

PART III:

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS AND PROMOTING CULTURAL AWARENESS



I guess there are two alternatives . . . you can go the path of division and separation and fear and distrust . . . or you can go the other route that can bring you peace and friendship.

-Kevin Webb²⁷

We as individuals can just make a little effort every day to try and understand one person that we come across.

-Texas 12th Grader

Challenging assumptions involves many skills: discriminating between facts and opinions, differentiating between faulty and accurate generalizations, and being able to recognize stereotypes in one's own and others' speech. Challenging assumptions also involves such skills as recognizing the uniqueness and worth of people, feeling empathy, and countering the prejudicial statements of others. Perhaps the most important skills are recognizing the limitations of stereotypical thinking and cultivating a willingness to change direction when we start toward the "path of division and separation."

These are skills that Peace Corps Volunteers must apply every day in their host countries. And these skills can be modeled, practiced, reinforced, and therefore taught, in our schools. Bill Piatt, who served as a Peace Corps country director in Togo in West Africa and in the Czech Republic in Europe, suggests that students will invest the effort to understand one another if educators "create situations in which the students must work together."

The activities in this section are designed to help students work together to explore their assumptions—and to then continue working together to find safe and effective ways to reduce divisive thought and language.

Several of the activities contained in this section encourage students to speak out when they hear stereotypes being used to describe individuals or groups. To do this takes courage and tact, but the results, as illustrated in the following article, can be very effective. Consider sharing this story with your students or your colleagues as an example of the gentle art of teaching tolerance.



What is Black? ²⁸

It started off like any other day in my job as a language arts resource teacher. Upon arrival at my school, I greeted teachers and began working on my current project. Shortly after the bell, Miss Samuel, another teacher, came over and asked me if I'd come to her class to teach a lesson on color poems.

"No problem," I told her. I smiled to myself because this was one of my favorite lessons. The kids love it, and it really seems to bring out their creativity.

Later that day, I marched confidently into her class bearing my "tools of the trade": my colorfully lettered chart, my extra pencils, my chalk, my paper, and my already prepared examples of color poems. The lesson began by soliciting color images from the students.

"What things can you think of that are green?" I asked enthusiastically.

"A bluggoe leaf . . . an unripe mango . . . grass . . . skin-ups . . . trees . . . a lunch kit . . . a hair clip . . . an exercise. . . ." they responded. I eagerly recorded each and every one of their responses on my chart.

I then shared some examples of color poems (which came from a handout I received from the Ministry). Here are a few examples.

What is Red?

Red is a heart filled with love.
Red is a face when it's angry and mean.
Red is when the door is slammed.
Red is Moses and the burning tree.
Red is a volcano erupting.

What is Black?

Black is the color of hatred.
Black is a gloomy night, ashes,
Tar on the road, a car's tyre.
Black is the funeral, dragging slow,
A midnight sound, dark and low.

What is Pink?

Pink is the sky at sunset.
Pink is a kitten's tiny nose.
Pink is the inside of a rabbit's ear.
Pink is how I feel inside on my birthday.
Pink is the joy of being alive.

I then encouraged the children to write a descriptive color poem as a class, with all students offering ideas and suggestions. Hands went up like rockets and children bobbed up and down in their seats, begging to be called on. We composed quite a nice color poem, "What is Blue?" Finally, I put the students into small groups to write their own color poems. They worked well together, cooperating and sharing.

When the lesson was over, I quickly conferred with Miss Samuel to see how she felt about the lesson. We both agreed that the students had made a good effort and have some excellent poems to prove it. I left the class feeling satisfied and went about my duties, without thinking again of the lesson.

The next morning, Miss Samuel came over to have a "piece-a-chat" with me. She told me that something about the lesson I taught had bothered her, but she couldn't put her finger on it at the time. Throughout the evening she thought about it and finally realized it was my example color poem, "What is Black?" She found that my poem used negative images to describe black and decided to try her hand at presenting black in a poem with positive images. This is what she came up with.

What is Black?

Black is the shine of ebony
And the color of some people's hair.
Black is the feather of the Corbeau King
And the skin of my ancestors.
Black is the seed of the sweet Sapodilla.
Black is the forerunner of the fair dawn.



Black is Truth.
 Black is Justice.
 Black is Beautiful.
 Black is the writing of Martin Luther King
 And the words of Malcolm X.
 Black is the philosophy of Marcus Garvey
 And the teaching of Bustamante.
 Black is the roll of the Tumba drums
 And the dancing of the Shango women.
 Black is the taste of molasses sweet
 And the culture of my people.
 Black is the son of King Shaka
 And the daughter of Queen Nazinga.
 Black is the ring of the Short-Knees' gullo.
 Black is Free.
 Black is We.
 Black is being Me.

As I finished reading her poem, every hair on my body stood on end and tears welled in my eyes. I stammered out some words of praise for her powerful poem and she went on to see about her class.

