

Talking Tolerance

Overview: In this lesson students will examine how hidden biases may influence our perceptions and actions, and will explore ways to promote tolerance. The lesson focuses on the films: *Divided City* and *I'm Not a Boy*. Students will take a hidden bias test, record thoughts and feelings in a reflective journal, perform a skit to examine what it might be like to live another person's life, and take action to promote tolerance in their school.

Grade Level: 6-12

Subject Areas: Language Arts, English, Geography

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

- View, analyze and evaluate media
- Examine biases
- Develop an understanding of the importance of tolerance

Media

Divided City Ghayda Nawrus

Our Voice (**Amman, Jordan**)

16 year-old-Ghayda looks around the streets of Jordan and sees a divided society with two faces - modern and traditional. The differences are striking, from the way people dress and how leisure time is spent, to relationships between family members and personal views of the world. Ghayda prefers non-traditional western clothing, and music and culture, which are looked down upon by traditional Jordanians. She also believes strongly in her Muslim faith, choosing to pray five times a day, fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, and choosing not to have a boyfriend. Ghayda is part of a new Jordanian generation - a complex mix of old values and new ideas. Misunderstandings about her generation's beliefs and values are driving a wedge into a small but fragile society. She finds solidarity in friends who share similar dreams of a community that can balance the traditional and non-traditional, and is determined to continue working hard at school.

I'm Not a Boy Julie Joyce

House of Frame Frame Fierce (New York City, NY)

At the age of 16, Julie Joyce stopped answering to her male birth name and decided to publicly identify herself as a girl. Without support or understanding from her family, Julie turned to transgender girls on the streets of the Bronx for support. Although their support was important, she knew their lifestyle left them vulnerable to harassment, substance abuse, and prostitution. As she searched for safe and productive ways to express her identity, Julie found a peer education job teaching other youth about transgender rights and HIV/AIDS awareness. Today, she is part of a new family of friends who support her in developing her full potential as a human being.

Lesson Sequence

Building Background

Activity One: Places and Spaces

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with background information that will help them better understand the issues discussed in the film and the lesson activities.

1. As a class, visit the *Beyond Borders Countries* section of the website. This section contains information about the culture, geography, politics, economics and people of the varied countries that are featured in the *Beyond Borders* films. In this lesson, have your students investigate the following countries:

- USA
- Jordan

Activity Two: Discovering Hidden Biases

Even though we think that we treat people as with respect, many people have hidden biases that may influence our perceptions and actions. The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to test themselves for hidden biases.

1. Provide time for students to take the hidden bias test on the Tolerance.org website. Send students to [Dig Deeper: Test Yourself For Hidden Bias](#) and ask them to click on the "Project Implicit's website" button.

Activity Three: Reflective Journal

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to a reflective journal in which they will record thoughts and feelings during the course of this lesson.

1. Pass out the reflective journals (see template) and as each student completes the test, ask them to write about the results of the Hidden Bias test.
2. After students have finished writing in their journals, separate students into small groups and have them share what they learned from taking the test.
3. Ask for volunteers from each group to share salient points from their group discussion with the entire class.
4. Homework Assignment: Ask students to consider other hidden biases they might have and write about them in their reflective journals. These biases might include--but are not limited to--gender, race, age, religion, sexual orientation, weight issues, or disabilities.

Media Component

1. View the film *Divided City* with your students. Lead the class in a group discussion about the film. The following questions may be used as a springboard for the discussion:

- What does Ghayda fear?
- How can people who are different learn to accept each other?
- Ghayda worries about the divisions in her country. What is your greatest concern regarding your country?
- Ghayda's sister describes Ghayda as being a tolerant person.

What examples shown in the film support her statement?

- How does Ghayda balance her faith and traditions in a changing world?
- Can you share an example in your own life where you were caught between two ways of thinking?
- How did this film make you feel?

2. View the film *I'm Not a Boy* with your students. Lead the class in a group discussion about the film. The following questions may be used for the discussion:

- What does Julie fear?
- In what ways does Julie differ from her birth family?
- What do you do when/if your views differ from those of your family?
- What did Julie do to help create a secure community for herself?
- Julie fears people's ignorance. How have people's biases and intolerant behavior impacted Julie?
- Julie feared that she would never become the person she imagined she could be. Do you ever worry that you won't become the image that you have in your head? If so what do you do about it?
- How did this film make you feel?

3. After the students have finished watching both films, ask students to write about their reactions to the films in their reflective journals.

Students may want to respond to some of the following questions in their journal writing:

- What did each filmmaker fear?
- What were the differences between the students' experiences and how they dealt with them?
- Which film did you think was most personally compelling? Why?
- What message do you think each filmmaker was trying to express?

Lesson Activities

Activity One: Trading Places

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to consider what it might be like living someone else's life for a day.

1. Divide the class into small groups and tell students that they are going to create a short skit based on Ghayda and Julie's lives.
2. Make certain that the groups are evenly distributed between Ghayda and Julie.
 - Groups that are portraying Ghayda will create a skit in which Ghaya is confronted by a group of traditional teenage Jordanians who question Ghaya about her wanting to balance traditional and non-traditional ways.
 - Groups that are portraying Julie will create a skit in which Julie faces a difficult incident at school.
3. Ask students who portrayed Ghayda and Julie what it felt like to be in their positions.
4. Ask students to write in their reflective journal about how their day might be different if they were a different gender, religion, race, age, or sexual orientation, or if they had a disability.

