

LESSON

The Power of Belonging

Overview

About This Lesson

Bethany Morrow's short story "As You Were," originally published in the collection *Take the Mic: Fictional Stories of Everyday Resistance*, invites students to consider the ways in which their identity and membership in certain groups can impact their power, agency, and voice. The first half of the story introduces readers to the main characters and establishes the strong bond they share as members of a successful high school marching band as they prepare for homecoming. The second half of the story reveals the fragility of this bond and challenges readers to consider the privileges that their identities may or may not afford them, and the very real risks and rewards that can come with having the courage to speak up in the face of injustice. In this lesson, students will draw evidence from the first half of the story, which they read for homework, to create empathy-building character maps in order to consider Ebony's relationship to other characters in the story, as well as her sense of belonging and agency as the leader of her marching band's trombone section.

Essential Questions

- How do I empower myself to take action on behalf of myself and others?

Guiding Questions

- What is the relationship between agency and belonging?
- How is your identity, sense of belonging, and agency shaped by the people and circumstances you encounter in your life?

Facing History Learning Outcomes

- Engage with real and imagined stories that help them understand their own coming-of-age experiences and how others experience the world.
- Practice perspective-taking in order to develop empathy and recognize the limits of any one person's point of view.

What's Included

This lesson uses the following texts and materials. Access materials and a lesson Plan-on-a-Page in this [Google Folder](#).

- **Reading: As You Were, Part 1** (assign Part 2, pages 8-19, for homework)
- **Handout: Map the Internal World of a Character**
- **Handout: Analyzing Actions and Outcomes** (assign for homework)

Preparing to Teach

A Note to Teachers

1. Reading "As You Were" in Two Parts

This lesson's homework assignment calls for students to read the second half of the short story "As You Were" by Bethany Morrow and to complete the **Analyzing Actions and Outcomes** handout for Ebony, Josiah, or the police officer. You can assign students one of the three characters or have them count off. If you are not able to assign this task for homework, you will need to add time to this text set so students can complete the assignment in class.

Lesson Plan

Activities

1. Reflect on Belonging

Project the following questions and have students turn and talk to discuss them with a partner. Then ask a few volunteers to share their ideas with the class:

- What does it mean to belong?
- How do we develop a sense of belonging?

2. Map the Internal World of a Character

Let students know that they will be using evidence from the text, and their own understanding of the world, to analyze Ebony's thoughts, feelings, motivations, and sense of belonging in the first part of the story. Move students into groups of four and start by asking them to share a heart or emoji annotation from their homework and explain their reasoning. Then have them spend a few minutes discussing places in the story where they felt confused and examples of evidence they found that helps them understand Ebony's sense of belonging and agency. Finally, pass out the

Map the Internal World of a Character handout and have groups discuss the questions, adding evidence in the corresponding sections of the graphic organizer on the second page of the handout.

3. Discuss Belonging and Agency in the Story

Have students display their character maps on their desks, and give them some time to circulate to see what others have written. Then discuss the following questions as a whole class:

- What ideas do you notice appearing on two or more character maps?
- What new ideas do you notice on other maps that you find interesting?
- What do you think belonging to the marching band means to Ebony? How do you know?
- How would you describe Ebony's agency at this point in the story? What factors contribute to her agency? What makes you say that?

Homework

Students should finish reading "As You Were" and complete the **Analyzing Actions and Outcomes** handout for Ebony, Josiah, or the police officer for the second half of the story. Assign students a character to focus on for the handout and let them know that they will be sharing their ideas in the next class period.