Unknowingly, Miss Samuel had opened my eyes to my own hidden prejudice. This was upsetting to me because I consider myself extremely open to and accepting of other races and cultures. I've lived and taught in a rural village in Kenya and now in the West Indies. I appreciate, even celebrate, the richness and beauty in other cultures. I am an avid listener of African music like Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Miriam Makeba, and Hugh Masekela. I enjoy reading the works of African writers like Bessie Head, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, and Chinua Achebe. I choose to see movies like *Cry Freedom* and *A Dry White Season*. I have participated in anti-Apartheid rallies and believe in the ideas of Stephen Biko and Nelson Mandela. Currently, I'm involved in the most significant relationship of my life,



a cross-cultural one with a Grenadian. To me, all these things show my belief in the unity of all people, regardless of race or color, and my profound respect for African culture. I consider myself free of racial prejudice. And yet, I found myself in a black culture, clearly and unconsciously contributing to negative images associated with black that have been around for many years. I'm ashamed to admit this and disappointed in myself for this lack of cultural sensitivity.

It started me thinking: Why is it that bad guys always wear black and good guys wear white? Why do we wear black for grieving our dead and white to celebrate the joy of the union of marriage? Why is black associated with death, evil, and hatred while white is associated with angels, purity, and goodness? What kind of message is this sending?

What I know is, I taught the same lesson to nearly every class in my school. Each time, I was unconsciously perpetuating the "negative images" of black and showing my own "true colors" (excuse the pun). If it wasn't for Miss Samuel, I would have continued my subtle prejudice without even realizing it. So, I owe a lot to her for reminding me, gently, that although we consciously believe in racial equality and unity, sometimes our actions don't show it.

For now, my former example of the color poem "What is Black?" lies at the bottom of my trash bin. I'll be using her powerful images of black from now on. Thank you, Miss Samuel.

Lindy Nelson served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Grenada in the West Indies from 1991 to 1993

Activity Suggestions: Grades 3-5

Stereotype Busters

Class Time Needed: 20 minutes

Materials

- A cassette tape or CD player and recorded music
- 4 small containers
- Pieces of paper, each printed with a stereotype (Examples: All redheads have short tempers, all nurses are women, all tall people like basketball, only men like sports cars, all doctors are rich)

Note: Be careful not to use racial or other stereotypes that might offend participants.

Objective

- Students will learn appropriate ways to address stereotyping.

Introduction

Each of us hears or makes stereotypical comments every day. Students need to become aware of the damaging effects of generalizations and stereotypes. They also need to develop tools for addressing stereotypes when they hear them and checking their own thinking when they find themselves using stereotypes to make judgments. This activity gives students an opportunity to practice ways to reduce stereotyping.

Procedure

1. Have the students arrange their chairs in a large circle.
2. Review the concepts of stereotypes and prejudice and come to an agreement about definitions. In this context, a stereotype is an oversimplified statement based on a single characteristic. For example, the statement “All men hate to cook” expresses a stereotype. Prejudice is to *pre-judge* or to form an opinion (usually negative) about someone or something before all the facts are known. “Richard can’t cook—he’s a guy!” is an example of prejudice.
3. Discuss why stereotypes and prejudice are harmful. For example, they are often based on faulty information, they get in the way of knowing people as individuals, and they can lead to serious misunderstandings.
4. Tell students that even though it is easy to fall into the habit of using stereotypes to prejudge people, there are ways to reduce stereotypes and combat prejudice. One way is to check our own thinking, to be careful of jumping to conclusions based on generalizations or others’ opinions. Another way is to politely challenge stereotypes when we hear them by offering evidence that the stereotype is false.
5. Model some statements that “bust” the men-hate-to-cook-stereotype, for example:
 - I don’t like to stereotype, so I can’t agree with you. My brother makes the best bread I’ve ever tasted.
 - I don’t like to stereotype, so I can’t agree with you. I’m sure there are many men who like to cook.



6. Explain that the students will participate in a game that will help them become “Stereotype Busters.” Participants will pass a container around the circle when the music begins. When the music stops, the student who is holding the container will read the stereotype it holds. Then, the student to his or her right will respond, using statements similar to those modeled earlier. Encourage other students in the circle to offer additional suggestions.

7. Repeat the activity with the remaining containers.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students think about how and when to challenge stereotypes in real life situations. **Note: During the debriefing, be sure to discuss when it is and is not appropriate to challenge statements made by other people.**

1. How did it feel to speak up about stereotypes?
2. What happened when it was your turn to respond? Was it easy or difficult to “bust” the stereotype?
3. What are some other stereotypes? How do you think these are learned? What are some ways to respond to stereotypes?
4. It has been said that a stereotypical statement tells more about the person who says it than about the people who are being stereotyped. What does this mean? Do you agree or disagree?
5. Do you think you could really use “Stereotype Busters” to check your own thinking? Would you feel comfortable doing this with a family member? A friend?
6. What if you heard an older person make a stereotypical statement? (Caution students that it is best to know people before challenging their statements. We can’t predict a stranger’s response. The best response is to do a mental check to make sure we are not influenced by someone else’s prejudices.)
7. What advice would you give to a friend who is the object of stereotyping and prejudice?



