

American Born Chinese and Stereotypes

Grade Level: 9 - 12

Subject: English/Social Studies

Overview: Students discuss different stereotypes for different groups of people within their school and society.

Objectives: Students recognize how assumptions and stereotypes influence our attitude and restrict us from making fair judgments about someone.

Suggested Topics:

1. Begin by discussing with students how people often use labels or categories to describe others and how these labels can be based on such characteristics as clothing, looks, the way a person talks, or the groups to which he or she belongs. Explain that categorizing things or people is a natural human inclination; however, people often make assumptions about groups of people they don't even know.
 2. Ask the class to brainstorm categories that are used at school to group people. Categories could include labels such as "jocks" or "brains." Write each category the class generates onto the board and then have students narrow that list down to five major categories.
 3. Write these major categories onto five separate pieces of paper and post these around the room. Give the class 10-15 minutes to travel to each posted sheet and write down adjectives related to the category headings. Remind students that they should only add new descriptions to the list.
 4. When they are finished, ask students to take a moment and look at the adjectives that the class has generated under each group heading. Use the following questions to lead a discussion about what they recorded:
 - Do assumptions apply to everyone in a group?
 - Do most people hold the same assumptions about a group? Why or why not?
 - Do assumptions tell us anything definite about a categorized individual?
 - How do assumptions affect your behavior toward others?
 5. Now ask students to define the word "stereotype." Explain that when we make assumption about an entire group of people, those assumptions are referred to as stereotypes. When assumptions and stereotypes influence our attitudes, we may find that making a fair judgment about someone or something is difficult. This influence on judgment is called "bias."
 6. Take another look at the adjectives recorded and hold a class discussion around the following questions: Do these adjectives describe stereotypes? How can they be unfair or hurtful?
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Suggested Topic: Racial Stereotypes

1. Begin with a discussion on the concepts of race and ethnicity. Write each word on the board and ask students to list the attributes that define the terms

- “race” and “ethnicity.” Next ask students for the name of five different racial or ethnic groups. (Can use included Stereotype handout).
2. On the board write the name of one of the groups that the students named.
 3. Divide the class into five groups and supply each student in the class with a marker.
 4. Give each group one of the five sheets of paper. Ask them to list as many stereotypes that are commonly used to describe the category of people written at the top of paper. Give students three minutes to complete the exercise. Emphasize that students should list stereotypes that they have heard, not ones that they necessarily believe to be true.
 5. When they are finished, rotate the sheets of paper between groups so that each group works on a new sheet. Have them add any unlisted stereotype adjectives. Rotate every three minutes until every group has worked on every sheet.
 6. Post the sheets in class where everyone can see them and give students five minutes to read the sheets.
 7. Conclude the lesson with a discussion on the exercise, asking students the following:
 - How do the stereotypes recorded by the class make you feel?
 - What do you notice about the stereotypes listed?
 - Where have you seen these stereotypes portrayed? Television programs, movies, magazines, books?
 - How do you think a stereotype might cause someone to act unfairly toward another person?
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Suggested Topic: Experiencing Bias

1. Before class begins, post around the classroom the 10 pieces of paper generated about assumptions and stereotypes in school and society.
2. Ask students to spend 15-20 minutes writing about a personal experience with biased behavior. Emphasize to students that they should not put their names on their papers. They can share an experience in which they were a victim of biased behavior or in which they witnessed bias.
3. Prompt the class with the following: “Think about a situation when someone made a biased judgment about you or acted unfairly toward you because of your age, skin color, clothes you were wearing, gender, the way you speak, where you live, how much money your family has, or some other reason.”
4. Ask students to consider the following questions before they begin to write:
 - How did you know you were being unfairly judged?
 - What words or actions were directed at you because of assumptions or stereotypes?
 - Why do you think those assumptions were made about you?
 - How did the experience make you feel?
 - How do you think you should have been treated in that situation?
5. When students are finished, have them pass their papers to the front of the room. Shuffle the papers and pass them back out to the class, making sure no one person has their own paper. Have each student read the personal experience of a classmate.
6. For homework, have students identify stereotypes in the media. Over the course of several days, they will keep a log of stereotypes they notice in television shows, commercials, or movies. Students should record the name of the show, movie, or product advertised; the group stereotyped; the

stereotype portrayed; and any thoughts or feeling the student experienced while watching the program. Explain that this exercise might not be as easy as it seems; many of us are so accustomed to seeing certain stereotypes that we don't even notice them. Encourage students to look for patterns in the images they watch