

LESSON

How Do Others See Me?

Overview

About This Lesson

In this lesson, students will consider the range of factors that make up their identities and how the way others perceive them can differ from their own ideas and feelings about their identities. The resources and activities in this lesson encourage students to think about the power of assumptions and stereotypes. Students will define key concepts, engage with personal narratives, and think about how assumptions and labels can lead to stereotypes that impact how we are perceived and how we think about ourselves.

Essential Questions

- How do we become who we want to be in the world?

Guiding Questions

- What parts of my identity are determined *by* me and which parts are determined *for* me by other people or by society?
- How do labels, assumptions, and stereotypes affect how other people identify each of us? How might labels, assumptions, and stereotypes affect how we think about ourselves?

Facing History Learning Outcomes

- Examine how their identity is a combination of who they say they are, who others say they are, and who they hope to be in the future.
- Engage with real and imagined stories that help them understand their own coming-of-age experiences and how others experience the world.

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: Why Are Successful Black Men Assumed to Be Athletes or Entertainers?
- Handout: Don't Misunderstand Me!
- Handout: Inside-Out Identity Chart

Preparing to Teach

A Note to Teachers

1. Familiarizing Yourself with the “Take Note” Thinking Routine

In the first activity of the second class period, students will listen to a podcast episode. Before teaching this activity, preview the podcast episode and the steps of Project Zero’s [Take Note Thinking Routine](#). You will need to decide how you would like students to respond during the routine (index cards, a handout, a Google Doc, a Padlet, etc.) and how they will share what they write with their peers and with you.

2. Preparing to Talk about Identity

In the second activity of the second class period, students will be generating a list of factors that make up identity. You might get them started by first writing on the board a few factors that make up your own identity. Think generally at this point (race, age, gender, family identities, faith, etc.). If it doesn’t come up in discussion as you generate your group list, prompt students with questions that help them think about the following ideas:

- Some aspects of our identities are consistent over our lives; others change as we gain skills and have different roles in life.
- Some feel very central to who we are no matter where we are; others might feel more like background or depend on the situation.
- Some identities are labels others put on us; others see us as having that identity, but we might not.

3. Modeling the Inside-Out Identity Chart

Before the second class period, create or start to make your own individual identity chart using the Inside-Out template that your students will use in the fourth activity. Sharing your chart as a model and speaking about a few factors that make up your identity is an excellent community-building opportunity and a way for your students to learn more about you.

4. Pacing This Two-Day Lesson

The activities in this lesson are designed for two class periods. In the first class period, teach the first five activities about labels, assumptions, and stereotypes. Then, in the second class period, share ideas from the first lesson’s exit cards, listen to and discuss the podcast, and create identity charts.

Lesson Plan

Activities

1. Reflect in a Journal Response on Assumptions People Can Make

- Begin by giving students a few minutes to write in their journals in response to the following questions. Let them know that they will not be sharing their responses with their peers.

- Has someone ever made an assumption about you because of some aspect of your identity or because of a group that you belong to?
- Was it a positive assumption or a negative one?
- How did you find out about the assumption? How did you respond?
- After they have had time to journal, tell students that it is human nature to make assumptions; however, assumptions are powerful and can have both negative and positive consequences. Explain that in the next two classes, they will examine how the assumptions we make about people and groups can impact the way we interact with others.

2. Read “Why Are Successful Black Men Assumed to Be Athletes or Entertainers?”

Distribute copies of the excerpted *Mother Jones* article “**Why Are Successful Black Men Assumed to Be Athletes or Entertainers?**” Make sure you read this excerpt aloud for students and that they understand the mock script format. After reading, ask the class the following questions:

- Why do you think the writer pointed out that his friend Mark is both an “amateur musician” and a “card-carrying nerd”?
- What assumptions does a “Generic Everyperson” make about Mark when they first see him? Why do you think they make these assumptions?
- How does Mark react to these assumptions? How do you know?