Extending the Ideas

- If stereotypes (oversimplified images of people, issues, or events) lead to prejudice (judgments based on stereotypical images), then prejudice leads to discrimination—treating someone unfairly because we believe their differences make them inferior. Discuss this continuum with your students, using news stories or fictional stories that deal with discrimination issues as examples. Have students look for stories related to discrimination in magazines and newspapers and on television broadcasts over a period of several days. Have students identify the stereotypes that lie behind these stories. What assumptions (prejudgments) were made about the people who experienced discrimination?
- If your class is corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer through World Wise Schools, ask the Volunteer questions like these.
 - Did you have any preconceived ideas about your host country before going there? How were these prejudgements changed during your volunteer service?
 - Do the people in your host country have preconceived ideas about Americans? How do you correct these ideas?
 - Are there other stereotypes in your host country similar to the ones in the United States?
- People often develop oversimplified ideas about the homeless. A study of the causes of homelessness and the services available for the homeless in your community might lead your class to a service-learning project. After studying the problem, and learning about the issues, students could develop a plan to help meet community needs. Use the Service-Learning Rubric in the introduction to this guide to help plan a project with strong impact.

People Tags²⁹

Class Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials

One copy of “People Tags” for every four students

Objectives

- Students will understand how labels, even those that seem neutral, can influence our thinking about people.
- Students will recognize the importance of getting to know a person before making judgments.

Introduction

Labels are a convenient, and necessary, way of organizing information about people and events. But labels often become substitutes for thought and experience. Even when labels are accurate and neutral, they describe only one aspect of a person. When they are used as the sole source of information, they limit our understanding and cut us off from full communication. “People Tags” is an activity that illustrates how misleading labels can be when they are applied to people.

Procedure

1. Prepare for the lesson by making one copy of “People Tags” for every four students. Cut off the fact cards and keep them for the second part of the activity.
2. Divide students into groups of four. Give each group a set of people cards (Uncle Fred, Aunt Jennifer, etc.) and object cards (dictionary, clock, etc.). Do not give out the fact cards yet.
3. Assign the task: You are doing your holiday shopping for Uncle Fred, who rides in a motorcycle gang; Aunt Jennifer, a librarian; Cousin George, a Navy recruit; and Great-Aunt Phyllis, a senior citizen. From the collection in front of you, which gifts would you choose for each?
4. After a few minutes, discuss the following.
 - Who gave Uncle Fred the leather jacket? Aunt Jennifer the coffee mug? Cousin George the tattoo? Great-Aunt Phyllis the rocking chair?
 - How did you decide who would get each gift?
 - How did the labels (i.e., “senior citizen,” “librarian”) influence your decisions?
5. Pass out the fact cards and comment that perhaps the students need more information before making their final gift choices.
6. Give students time to “reassign” gifts.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to guide discussion about getting to know people before making judgments.

1. How did it feel to try to choose gifts for people based on a single piece of information or label?
2. What happened when you were given more information? Who changed their gift ideas? Why?
3. What is the purpose of this activity? Can you give some examples of ways labels influence the way you think about people or things?

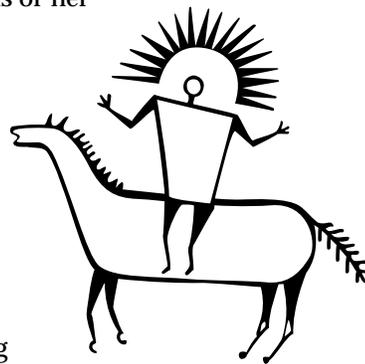
4. What are some problems that can occur when we rely too much on labels?
5. What if you were asked to choose gifts for a member of this class whom you don't know well? What could you do that would help you choose the right gift?
6. How can we apply this activity to learning about other cultures?

Extending the Ideas

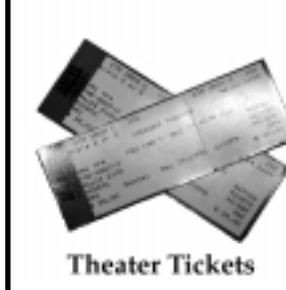
- Have students create posters to illustrate the many dimensions behind the labels with which they are most familiar—their names. Ask each student to create a list of words and phrases to correspond with letters in his or her name. Explain that the words should describe what people will learn about them when they look behind their “label” and get to know them well. Students should feel free to brag a little, as well as to describe things they may like to improve. Their names should be the center points in the designs. The teacher can use the example below or demonstrate the activity using his or her own name to get students started.

liKes baseball
 Artistic
 Reliable
 Energetic
 forgEtful
 hates Mondays

- Have students work with a partner to find out more about each other. Give them time to talk about their interests, families, hobbies, and aspirations. Urge them to look for more than the obvious details. Then have each student create a poster about his or her partner. The posters should depict the person's personality and other attributes. The posters should be used to introduce the “real” person to the rest of the class in a validation activity. Afterwards, these should be displayed around the classroom or school.
- If you are corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer through World Wise Schools, send him or her smaller versions of the posters mentioned above. Be sure to use lightweight paper. If the Volunteer is a teacher or working with youth, ask him or her to consider completing this same activity and sending mini posters to your class in return.



