



## LESSON 3

# Complicating the Concept of Community

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can we work together to create an open, supportive, and reflective learning community?

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is a community?
- What would need to happen in order for the members of this classroom community to “see value in others” in the group?

## LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will read and analyze a definition of community and then apply it to a discussion about their own classroom community.

## OVERVIEW

After spending the first two lessons exploring their individual identities and sharing their stories and ideas with one another, students will now consider what it means to be an individual within a community. While most, if not all, of your students are probably familiar with the word *community*, they may not have explored the idea in depth or considered the relationship between identity and community. Considering the factors that make up a community is an important first step in preparing to examine the challenging history of this country. Questions such as “What does it mean to be a member of a community?” “To be a community, must members like each other?” and “How does our perspective shape the way we view others?” are as applicable to understanding human behavior and our own social worlds as they are to understanding the history of this country. In this lesson, students take a stand on their own ideas about community before analyzing author Suzanne Goldsmith’s definition, which raises interesting questions about the purpose of communities. Engaging in this analysis and reflection helps prepare students to develop a contract in the next lesson, which lays the groundwork for the kind of reflective and brave classroom community they agree to foster and uphold together.

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## DURATION

50-minute class period

## MATERIALS

- **Handout:** What Is Community? Anticipation Guide
- **Handout:** Exploring Community in Three Ways
- **Handout:** My Classroom Community Exit Card

## TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Anticipation Guides
- Journaling
- Four Corners
- Exit Cards

# SEL COMPETENCIES AND PEDAGOGICAL MOVES

## 1. Develop communication skills by debating ideas in a small and large groups.

This year, students will be learning about hard histories and engaging in conversations that may make them feel uncomfortable at times. While some students will need to develop increased efficacy in voicing their opinions and valuing the importance of their personal contributions, others will need to focus on limiting their participation to make space for other voices. Facing History and Ourselves has a number of discussion strategies on our website's **Teaching Strategies** page to help students develop the active listening and communication skills they will need as members of a classroom community where every student feels like their ideas are valued and heard. In this lesson, the **Four Corners** teaching strategy provides a framework for students to debate ideas, listen actively, and negotiate peer pressure to change their point of view.

## 2. Vary modes of instruction to help students process content and demonstrate learning.

This lesson opens with a journal reflection followed by a class discussion that uses the **Four Corners** strategy, a kinesthetic approach in which students move to different parts of the room to show their position on a controversial statement. When you preface a class

discussion with time for individual reflection, you provide a different way for students to engage with the material and each other. By the end of this lesson, each student will have written their ideas about the concept of community, shared their thinking in small groups, and taken a stance on their ideas in a structured class discussion. As a result, you will have multiple opportunities to observe students engaging different modes of learning and use this information for future planning and differentiation.

## 3. Use different versions of handouts to differentiate for readiness.

For this lesson, if you have students who, based on your observations in the first two lessons, would benefit from additional support, you can group them together and give them a modified version of the **Exploring Community in Three Ways** handout. Modify the handout by filling in two or three boxes to model a response and to reduce the number of answers students are required to produce. For more advanced readers, rather than ask them to capture the main idea of each sentence in three or four words, have them paraphrase, which is a more challenging task. Then, in the next lesson, create new groupings based on a different criteria, such as this lesson's exit card, so you have students with different ideas about community in each group and students don't start to see themselves labeled as one kind of learner at the outset of the year.

# NOTES TO TEACHER

## 1. Setting Up for “Four Corners”

The first activity in this lesson uses the **Four Corners** teaching strategy to debrief an anticipation guide and journal response. Before class begins, familiarize yourself with the two strategies and set up the room so students can move directly from their reflective writing to Four Corners. To prepare your classroom space, create four signs that read “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree,” and hang them in different corners of the room. Consider printing the signs on colored paper or cardstock and, if your school has a machine, laminating them so you can reuse them for Four Corners and **Barometer** discussions this year.

## 2. Pacing This Lesson

If you don’t have time for all of the activities in this lesson, there are a number of ways that you can shorten it. Rather than debrief the first activity’s anticipation guide using the Four Corners strategy, have students do a quick pair-share instead. Alternatively, if you teach older students who don’t need the second activity’s graphic organizer and chunking exercise, project Goldsmith’s definition of community, read it out loud, and ask pairs of students to paraphrase or summarize it together before discussing the questions that accompany it as a class. Finally, you can choose one of the two main activities (the anticipation guide or Goldsmith’s definition) to do in class and

assign the other one for homework, add it to a future lesson, or use it later in the year when you want to review the concept of community with your students.

