

FILL IN THE BLANKS



OVERVIEW

Students will explore the concepts of bias, stereotypes, and perception. They will begin with a fill-in-the-blank exercise and engage in discussions about the origins of these responses. The activity will involve watching a video to understand unconscious bias and will conclude with an introduction to cultural relativism. This activity aims to encourage students to consider others' perspectives and prepare for future interactions by seeing people through their cultural contexts.



GLOBAL COMPETENCE

Understand and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Social awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.



TIME

30 minutes depending on discussion and number of students



ACTIVITY TYPE

Reflection, Discussion



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will analyze how bias, stereotypes, and perceptions are formed, and will define and apply the concept of Cultural Relativism in discussions.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Distribute Activity Sheets:

Provide students with a worksheet containing paragraphs with blanks to fill in with words they feel best fit.



VIDEOS

For Algeria and Tunisia schools play until 4:56 minutes [14 minutes]

Ferrera, A. (2019, May). My identity is a superpower — not an obstacle [Video]. TED Conferences.

https://www.ted.com/talks/america_ferrera_my_identity_is_a_superpower_not_an_obstacle?subtitle=en

For US schools play until 4:46 minutes [14 minutes total]

Abdel-Magied, Y. (2014, December). What does my headscarf mean to you? [Video]. TED Conferences.

https://www.ted.com/talks/yassmin_abdel_magied_what_does_my_headscarf_mean_to_you?subtitle=en



DIRECTIONS

Instructions for US Classrooms

Introduction to the Topic

- Explain, "Today's activity focuses on bias, stereotypes, and perception. These concepts influence our interactions and perceptions of others."
- Provide the simple directions on the worksheet, distribute the Fill-in-the-Blank exercise, and ask students to begin. They have 2-3 minutes.
- Affirm that there are no right or wrong answers, and they should insert the word that makes the most sense to them.

Share and Discuss

- Display the worksheet on screen, and together, discuss the different answers students provided and why they chose the word they did.
- Students will begin to notice how different some responses are when compared. Explain that it demonstrates how we use what we know or understand to inform our perception.

Discussion Questions

Using the below prompts, ask students to revisit the worksheet, and next to the words they wrote, jot down where these responses may have come from:

1. Can you pinpoint a specific value, memory, or experience that shaped your response?
2. Why did that word come to mind?

Definitions and Group Activity

- Divide students into groups.
- On a screen, display the following terms: Bias, Stereotype, Perception.
- With 2-3 minutes, ask groups to brainstorm a definition for Bias
- Next, repeat the process for a definition of Stereotype and Perception.
- Invite students to share their thoughts or definitions with the class.
- After sharing, on-screen display the following:

- **Bias:** "Once we know and accept we have bias, we can begin to recognize our own patterns of thinking. With awareness and a conscious effort, we have the power to change how we think and to challenge the negative or harmful biases within ourselves." (National Museum of African American History and Culture. (n.d.). Bias. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from nmaahc.si.edu)
- **Stereotype:** "A stereotype is a widely held, simplified, and essentialist belief about a specific group. Groups are often stereotyped on the basis of sex, gender identity, race and ethnicity, nationality, age, socioeconomic status, language, and so forth. Stereotypes are deeply embedded within social institutions and wider culture." (Gendered Innovations. (n.d.). Stereotypes. Stanford University. Retrieved July 25, 2024, from genderedinnovations.stanford.edu)
- **Perception:** "What makes perception somewhat complex is that we don't all perceive things the same way. One person may perceive a dog jumping on them as a threat, while another person may perceive this action as the pup just being excited to see them. Our perceptions of people and things are shaped by our prior experiences, our interests, and how carefully we process information. This can cause one person to perceive the exact same person or situation differently than someone else." (Jhangiani R, Tarry H. 5.4 Individual differences in person perception. Principles of Social Psychology - 1st International H5P Edition. Published online January 26, 2022).
- Say, "Thank you for contributing your thoughts towards a definition. These complex terms often bring injustice, inequity, and other global issues to mind. However, we have influence and control over what we do about these words, how we allow them to impact us, and how we can write another narrative to engage with others. I want to watch a video segment together to explore further. "
- Play the What does my headscarf mean to you? video until 4:46.
- Afterwards, discuss the following questions as a class:
 - What perceptions do or did you have of someone who comes from a Muslim country or background? From the middle east or north africa?

- Where do you think stereotypes come from besides media or movies?
- What stereotype or bias do you think others might have towards you?
- How do stereotypes relate to current events or happenings in your community?

Cultural Scenario Analysis

Introduce a scenario to illustrate how bias, stereotypes, and perceptions can take hold without context.

On the screen, display the scenario.

Scenario 1:

You see a classmate down the hall, and they make the OK gesture at you.

- Ask students if they would think anything of this. Gather student responses.
- Display Cultural Insight: In some cultures within Brazil, Greece, Spain, and some Middle Eastern countries, this gesture is considered obscene. In some French cultures, it indicates that you or something is worthless.
- Introduce the concept of Cultural Relativism by displaying the below on screen:

"Cultural Relativism is the idea that a person's beliefs, values, and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture rather than judged against the criteria of another. When looking at another culture's practices, it's important not to judge based on what you think is 'normal' or 'acceptable' but rather on what people within that culture feel is normal or acceptable in their context." Citation: AFS-USA. (n.d.). Cultural influence on judgments. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from [afsusa.org](https://www.afsusa.org)

Wrap-up Question & Reflection

Highlight how understanding cultural relativism can help prepare them for future interactions, including those in a virtual exchange program.

Ask the below questions to the class to open a dialogue:

1. How can we view others as they want to be seen rather than through bias, stereotypes, or perceptions?
2. What are some critical insights from this activity for you as we begin our virtual exchange with peers in Algeria and Tunisia?

WORKSHEET

Directions:

Fill in the blanks with the word you believe makes the most sense within the context of the paragraphs.

All children are capable of _____, but we cannot expect all students to _____ when far too many are _____ stairwells with broken handrails and missing steps, tripping and falling as they _____ to keep up, while others are _____ up on elevators.

Equitably funded schools run by _____ educators, supported by strong local, state and national educational _____ that center the entire contexts of students' lives, will be the ones to improve the academic _____ of the most economically _____ children. They demand multiple solutions, deep investment and political _____.