People Tags

<p>Uncle Fred (member of a motorcycle gang)</p>	<p>Aunt Jennifer (librarian)</p>	<p>Cousin George (Navy recruit)</p>	<p>Great Aunt Phyllis (senior citizen)</p>
			
			 <p>Theater Tickets</p>

<p>FACT</p> <p>Aunt Jennifer likes modern fashions. The leather look is "in."</p>	<p>FACT</p> <p>Uncle George is looking forward to a career in the theater after his Navy tour.</p>	<p>FACT</p> <p>Uncle Fred loves antique furniture.</p>	<p>FACT</p> <p>Great-Aunt Phyllis has always been rebellious and daring.</p>
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Reducing Prejudice³⁰

Class Time Needed: 40 minutes

Materials

“Reducing Prejudice” worksheets for each student

Objectives

- Students will be able to define prejudice.
- Students will identify alternatives to prejudiced behavior.

Introduction

Gordon Allport defines prejudice as “an attitude in a closed mind.” In a closed mind, an attitude is cut off from new information. At its least dangerous level, prejudice is a filter that keeps one person from seeing beyond a stereotypical image. When a prejudiced person takes an action that prevents another person or a group from exercising Constitutional or human rights, then discrimination is at work. “Reducing Prejudice” is designed to call attention to intolerant behaviors that are the starting point of discrimination and to help students practice alternatives to prejudice.

Procedure

1. Distribute copies of the worksheet, “Reducing Prejudice,” and have students take turns reading or acting out the “What Happened” scenarios on the worksheet. Then, lead a discussion about ways in which we are different from one another.
2. Ask students to consider whether these differences are reasons to fear or dislike one another.
3. For each scenario on the worksheet, have students explain their answers to the following questions.
 - How have the students in this situation behaved?
 - Have you ever seen behavior like this?
 - How are the students in this situation dealing with differences? Is this behavior unusual? Is it acceptable?
 - How do you think the students who have been picked on feel?
 - Have you ever had negative thoughts or reactions to people who are different from you? Why did it happen?
4. Explain that prejudice means judging someone before you really know that person. People are prejudiced when they judge other people solely on traits such as skin color, gender, religion, or social group.
5. Continue the discussion by asking the following.
 - Why is each scenario an example of prejudice?
 - Have you ever experienced prejudice? Explain.
6. Discuss ways in which people can be hurt by prejudice.
7. Divide the class into cooperative groups and direct the students’ attention to the worksheet scenarios again. Ask each group to devise and role-play different endings for each situation that shows tolerance for differences and reduces prejudice. Point out that some situations present positive alternatives that the students can handle themselves. Other situations may require the help of an adult.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students find positive alternatives to intolerance.

1. How does it feel when someone makes fun of you or leaves you out of an activity because you are different?
2. What happened in the scenarios that demonstrated intolerance and prejudice? (Possible answers: Feelings were hurt, people were left out of activities, there was violence.)
3. What happened when you worked with your group to come up with better endings? How easy was it to think of different ways to handle these situations? What does this tell you?
4. What did you learn from this activity?
5. Have you ever experienced or witnessed situations similar to these? How did you react? Why do you think people are prejudiced?
6. What if we were all alike? Would the world be better? Would discrimination end?
7. What are some things you can do to reduce prejudice and discrimination? How comfortable would you feel doing the things you suggested in your “better ending” scenarios?

Extending the Ideas

- Have students write additional scenarios based on their own experiences with prejudice and stereotyping. Have them role-play positive alternatives to these situations.
- Carol Rogers³¹ offers this advice to students who want to take positive action against prejudice and stereotyping: *“Don’t be afraid to ask someone about their differences. Then, really listen.”* Kevin Webb, who served in Panama from 1993 to 1995, makes a similar suggestion: *“When I was a Peace Corps Volunteer, I would ask [about differences] in a respectful way. Not just anyone, but someone I was developing a relationship with. I would just say, ‘I don’t understand why you do this or why you say this . . . maybe you could help me to understand.’”*
- Help students identify some positive steps they can take as individuals to get to know people who are different from themselves. Here are some ideas.
 - Make an effort to get to know someone of a different culture, race, age, or religion.
 - Spend time with an elderly person or a person with a disability.
 - Invite someone new to join your friends in an activity.
 - Ask someone from a different cultural or religious group if you can participate in a special event, such as Kwanzaa, Chinese New Year, or Passover.
- Consider extending the learning into a service project. Work with your students to conduct a needs assessment to find out how students can help in the school or community by direct service, e.g., tutoring or volunteering at a home for the elderly; indirect service, e.g., collections, fund-raisers or clean-ups; or advocacy, e.g., lobbying or public performances. See the Service-Learning Rubric in the introduction to this book to help devise a project that includes curriculum, service, and reflection.



