A pottery business in India
Secondary Lesson Plan

This lesson plan was developed by Curriculum Corporation.

Source
Business in Asia

Learning area
Studies of society and environment

Level
Middle secondary

Description
Students read and discuss some material about Neerja International, a successful business in India, then construct a role play about how the business began.

Purpose
To develop an understanding of some factors involved in the success of an Asian business and the way a `traditional' craft can form the basis of a business operation.

Duration
One lesson of about 50 minutes

Possible outcomes
In relation to Studies of society and environment — a curriculum profile for Australian schools, this lesson can contribute to the achievement of outcomes in the following strands:

- Time, continuity and change
- Place and space
- Culture
- Resources
- Investigation, communication and participation

Materials required
Copies of Handouts 1 and 2 (from below)
Procedure

1. **Introduction**
   Explain to the class that this lesson is about a successful Indian business enterprise, Neerja International, that has adapted traditional pottery techniques to reach a wide market. It was founded by Leela Bordia in 1980.

2. **The beginnings of Neerja International**
   Read Handout 1, *Neerja International*, to the class or have students read it individually. Clarify any unfamiliar words or terms.

3. **Role-play**
   Ensure that the outline of Leela Bordia's association with Kailash is clearly understood. Then organise the class into small groups of five or six students and ask each group to devise a role-play as follows:
   Leela Bordia and Kailash visit a group of craftspeople to try to convince them to become part of the new business venture.
   Give students Handout 2, which describes the various roles.
   It is important in this exercise to avoid stereotypes and to point out to students that referring to Leela Bordia as `higher class' in this context means simply that she is wealthier and more influential. Reference to `caste' is unnecessary.
   If time permits (or in subsequent classes) groups may perform their role-plays for the whole class.

Extension activities

1. **Writing task**
   Ask students to imagine themselves in one of the roles above and write an account of what they were thinking during the role play.

2. **Could a business like Neerja International succeed in Australia?**
   Discuss this topic with the class. Issues that might be considered include the following:
   - differences in social and economic conditions between India and Australia
   - differences in traditional crafts between the two countries
   - the labour-intensive nature of Neerja International's business
   - whether Neerja International's work practices have anything in common with the use of `outworkers' in Australia
   - attitudes of the Australian workforce and trade union movement towards such practices
   The discussion can lead to a more formal debate or written work.

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Neerja International's 'Blue Pottery' is a unique blend of ceramic, quartz and white clay moulded into traditional designs and hand painted in blue. It has been made in Jaipur since 1727 when the city was founded.

In 1978, Leela Bordia, a well-off teacher, visited villages around Jaipur and saw the craftspeople living in poverty. She wondered whether Blue Pottery could be marketed more widely, as a way of improving the standard of living of the villagers. When she approached senior craftspeople to ask whether they could make changes to their designs, however, their reaction was not positive. They saw no need for change.

A few weeks later a young craftsman called Kailash visited Leela Bordia. He had tried some of her suggestions about modifying the traditional designs and an English tourist had paid a large sum of money for the pieces produced. Leela Bordia asked him whether he would work with her on a new business venture. He agreed and Neerja International was born.

Roles

Leela Bordia wants to see improvements in the lives of the craftspeople. She believes her innovative plans can benefit them and herself. She is of a higher class than the craftspeople.

Kailash is young, and expected to respect older people. The craftspeople are proud of their skills and traditions. They are suspicious of outsiders who may want to interfere with their traditional way of life. They do not want to be rude to a person of a higher class but they might not want to trust such a person.