3. Define Key Concepts: Labels, Assumptions, and Stereotypes

- Next, introduce the terms *label*, *assumption*, and *stereotype*, using the definitions below.
 - *Label*: A name, word, or phrase used to classify or categorize a person or thing (labels are often, but not always, inaccurate)
 - *Assumption*: Something that is accepted as true before one gathers any proof that it is so
 - *Stereotype*: An often incorrect assumption made about all of the members of a particular group
- Next, using the definitions above, arrange students in pairs or small groups and ask them to identify and annotate the labels, assumptions, and stereotypes at play in the reading “**Why Are Successful Black Men Assumed to Be Athletes or Entertainers?**” Check for understanding by having groups share their findings with the class, perhaps by projecting the passage and inviting students to the board to add their annotations.

4. Facilitate a Discussion

After students have had a chance to unpack the reading and the key concepts, ask each group to share highlights or key elements of what they have learned with the class. Then discuss the final questions together:

- How would you describe the relationship between normality, labels, assumptions, and stereotypes?
- How do labels, assumptions, and stereotypes affect how other people identify each of us?
- How might labels, assumptions, and stereotypes affect how we think about ourselves?
- How can you become more aware of the labels you place on others and the consequences that those labels may have?

5. Day 1 Reflection and Exit Card

- End the class with the **Don't Misunderstand Me!** exit card handout. Explain that everyone should complete the two sentence starters. Let students know that they will be sharing what they write with the group in the next class. Collect the exit cards at the end of the class period.

6. Share Day 1 Exit Card Reflections

- Begin today's class by returning students' **Don't Misunderstand Me!** exit cards from the previous lesson. Have students sit in a circle and use the [Wraparound](#) strategy to share misunderstandings and truths about group members' identities.

7. Listen to and Discuss "Do Not Diminish Yourself To Fit In"

- Remind students that in the previous class, they defined and discussed the difference between labels, assumptions, and stereotypes. Explain that in today's class, they will continue to consider what they have learned about normality, assumptions, and stereotypes as they listen to a *We Got You* podcast episode. Share the [Take Note](#) questions and let students know that as they listen, you will pause the recording so they can respond in writing to ONE question and process what they are viewing with their peers. The Take Note questions are as follows:
 - What is the most important point?
 - What are you finding challenging, puzzling, or difficult to understand?
 - What question would you most like to discuss?
 - What is something that you found interesting?
- Play the *We Got You* podcast [Haerin – Do Not Diminish Yourself To Fit In](#) (09:00). Note that the episode has two parts, and students are listening to Part 1 for this activity. Part 1 starts at minute 17:50 and counts down to end at 8:57. We recommend pausing at 15:46 and again at 13:33 for the [Take Note](#) routine. Repeat the routine at the end of the episode.
- After listening to the podcast, move students into small groups so they can share their notes and try to respond to any questions others may have raised. To facilitate a deeper discussion, ask students to respond to the following questions:

- When did someone make an assumption or stereotype about Haerin because of some aspect of her identity or because of a group that she belongs to?
- What factors made it challenging for Haerin to be who she wanted to be in the world? How did she navigate or rise above these challenges?
- What were some key moments in Haerin's life where she came to a new understanding of her identity and/or the world around her?

8. Create Personal Identity Charts

- Explain to students that after listening to and reflecting on Haerin's story and how she developed a deeper understanding of her identity, they will be thinking about the many factors that make up their *own* identities. Start by asking them to respond to the following question in their journals, and then, on the board, generate a big list of factors that make up identity: *What factors make up your identity? Write as many as you can think of in a list.*
- Next, let students know that they will think about the factors that make up their own identities and represent them in personal identity charts. Distribute the **Inside-Outside Identity Chart** handout and frame the activity by explaining that the template will allow students to consider the range of factors that make up their identities and how the way others perceive them can differ from their own ideas and feelings about their identities.
- Project or share a model of your personal identity chart and tell the story behind a few of the factors you've listed to help your students understand how to create their own charts and allow them to get to know you better as an individual and teacher.
- Give students time to make their own identity charts. Let the class know that they will be talking about their identity charts with a partner, but they do not need to share their diagrams.

9. Debrief Identity Charts in Pairs

After students have had time to complete their graphic organizers, have them share a few of their factors with a partner and discuss how these factors influence their sense of who they are. Remind them that they don't need to share their handouts—just ideas that they feel comfortable sharing. They can also add ideas to their identity charts if their paired discussions spark new thinking. Then ask students to store their identity charts in a safe place (or collect them), because they will be using them later in the unit.