"Reducing Prejudice" Worksheet

Directions: *Read or act out each of the "What Happened" scenarios below. Discuss the situations with your teacher. Then work in cooperative groups to find a better ending for each situation.*

What Happened

1. A new student arrives at school wearing the dress of her native country. The other children make fun of her and call her a weirdo. No one wants to sit next to her.

A Better Ending

1. A new student arrives at school wearing the dress of her native country . . .

What Happened

2. A student's father has told him that all people of a certain race are bad. The student gets a friend to join him in picking on children of that race. One day, a terrible fight breaks out in the school yard and several students are hurt.

A Better Ending

2. A student's father has told him that all people of a certain race are bad . . .



What Happened

3. Several boys sign up for an intramural field hockey team. The girls refuse to play with them.

A Better Ending

3. Several boys sign up for an intramural field hockey team . . .

What Happened

4. Several students attend a special class for gifted students. In the school cafeteria, other students call them nerds and make fun of them.

A Better Ending

4. Several students attend a special class for gifted students . . .

What Happened

5. In the locker room, a male student is upset and crying. A group of five other boys tease him and call him a sissy. They exclude him from their plans for a camp-out.

A Better Ending

5. In the locker room, a male student is upset and crying . . .



Fighting Words With Words³²

Class Time Needed: 30 minutes

Materials

- Examples of sweeping generalizations and balancing statements written on individual strips of paper
- Small weights (such as spools or small blocks of wood) to attach to each paper strip
- A two-sided scale
- Copies of “Fighting Words With Words”

Objectives

- Students will recognize the faulty thinking behind stereotypes and sweeping generalizations.
- Students will practice using balancing statements to counteract stereotypes and sweeping generalizations.

Introduction

“Fighting Words with Words” provides students with some simple tools to use when confronted with the prejudicial statements of others.

Procedure

1. Prepare for the activity by writing examples of sweeping generalizations and balancing statements (see examples below) on individual strips of paper. Tape each strip to a small weight. You will use the two-sided scale to show students how balancing statements can “balance” sweeping generalizations.

Generalization

Elderly people are afraid to try new things.

Balancing Statement

My grandmother just bought a computer. She loves using e-mail!

Generalization

People with physical disabilities can't play sports.

Balancing Statement

Former New York Yankee pitcher Jim Abbott was born with only one hand.

2. Review the meaning of “stereotype” and “sweeping generalization” with your students.

stereotype: *a preconceived belief that is applied to all members of a specific group. For example, a statement such as “Let’s get Kyle to play on the basketball team. He’s the tallest kid in the class” expresses a stereotype. The speaker assumes that all tall people like to play basketball.*

sweeping generalization: *a statement like “All tall people like to play basketball.” This suggests all members of a group are alike.*

3. Place a sweeping generalization on one side of the scale. Point out that sweeping generalizations give a one-sided or unbalanced view of a person or group. Then balance the scale by placing a counter or “balancing” statement on the other side. Ask students to describe the purpose of a balancing statement.

4. Place additional examples of sweeping generalizations and balancing statements on the scale. Point out the particular strategy being used in each balancing statement you place on the scale. (Examples: “This statement gives specific rather than general information” and “This statement politely disagrees.”)

5. Have students work with partners to come up with the sweeping generalizations behind the balancing statements given in “Fighting Words with Words.” For example, if the balancing statement is “I just don’t agree with you that girls don’t do as well as boys in math. That hasn’t been our class’s experience at all,” then the original statement could have been something like “Girls aren’t good at math.”

Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students find ways to use balancing statements when they hear sweeping generalizations or stereotypes.

1. How does it feel when you hear a sweeping generalization such as “All kids are lazy”?
2. What did you learn from this demonstration? What effect do sweeping generalizations and stereotypes have on people?
3. Have you ever heard a friend or a family member use a stereotype to describe an individual or a group of people? How could you use balancing statements when this happens?
4. What are some other strategies you can use to counteract “unbalanced” thinking about other people?

Extending the Ideas

- Have students make a list of sweeping generalizations and stereotypes they have heard. Ask them to work in groups to come up with counter statements to balance each statement. Share these with the entire class.

- Have students work with partners to write examples of situations that involve the use of sweeping generalizations and stereotypes. Then ask each pair to write a dialogue of a discussion that includes balancing statements. Have the groups perform their dialogues for the class and ask the class members to identify the balancing statements used in each scenario.