# ACTIVITIES

## 1. Reflect on the Concept of Community

- Have students complete the **What Is Community? Anticipation Guide** handout and its corresponding journal reflection, which is explained at the bottom of the handout.
- Debrief the activity by using the **Four Corners** teaching strategy to debate a few of the statements on the anticipation guide. Before having students defend their stance across corners, give them time in each round to share ideas with others in their corners. Because students haven't created their classroom contract yet, set expectations for speaking and listening that encourage everyone to share their ideas and listen actively to others.

## 2. Analyze the Definition of Community

- Next, explain to students that they will be analyzing a definition of community to see how it is similar to or different from their own thinking about the concept.
- Divide students into small groups of three and pass out the handout **Exploring Community in Three Ways**. Read Goldsmith's definition at the top of the handout out loud. Then have groups complete the graphic organizer together while you circulate to observe their progress, taking note of individual students' reading, note-taking, and collaboration skills.
- Debrief the activity by asking for volunteers to share ideas from their handouts. Then facilitate a class discussion that draws from the following four questions. To encourage participation, have students turn

and talk with a partner about each question for 30 seconds before discussing them as a class.

- » Use Goldsmith's definition to support your thinking: How can a history class be a kind of community?
- » What is the "shared enterprise" of a class community?
- » What does it mean to see someone as a "potential partner" in learning?
- » What would need to happen in order for the members of this classroom community to "see value in others" in the group?

## 3. Reflect on Your Classroom Community

- Pass out the handout **My Classroom Community Exit Card** to help students make connections between today's lesson and their experiences in the class. Let them know that in the next lesson, they will be working together to create a classroom contract that will establish the norms of behavior to guide their interactions as a community of learners this year

# ASSESSMENTS

- Evaluate the handout **Exploring Community in Three Ways** to see how students understand Goldsmith’s definition of community. If you collect the handouts, try to return them in the next lesson in case students want to refer to Goldsmith’s definition when they are creating their classroom contract.
- Read students’ exit cards to help you see how they are thinking about the concept of community and applying what they learned in this lesson to their own experiences in the class.

# TEACHER REFLECTION QUESTIONS

After teaching this lesson or at the end of the day, take some time to reflect on the following questions. You can think about your answers as you plan for the next class period and/or record your ideas in writing on your lesson plan or in a teacher journal so you can refer to them this year or when planning next fall.

## 1. What do you feel went well today?

## 2. If you could teach this lesson again, what would you change?

## 3. What did you observe about students' speaking and listening skills?

- Who volunteered to share their ideas today?
- Who shared their ideas only after you called on them?
- Who didn't you hear from today?
- How will you use this information to help students set individual goals for speaking and listening?
- How will you use this information to inform the teaching strategies you choose for discussions in upcoming lessons?

**4. What do the exit cards reveal about your students' understanding of community?**

**5. What ideas from the exit cards will you share with students at the beginning of the next lesson when they create their classroom contract?**



# Handout

## *What Is Community? Anticipation Guide*

**Directions:** Read the statement in the left column. Decide if you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) with the statement. Circle your response.

| Statement   | Your Opinion       |
|---|--------------------|
| Communities are made up of people who are more or less the same.                | SA    A    D    SD |
| Joining a community means you have to give up some of your individual identity. | SA    A    D    SD |
| Communities have certain rules for membership. Not just anyone can belong.      | SA    A    D    SD |
| For a community to be strong, all members must like each other.                 | SA    A    D    SD |
| A history class is a kind of community.   | SA    A    D    SD |
| The United States is a kind of community.                                       | SA    A    D    SD |

**Choose one statement to explore in a journal response:** Copy the statement in your journal and then write about why you “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” or “strongly disagree” with it. Support your thinking with examples from your own experiences or the world.



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# Handout

## Exploring Community in Three Ways

“Communities are not built of friends, or of groups with similar styles and tastes, or even of people who like and understand each other. They are built of people who feel they are part of something that is bigger than themselves: a shared goal or enterprise, like righting a wrong, or building a road, or raising children, or living honorably, or worshipping a god. To build community requires only the ability to see value in others, to look at them and see a potential partner in one’s enterprise.” —*Suzanne Goldsmith*

|  | Draw an image that represents this idea about community. | Write the main idea of this sentence in three or four words. | Write a question that this idea raises for you. |
|--|--|--|---|
| Communities are not built of friends, or of groups with similar styles and tastes, or even of people who like and understand each other.   |  |  |   |
| They are built of people who feel they are part of something that is bigger than themselves: a shared goal or enterprise, like righting a wrong, or building a road, or raising children, or living honorably, or worshipping a god. |  |  |   |
| To build community requires only the ability to see value in others, to look at them and see a potential partner in one’s enterprise.  |  |  |   |



# Handout

## *My Classroom Community Exit Card*

EXIT CARD

Name:

1. A strong community is . . .
2. What qualities of a strong community does this class already have?
3. What needs to happen in order for our classroom to get stronger?

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