Activity Two: Promoting Tolerance

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with an opportunity to share with others what they have learned about tolerance.

1. Explain to students that they are going to initiate an effort to promote tolerance in their school. Students who are interested may choose to volunteer to ask students, teachers and staff members to sign Tolerance.Org's Declaration of Tolerance.

To fulfill my pledge, I (insert name) will

- examine my own biases and work to overcome them
- set a positive example for my family and friends
- work for tolerance in my own community
- speak out against hate and injustice.

We Share A World

For all our differences, we share one world. To be tolerant is to welcome the differences and delight in the sharing.

The Declaration of Tolerance can be found at http://www.tolerance.org/101_tools/declaration.html.

2. Ask students to make copies of the Declaration of Tolerance, including the website, and pass them out to students, teachers, and school staff. Tell students to instruct people who want to sign the declaration to go to the web address listed on the handout.

3. The Tolerance.org website also offers ideas for promoting tolerance at school. These suggestions may be found at the following web address: http://www.tolerance.org/101_tools/school.html.

4. As a class, decide what suggestion(s) you will pursue from the Tolerance.org website, or from ideas generated by the class.
Teacher Note: If your students think of an idea that isn't on the Tolerance.org website, have them click on the link below and e-mail them your idea. http://www.tolerance.org/101_tools/share.html

5. You may choose to inform your local newspaper about what your class and school are doing to promote tolerance.

Extension Activities

Activity One: Transgender Hotline

1. Divide the class into two groups. Have the students visit the websites below to learn more about the issues surrounding

transgender youth. Tell students that they are going to pretend that they are manning a transgender information hotline. Ask both groups to use the information on the websites to generate five questions. Explain to students that they will "call" and pose the questions to the people manning the hotline. When they call with their questions, the students manning the hotline will answer their questions based on the information found on the sites. Give each group a chance to be the callers and the hotline workers.

Human Rights Watch website

http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/Final-09.htm#P878_156513

Read about Anika P., seventeen, a transgender youth who has lived for the last seven years as a girl.

Human Rights Watch website

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/uslgbt/action.htm>

Learn what you can do to support transgender youths.

Connect For Kids website

<http://www.connectforkids.org/node/302>

Visit this site to read an article entitled "Do Schools Fail Gay and Lesbian Youth?"

The following websites contain a wealth of information and resources:

Youth Research: A Project of Advocates for Youth website

<http://www.youthresource.com/community/transtopia/index.htm>

The National Center for Transgender Equality

<http://www.nctequality.org/>

PFLAG

<http://www.pflag.org/index.php?id=277>

Activity Two: Information Poster

1. Send students to the following sites to learn about Jordan and the Muslim faith. Ask students to collect ten facts or interesting pieces of information. Create an information poster using the information collected by the students.

Islam.com

<http://www.islam.com/>

PBS – Islam: Empire of Faith

<http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/>

PBS – Frontline: Muslims

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/muslims/>

Library of Congress

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/jotoc.html>

National Geographic – Map Machine

<http://plasma.nationalgeographic.com/mapmachine/profiles/jo.html>

Colorado State University – Islamic Holidays and Observances

<http://www.colostate.edu/Orgs/MSA/events/Ramadan.html>

Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education & Learning

www.mcrel.org

Language Arts

Writing

Standard 1. [Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process](#)

Level III [Grade: 6-8]

12. Writes in response to literature (e.g., responds to significant issues in a log or journal, answers discussion questions, anticipates and answers a reader's questions, writes a summary of a book, describes an initial impression of a text, connects knowledge from a text with personal knowledge, states an interpretive, evaluative, or reflective position; draws inferences about the effects of the work on an audience)

Level IV [Grade: 9-12]

11. Writes reflective compositions (e.g., uses personal experience as a basis for reflection on some aspect of life, draws abstract comparisons between specific incidents and abstract concepts, maintains a balance between describing incidents and relating them to more general abstract ideas that illustrate personal beliefs, moves from specific examples to generalizations about life)

Standard 2. [Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing](#)

Level III [Grade: 6-8]

1. Uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas (e.g., establishes tone and mood, uses figurative language, uses sensory images and comparisons, uses a thesaurus to choose effective wording)

Level IV [Grade: 9-12]

5. Uses a variety of techniques to provide supporting detail (e.g., analogies; anecdotes; restatements; paraphrases; examples; comparisons; visual aids, such as tables, graphs, and pictures)

Geography

Standard 4. [Understands the physical and human characteristics of place](#)

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

1. Knows how social, cultural, and economic processes shape the features of places (e.g., resource use, belief systems, modes of transportation and communication; major technological changes such as the agricultural and industrial revolutions; population growth and urbanization)

Standard 6. [Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions](#)

Level III [Grade: 6-8]

3. Knows the ways in which culture influences the perception of places and regions (e.g., religion and other belief systems, language and tradition; perceptions of "beautiful" or "valuable")

Level IV [Grade: 9-12]

2. Understands how individuals view places and regions on the basis of their stage of life, sex, social class, ethnicity, values, and belief systems (e.g., perceptions of distance, impressions about what makes a place secure, views of public housing or wealthy urban neighborhoods)
3. Knows ways in which people's changing views of places and regions reflect cultural change (e.g., rural settings becoming attractive as recreation areas to people living in densely populated cities, old mining ghost towns becoming tourist and gambling centers)

Working With Others

Standard 1. [Contributes to the overall effort of a group](#)

Level IV (Grades K-12)

2. Works cooperatively within a group to complete tasks, achieve goals, and solve problems