- Share the following description of a Peace Corps Volunteer’s experience in his host country with your students. This anecdote provides a good opportunity to help your students understand that prejudice is not always a factor in situations where people from different cultures come together.

I would ride a bus from the capital out to a small town where I would catch another bus out to the village up in the mountains. I noticed that if I got on the bus and it wasn't very crowded, all the other seats on the bus would fill up before someone would sit beside me because I was different—I was the one white person on the bus. People naturally are going to gravitate toward what they know and what they are comfortable with. . . . I learned really quickly that they weren't [choosing other seats] because they hated white people. I was different and they were naturally going to go to where they felt comfortable first. My seat would usually be the last to fill up and I often had wonderful conversations with whomever ended up sitting next to me.

-Kevin Webb

- Have students work in cooperative groups to design posters that illustrate the nine types of balancing statements identified in the “Fighting Words with Words” worksheet. Post the whole set in a public place, such as the school cafeteria or a hallway.

Fighting Words With Words

We can do many things to act against stereotypes. One easy thing we can do is to change the way we talk about other people, particularly when we don't know them very well. In our everyday discussions with friends and classmates, we can use words and phrases that give a balanced view of others. Sentences that give another point of view are called "balancing statements."

Directions: Below are some examples of stereotypes and balancing statements. Can you identify the sweeping generalizations that are behind the stereotypes?

1. Think about or share opposite examples when someone makes a sweeping generalization.

They say: *Sri Lankans have long, straight hair.*

You say: *Two of my Sri Lankan friends have short hair that's permed.*

Generalization:

2. Give specific rather than general information about people.

My new friend from Jamaica enjoys rock music and country music, not just reggae. He is interested in playing in the orchestra, but he also wants to try out for the volleyball team.

Generalization:

3. Point out the good or positive things about others.

When I was a Volunteer, most people in Nepal went out of their way to help strangers.

Generalization:



4. Share cultural information.

George isn't eating the sausages because his family practices Islam. Did you know that people who practice Islam usually don't eat pork?

Generalization:

5. Actively question (even just to yourself) the reliability of the source of information.

I wonder if John really knows what the Honduran people are like. He was there for only a few days. Maybe he or someone he knows just had a bad experience.

Generalization:

6. Politely disagree.

Really, I just don't agree with you that girls don't do as well as boys in math. That hasn't been true in our class.

Generalization:

7. Point out that what may be true for some is not necessarily true for all.

I know a lot of people in Senegal are farmers, but they don't all live in the country, nor do they all become farmers. In fact, many work in the cities or go to the university and study for advanced degrees.

Generalization:

8. Wait before making a judgment.

Think to yourself: That girl seems really stuck-up to me, but I'd better wait to form an opinion about her. Maybe she just doesn't speak English very well yet. Or maybe she's shy.

Generalization:



Activity Suggestions: Grades 10-12

Understanding Prejudice³³

Class Time Needed: Two class periods

Materials

- A copy of “Prejudice: A Definition” for each student
- A copy of “Bogardus Social Distance Scale” for each student
- A copy of “A Continuum of Social Relationship Among Human Groups” for each student

Objective

- Students will understand the meaning of personal preference, prejudice, discrimination, and scapegoating.

Introduction

This lesson can be implemented from several different entry points, or all of the components can be used, depending on your goals and your students’ understanding of the concepts of prejudice and discrimination. When you use all three components, students will have the opportunity to move from theoretical understanding to more personal examination of their own levels of tolerance.

Entry Point A

Role-play the following activities.

- Only students wearing (brand name) ___ blue jeans can attend the school assembly.
- Only students wearing digital watches may take the social studies exam. Everyone else fails.
- Only pupils wearing (brand name) ___ shoes may go to lunch. The others must stay in the classroom during the lunch period.

Discuss the feelings of the “ins” and the “outs.” How did it feel to be denied a privilege because of an arbitrary rule? How did the privileged students behave toward those who were told they could not attend the assembly or go to lunch?

Entry Point B

Have students read “Prejudice: A Definition” and review “A Continuum of Social Relationship Among Human Groups.” Ask students to define prejudice, discrimination, and scapegoating. Help students identify behaviors that illustrate each of the terms on the continuum.



Entry Point C

Administer the “Bogardus Social Distance Scale.” Ask students to indicate on which step of the scale they would admit members of the listed ethnic and national groups. Be sure to communicate that there are no right or wrong answers. The scale is designed to help students explore their individual feelings, and their responses should be shared only on a voluntary basis. The debriefing discussion should focus on what factors influence the way we make decisions about people different from ourselves.

When students have completed the scale, ask them to look at their own papers and discuss the following:

- What do you know about these groups? What are your sources of information? How do you know what people in the groups are like?
- How did you decide where to place each group on your distance scale?
- Where do your feelings about these groups fall on the “Continuum of Social Relationship”?

Debriefing

Use the following questions to focus discussion on the importance of being aware of our own predilections and prejudices.

