Dear Phillip,

I want to thank you for overseeing the family and taking care of the household while I attend school. All of your hard work and long hours dedicated to the family after working eight hours, plus overtime, at your Information Technology job is truly appreciated. Thanks for understanding and picking up my work load, so I can accomplish my homework assignments and attend class on Thursday nights. The next two years will be challenging for us both, but I know our love and ability to communicate our frustrations will help us manage work, home, and school as God leads the way to my graduation day. Life will seem like a breeze after I graduate, because our daily activities will be cut in half. Our family will prosper for our commitment and sacrifices we are making for the next couple of years, so I can obtain a degree in Business Management. I know at times, I may seem overwhelmed with my job and school, but knowing I have your support and love gives me the strength and encouragement to do my best. Without you beside me, I would not have been able to carry my 4.0 grade point average, since I started college part-time a couple of years ago. Baby, thanks for all you do for me. We will have a huge celebration the week of my graduation from Southern Nazarene University.

Last week, I shared a bit of information from my Cultural Anthropology textbook that you found very interesting and could apply to your own way of thinking about our society and environment. I want to share how this subject is good for me and will benefit my career as well as our family. This education will benefit us with our friendships, family, church, jobs, social gatherings, neighborhood relationships, and in our general communication with people of all races and walks of life.

Our friends and family are a mixture of culture, race, and ethnic values. Hopefully, the holiday gatherings will be different for us this year, as I am learning how to deal with a combination of people that we have nothing in common with at times, except the bloodline. I will share my knowledge with you, and I encourage you to read my textbook to have a better understanding of cultural differences. The study of Cultural Anthropology is teaching me how to cope and understand people that hold different values and beliefs. Approaching situations with respect for a person or group of people provides a foundation to build upon. As a result, this allows me to apply my knowledge of cultural differences and be unbiased as I learn the rest from the individual or group of people. I know I will not necessarily believe or be able to accept other cultural differences and ethical practices entirely, but I am learning the basis of many cultures that allows me to have familiarity and handle the diversity of our world by listening and not always debating issues.

Visiting the all exclusive African American church last Sunday was an experience of a life time. Without this class assignment, I would have never traveled to Oklahoma City to attend church with people I did not know, much less to be the only person of my race in the congregation. We do not have many African Americans living in Mustang, but I am sure with time, this city will become a mixture of races and ethnic groups. Having the experience of
attending church with a race different than mine has made me aware of how uncomfortable it must be for the minorities in our city in which we live. We take for granted our American rights and way of life as we ignore the minority community that have made Mustang their home. When the Mexican family moved into our neighborhood, we just assumed the neighborhood was going down hill. As time passed, we realized that only one family lived in the house, so our stereotyping, and prejudice assumptions were proven false, but we still have not welcomed them to the neighborhood. The language barrier does prevent us from verbally communicating, but maybe we can start waving to them as they drive past our home.

Cultural Anthropology should be a requirement for all business students. This subject has already been helpful to me, as I have learned to be more sensitive to others regarding race and cultural differences. At my job, I have many different races and cultural groups. Some personnel have green cards and some are married to Americans so they can live and work in the United States. The religious practices and beliefs are taken into consideration by my employer, as they allow the Muslims to break from work to attend prayer service. Before studying Cultural Anthropology, I thought this was unfair to the rest of the employees as they attend church on Wednesday and Sunday, not every day of the week during work hours. Learning about different cultures and ways of life has enlightened my way of thinking, and now I believe it is their right to live life without being judged or prosecuted for having a different cultural or religious belief system.

If I had received some cultural education prior to departing for my two-year stay in Turkey, I would have been able to avoid creating situations stemmed from the lack of cultural misunderstandings. Being young and faced with leaving my home, job, and college created stress, frustration, and a tremendous amount of anxiety. Dealing with the unfamiliarity of the people and customs alone was enough to make me have a nervous breakdown. My time could have been spent traveling and exploring Europe, but I chose to stay in my home for the most part, missing a life time opportunity, since I will probably never travel to Europe again.

I hope you can see the benefits from this class and how it will benefit me and our family as a whole. My outlook on others and how I approach situations at work has already changed for the better, as I have improved in communicating with personnel and at the same time I am becoming an asset to management by dealing with human relation issues.

Thanks again for your patients and understanding as I continue my education. Let us learn and grow together. I would love to share what I learn in Culture Anthropology with you each week. This subject can help you relate to your work and daily activities and maybe even make it easier to deal with your boss.

I look forward to our next date night. Take care and know I love you very much. I am glad I married you and pray we always have the love and commitment that has held us together through thick and thin. You are my best friend, and I am so lucky to have married the most wonderful and gorgeous man in the world.

Love you always! -M

Sample #2

Dear Heidi,
How are you and Justin? We are all doing great. Eli is ready to have the pool open so Justin can come up and go swimming with him.

I wanted to talk to you about why I am taking the course on Cultural Anthropology. I know we have talked several times about my returning to school — I still think that you should go back too! The reason I signed up for it was pretty simple. I needed a few more credits before I could begin what I considered the "real program." This was my first course back in college in many years and I wasn't even sure what Cultural Anthropology was or what I might learn. The advisor assured me that I would like it and do fine.

Well, it's been an amazing experience. The class covers cultures from around the world and talks about all the diversity from government, gender, marriage, and language, to economics and race. It started with a background of what anthropologists do — they study human society and culture. There are different subfields — archaeology was the one with which I was most familiar.

