and allowed to live in the open centres, these suffer from a lack of everyday necessities. They depend on the generosity of the public for clothes, pots and pans, plates and other things. Church groups and other NGO'S help a lot in this field.



3. Multicultural Society

We have to mention also that in many countries nowadays we don't find a **mono-culture** anymore (meaning one culture) but we find a **multi-cultural society**.

This means that in the same country we find many cultures of different peoples existing side by side

Hence we find people with different religious beliefs, different styles of clothing, different traditions and all living together in the same country.

Malta is a multi-cultural country. We can note this when we see churches of all types of denominations all over the island, restaurants serving all types of food, different ethnic groups living in different towns and villages, etc.



This takes place through the great number of tourists, large amount of emigrants, influx of irregular migrants and the membership of Malta in the European Union.

Obviously multiculturalism brings with it a change in the culture of a country. New ways are introduced, different feasts start to be celebrated, we eat food which is more associated with foreign countries and we introduce new words to our vocabulary.

This means that in the same country we find many cultures of different peoples existing together. So we find people with different beliefs, different style of dress, different traditions all living together in the same country.