1. How does it feel when someone prejudices you based on your ethnic or national group? What do you learn about yourself? What do you learn about that person?
2. What happened when you used the distance scale? Were there some groups that you would exclude from any part of your life? What information did you use to make your decisions?
3. What did you learn from this activity?
4. What real life ideas are represented by the distance scale? Do you think that you have an unconscious scale that determines your level of tolerance for people who are different from you? How do you think you developed your own scale?
5. Suppose there is a group that you have placed at the sixth or seventh level on the “Bogardus Social Distance Scale.” A person from that group is introduced into your tightly knit social circle by a good friend. What would you do? What happens when people don’t interact with people from other groups?
6. What are some things you can do to learn more about individuals or groups that you don’t know well?

Extending the Ideas

- Have students do research to learn more about the people and culture of some of the groups listed above. Discuss with the students whether having more information changes the way they rank those groups on the social distance scale.
- Using the color poems for “What is Black?” in the introduction to this section as models, ask students to write culture poems based on research on several of the groups listed above or other cultures found in your community. Provide other assignments for students whose learning style is not based on the written word. Students could make collages, slide shows, or musical or multimedia presentations.



Prejudice: A Definition

by Gordon Allport

Let's look at the stages of hostile relationships—starting with “predilection.”

Predilection simply means that someone prefers one culture, one skin color, or one language as opposed to another. If you like Mexican culture and I do not, there is no use arguing about taste. We may disagree on such matters, but, as a rule, we respect one another's choice. Predilections are natural. But they are the first step toward scapegoating if they turn into more active biases, that is to say into . . .

Prejudice. A prejudice is an attitude in a closed mind. (“Don't bother me with facts, I've already made up my mind.”) Some Europeans may think that all Americans are loudmouthed spendthrifts. This stereotyped view is hard to change. It is a prejudice. An Oxford student is said to have remarked, “I despise all Americans, but I've never met one I didn't like.” This anecdote suggests that prejudgments may stand even when available evidence is against them. Some people with prejudices may think that blacks have rhythm, that Scotsmen are thrifty, or that a woman's place is in the home.

Prejudice, if kept to oneself, causes no great harm except to the mind that possesses it. But prejudice expressed leads to . . .

Discrimination. That means leaving somebody out because of prejudiced thinking. Generally it is based not on an individual's intrinsic qualities but on a “label” branding the individual as a member of a group to be looked down upon. It means separating a group forcibly and unjustly from our neighborhoods, our schools, our churches, our labor unions and our professions.

Scapegoating is hostile behavior by word or deed. The victim usually cannot fight back, for scapegoats are usually members of vulnerable minority groups. [Editor's note: “Minority” does not refer only to race or ethnicity.] The essential cowardice of scapegoating is illustrated by the persecution of the Salem “witches,” a small, frail handful of people who could not fight back.

Adapted from ABC's of Scapegoating by Gordon Allport (New York: Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1985).



A Continuum of Social Relationships Among Human Groups

Friendly

Cooperation

Respect

Tolerance

Predilection

Prejudice

Discrimination

Scapegoating

Hostile



Bogardus Social Distance Scale

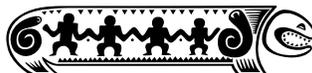
Directions: *The steps below represent a continuum—from close family relationships to complete physical and geographical separation—on which we may place people who are different from ourselves. Write a number beside each national and ethnic group listed below to indicate at what point on the continuum you would feel comfortable with members of those groups. You may keep your responses private, but you will be asked to discuss how you made your decisions.*

Steps

1. To close kinship by marriage
2. To a social group as a personal friend
3. To my street as a neighbor
4. To employment in my place of work within my occupation
5. To citizenship in my country
6. As visitors only to my country
7. Would exclude from my country

Groups

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American | <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> Mexican |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Armenian | <input type="checkbox"/> German | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canadian | <input type="checkbox"/> Greek | <input type="checkbox"/> Polish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic | <input type="checkbox"/> Puerto Rican |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cuban | <input type="checkbox"/> Hungarian | <input type="checkbox"/> Scottish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Egyptian | <input type="checkbox"/> Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> Tanzanian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Haitian | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> Vietnamese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Korean | <input type="checkbox"/> White American |



Promoting Understanding ³⁴

Class Time Needed: 40 minutes

Materials

- Newsprint or butcher paper
- Markers
- Sticky notes

Objectives

- Students will understand the difference between categories and stereotypes.
- Students will identify ways to respond to the stereotypes they hear.

Introduction

In *Teaching About Cultural Awareness*, Gary Smith and George Otero point out an important difference between categorizing and stereotyping.

*Because of the amount of information we have to assimilate, categorizing is necessary. It is a way to reduce and simplify an otherwise impossibly complex world. Stereotypes . . . go beyond the functionality of thinking in categories. They are beliefs about people in categories that lessen the chances of interaction and diminish the potential for recognizing and accepting differences.*³⁵

This activity is designed to help students understand the negative consequences of stereotyping. Follow-up activities provide opportunities to work together to find ways to confront stereotypes.