One of the things that surprised me the most was that I was the only second generation immigrant in a class of about 16 people. I just never thought we were that much "different" than everyone else. The course has made me want to go and study the German culture more and see how our relatives lived, what they went through and what makes them special. I am more curious than ever before to get in touch with our past. I interviewed dad for a paper and learned so much that I didn't 't know about how he grew up and his experiences in coming to a new country at age 12. I guess I always just considered it as a fact of life and never really thought about what it must have been like for him and his family. It explains a lot about his attitudes and even some of his prejudices. While I still don 't agree with them, I definitely can see where they came from.

It has also made me appreciate more what Sharon went through in Nicaragua. I know that it sounded hard to go through when she did it but I guess I didn't really consider the immersion into a totally foreign culture that she experienced. The lack of electricity and air conditioning would have been roughing it enough for me! The thought of living with people who didn't 't value education like we do or that eat a different diet than us would be harder than I could probably handle.

The class has also covered food production in different cultures. It is wild to think about people that aren't 't able to walk into Wal-Mart and pick up what they need for dinner that night. There are people that still hunt and forage for their food. There is even a difference between horticulturists and agriculturists — horticulturists move from plot to plot and don 't use sophisticated methods offarming.

Other cultures treat men and women differently. Some cultures trace their ancestry through their mother, others through their father and some do it like we do through both sets of parents. Can you imagine if we couldn't look back through both branches of our family history (although there are some relatives we would probably both like to disregard!)?

The main point is I think that we get set in our ways and don 't consider that the rest of the world is not the same as us or that even if they are different, that it is okay for them to be that way. Probably the most important thing I have picked up is it's not that we do it right and anyone who does it differently is wrong, it 's just different. What might be right for them isn't necessarily right for us. This class has opened up my eyes to a whole world out there. I know that I find myself being kinder to everyone — never quite knowing what their background is. And hopefully, when I find myself in a new or strange culture (even if it 's going to the Asian market), that they will be as kind to me as I am to them.

I would like to see you have the same type of experience. Give Justin a hug and kiss for me.
and we'll see you this summer!
Love,
Susan

Sample #3

Dear great-grandma Ferguson,

I am writing this letter to you about a course I am taking in cultural anthropology. I chose to write this letter to you even though you are not around to read it because you were always my hero and this class makes me think about how you must have felt when you arrived in the United States from Ireland in 1906.

I imagine that cultural anthropology was probably not a phrase you ever even heard during your life time. Yet, as I go through this class I can't help but think of how your life would have been a good case study. I have learned that cultural anthropology studies human society and culture and that the concept of culture is basic to the study of anthropology. My text book states that "culture includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". This greatly intrigues me and causes me to analyze myself and what my "culture" is about. Since you are the oldest family link I am familiar with, I wonder how much of my personal culture was and still is influenced by you and your culture. I remember that your Catholic faith was paramount in your life. You continued to practice your religion in the United States just as you had in Ireland. This was a part of your culture and heritage that you did not leave behind. You would be happy to know that even today, this many years later that your family continues practicing Catholicism. I am proud of that link to my Irish heritage but I wonder about other customs and traditions. I wish I knew more about you and your life so I could answer those questions.

One of our class assignments was to participate in an experiment of becoming a foreigner for a day. Since we could not actually visit a foreign country during the five week course, we did the next best thing. We were required to attend a worship event of our choice, with a group ethnically different from our own. A friend of mine from class joined me in visiting a Vietnamese Catholic church. Even though there were many similarities in the tradition of the mass, it was still very uncomfortable. When we first arrived at the church, we could feel all of the stares from the parishioners because it was clear we did not belong. They all must have thought we had just made a mistake and come to the wrong church. We did not understand one word of the service and just had to watch as everyone who did "belong" interacted with one another. I admit it was not a pleasant experience. You are probably wondering why I did this if it made me so uncomfortable. The truth is because I had to, it was a requirement. Just like you, I was forced to leave what I knew and what was familiar, for something totally foreign. Unlike you, I only had to do it for an hour, not a lifetime. I now have a small glimpse into the culture shock you must have felt when you, your husband and three small children left the land where you were born and raised and arrived in a new, strange country. You must have felt so lost and out of place, yet you managed to build a new life for yourself and family, bringing along some of the old world with you. You probably could have benefited from some cultural awareness and the class I am taking.

That is why I think the study of anthropology is so important and helpful. The more I
learn about traditions and customs that govern behaviors and beliefs, the more I understand how similar we all really are. All of us came from somewhere and from someone. We all learned our beliefs from members of our own "group". There is a word in my textbook that explains this concept. Enculturation is defined as "the social process by which culture is learned and transmitted across the generations". That means that every person, as they go through their life learning and interacting with others, develops their own awareness of what their culture considers right and wrong. As more and more cultures interact, inter-marry and otherwise cross lines, the more we become unified by common experiences. At the very least, we become more aware of how everyone around us is a product of their environment, just as we are. That is why the definition of one's own culture continues to be ever-changing.

I am sure if you were alive today, you would see vast differences in values and beliefs, even in your own family. The years of changes, equal rights for women, technology and many other differences have molded me into a much different person than you probably were. Still, it can't be denied that the fundamental beliefs and values of yours are also mine. I continue to practice the Catholic faith and raise my children in the church just as you did. Like you, I also became a widow at a young age and had to raise my children by myself. Your eldest became a doctor and mine became a nurse. So, you can see, your life has definitely influenced mine. As I mentioned at the beginning of this letter, you are still my hero. Thank you for your contribution to my "culture".

Sincerely Yours,
Teresa