

LESSON

Feeling Seen: A Matter of Perspective

Overview

About This Lesson

In this lesson, students will explore the ways in which we respond to difference and how accepting the labels that others impose on us can impact our perception and understanding of others and ourselves. The activities and resources in this lesson introduce and support perspective-taking through close reading and analysis of a character's identity, sense of self, motivations, and feelings. Through this analysis, students will have opportunities to consider how taking the time to understand someone else's perspective can broaden our understanding of others and the world around us.

Essential Questions

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

Guiding Questions

- Whose opinions and beliefs have the greatest effect on how I think about my own identity?
- What factors can make it challenging for me to be who I want to be in the world? How can I navigate or rise above these challenges?

Facing History Learning Outcomes

- Practice perspective-taking in order to develop empathy and recognize the limits of any one person's point of view.
- Analyze the internal and external conflicts that characters face and the impact that these conflicts can have on an individual's choices and actions, both in the text and in the real 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: "One of Us" by Joyce Sidman
- Handout: "One of Us" Connection Questions
- Handout: I Feel Seen When . . . Exit Card

Preparing to Teach

A Note to Teachers

1. Preparing to Introduce the Concept of “Perspective”

Before class, find one or more ambiguous images to introduce the concept of perspective. For example, you might choose “My Wife and My Mother-in-Law” or “Rubin’s Vase,” both of which you can find online. These images help to convey that it is possible to have very different interpretations (or perspectives) of the same reality.

2. Using a Jigsaw Variation

The fourth activity in this lesson uses a variation of the [jigsaw](#) teaching strategy to analyze different perspectives in a poem. Familiarize yourself with the strategy and activity. Then decide if you will assign students to a specific perspective, create random groupings, or let students choose the perspective that interests them.

Lesson Plan

Activities

1. Play with Perspective

- Project an ambiguous image (see Note to Teacher) and have pairs discuss what they see. Solicit ideas from the class, inviting students to the board to outline the shape. Then introduce the concept of perspective by explaining that an individual’s perspective refers to how they see and understand the world and what’s happening around them. Everyone has a perspective that is influenced by their identity as well as the communities to which they belong.
- After defining “perspective,” project the following questions one at a time so students have a chance to process the concept in their journals:
 - How do you get ideas and form impressions about people who you interact with on a regular basis?
 - How do you think other people get ideas and form impressions about you?
- Finally, in pairs and then as a class, invite students to discuss the following questions:
 - What is the value in understanding someone else’s perspective?
 - What factors can make it challenging to understand someone else’s perspective?
 - Can we ever fully understand someone else’s perspective? What makes you say that?

2. Read and Discuss the Poem “One of Us”

- Distribute the poem **“One of Us”** by Joyce Sidman. To teach this poem, you might use one or more of the [Read Aloud](#) strategies. Because the poem is short, students will benefit from reading and hearing it read aloud multiple times. Then give students an

opportunity to read the poem to themselves and underline one line that resonates with them, perhaps because they connect to it on a personal level, for how it makes them feel, because of a question it raises for them, or for the poet's use of language. Invite them to share their line, and reason they chose it, with a partner.

- Pass out the **“One of Us” Connection Questions** handout and use a variation of the [jigsaw](#) strategy to discuss the poem, organizing students into “expert” groups that each focus on one of the three main perspectives in the poem: the teacher, “that kid,” and the speaker. Once students have had time to complete the first part of the handout in their expert groups, rearrange them into new groups of three to complete the activity. Newly formed groups should have at least one of each perspective present. Ask students to continue their discussion using the questions from Part 2 of the handout.

3. Facilitate a Class Discussion

After students have finished both parts of the handout, have each group share highlights or key elements of what they have learned with the class. Then discuss the final questions together as a whole class:

- What do you think it means to “feel seen”? How does the poem help you answer this question? How about your own experiences?
- How do expectations from your family, friends, teachers, and other people in your life impact whether or not you feel seen?
- What steps can individuals and groups take to help ensure that people in their community feel seen?

4. Share Final Reflections on an Exit Card

To find out more about your students and to give them a chance to “be seen” in a new way, ask them to respond to the prompts on the **I Feel Seen When . . . Exit Card**.