Procedure

1. Post several sections of newsprint or butcher paper around the classroom. List one category at the top of each sheet of paper. Some possible categories are listed below, but feel free to adapt this list to make it relevant to your students.

Girls	Asians
Boys	Gays/Lesbians
Athletes	Native Americans
Honor Roll Students	Biracial/Multiracial
Cheerleaders	Disabled
Blacks/African Americans	Various Religious Groups
Whites/European Americans	Elderly
Hispanics/Latinos	Young

2. Present or review the terms “category” and “stereotype.” Point out that categories help us organize the information we have about people, places, and things. For example, it makes sense to describe someone whose ancestors lived in North America well before 1492 as a Native American. But if we assume that person has certain characteristics because he or she belongs to that category, then we are stereotyping. Stereotypes ignore individual differences and assume that all of the people in a given category are alike.

3. Have students look at the posted categories and, using sticky notes, write down stereotypes they have heard about these groups of people. Then have students place the notes under the appropriate categories.

4. After everyone has finished, give students the opportunity to look at the stereotypes posted under each category. Then move to the debriefing session.

Debriefing

Use the following questions to guide student discussion about stereotypes.

1. Were any stereotypes posted about groups or categories that you belong to? How did it feel to see them “in print”?
2. Where do these stereotypes come from? How are they perpetuated?
3. Were positive as well as negative stereotypes posted? Why should positive stereotypes be avoided?
4. What did you learn from this activity? Is there any group that is free of stereotypes?
5. What if there were no stereotypes? Do you think people would behave differently toward one another?
6. Suppose your best friend believes that all the stereotypes about a certain group are true. How would you deal with that situation? What are some things we can do to avoid perpetuating stereotypes?

Extending the Ideas

- Make a list on a flip chart of categories that students in the room fall into, such as African American, Hispanic, Chinese American, band members, honor roll students, cheerleaders. (Be sure that each category will apply to at least two students.) As you go through the list, have the students identify each group to which he or she belongs. Point out that even though each person belongs to many groups, for the purposes of this exercise, students will focus on one group. Then divide the class into several small groups, e.g. a group of Baptists, a group of Chinese Americans. In each group, have students list stereotypes that are commonly applied to the group and facts that dispel the stereotypes. Then have each group present its list to the entire class.
- After all groups have presented their lists, ask the class to brainstorm what they could do to help reduce these stereotypes. For examples, refer to the activity “Fighting Words with Words.” For practice, individuals can role-play what they would say or do if they experienced being stereotyped or hearing someone stereotype others. Emphasize the use of nonaccusatory language when confronting stereotypes.
- Work with your students to make a list of current popular movies or songs. Discuss the plots or lyrics. Ask the students to work independently to examine these for stereotypes. After a few minutes have them bring their findings to a cooperative group, discuss these, and rank the list for the number of stereotypes depicted. Compare all the groups’ rankings and come up with a class consensus. Then pose the question: “Based on these findings, what further action can we take to reduce the use of stereotypes?” This could develop into a service-learning project. See the Service-Learning Rubric printed in the introduction to this guide.



Endnotes

²⁷ Kevin Webb served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Panama from 1993 to 1995. This comment is taken from an interview in March 1997.

²⁸ Reprinted from *Peace Corps Times*, Number 2, 1993, pp. 32-33.

²⁹ Adapted with permission from *Cultural Sight and Insight: Dealing with Diverse Viewpoints and Values* by Gary Smith (New York: Global Perspectives in Education [American Forum for Global Education], 1979), reprinted with permission, pp. 53-56.

³⁰ Adapted from *Promoting Harmony: A Compilation of Sample Lessons, Grades K-12* (Brooklyn: New York City Board of Education, 1992), by permission of the Board of Education of the City of New York.

³¹ Carol Rogers served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand from 1984 to 1987. This comment is taken from an interview in March 1997.

³² The balancing statements and examples in the activity have been adapted with permission from *To Live in a Multicultural World* (adapted by Angene Wilson and edited by Cay Hartley and Cary Morse; Washington, D.C.: Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1992). The balancing statements originally appeared in "Stereotyping" in the Intercultural Communications Series of the Volunteers in Intercultural Programs training materials (Youth for Understanding International Exchange, 1989).

³³ Adapted from *Promoting Harmony: A Compilation of Sample Lessons, Grades K-12* (Brooklyn: New York City Board of Education, 1992), by permission of the Board of Education of the City of New York.

³⁴ Adapted with permission from *Building Cultural Bridges* by Joby Stafford Robinson and Robert P. Bowman, et al. (Bloomington, Indiana: National Educational Service, 1997).

³⁵ Gary Smith and George Otero, *Teaching About Cultural Awareness*, (Denver: Center for Teaching International Relations, University of Denver, 1989), p. 7.