

**Title of Lesson:** Synthesizing Narratives to Dismiss Notions of Normalcy

**Date of Creation:** 12/11/2020

**Creator of the Lesson:** Sara DeSantis

**Grade Level:** 11

**Subject:** English (AP Language and Composition)

**Time Duration:** 85 minutes

**Summary of Lesson:** Students read and synthesize narratives written by people with disabilities in order to challenge their perception of how society defines normalcy and how the use of language (rhetoric), as well as personal narratives, can dispel those false definitions.

**DSE Alignment:** This lesson privileges the voices of people labeled with disability/disabled people.

### **Lesson Objectives and Assessments:**

**Objective 1:** Recognize and understand how people with disabilities view language used to refer to them, and that language used to refer to people with disabilities can have positive and negative implications, whether it is intentional or unintentional. **Assessment 1:** Post-activity reflection and class discussion

**Objective 2:** Understand the stereotypes and stigma that can be associated with disability" and how that affects people with disabilities.

**Assessment 2:** Post-activity reflection and class discussion

### **Teacher Guide:**

My AP Language and Composition class focuses on some of the traditions, innovations, and complexities of writing in the Americas; the class teaches students to approach texts with a focus on authorial intent, audience, and purpose. We also talk a lot about the use of rhetoric and language, and how the way someone uses language **matters** and holds power in constructing specific narratives. For example, we do a unit on systemic injustice where we read Bryan Stevenson's novel, *Just Mercy*, and discuss the prison system and its connection to racism, and how the language

used for convicts changes based on their race and/or sex. This lesson is part of a larger unit that focuses on disability studies in the United States and how people with disabilities are written about, and how people with disabilities write their own stories.

#### Questions to Consider

1. Who should decide what "normalcy" is?
2. How do notions of normalcy affect people with disabilities?
3. How can a writer use language and/or rhetorical strategies to dispel stereotypes and establish their own voice and opinions?

#### **Anticipatory Set (Prior to beginning of the Lesson):**

Students will need to understand what rhetoric is, and how people use language to reach and persuade an audience, or influence their opinion of an issue or group of people.

#### **Lesson Progression (Will the lesson unfold/develop?):**

1. Students will first discuss how they define "notions" and "normalcy," and then "notions of normalcy." Students will deliberate on what makes someone -- if at all possible -- normal, and who determines that status. This can be done as a journal entry combined with an impromptu class discussion. Students can respond to the questions in writing, or could video their response.
2. Students will then be put into groups and assigned one of the readings or videos. Students will work together to read or view and annotate the work, paying attention to the author's purpose and how they develop their argument, as well as how the text dispels stereotypes or reveals new viewpoints on living with a disability.
3. Students will then be placed into new groups with students who read the other articles, so they can compare experiences and articles in a [jigsaw](#) format.

#### **Closure (How will the lesson be wrapped up?):**

Following their jigsaw discussion, students should be allowed time to individually reflect on what they learned. This can be done through journaling, an artistic representation of their thoughts, a video, or an audio recording. Students will then come together as a whole class to synthesize the readings and discuss how these authors are rewriting the narrative that society has constructed about people with disabilities.

#### **Required Materials/Equipment:**

Readings and Videos:

- Girma, Haben. "[Guide dogs don't lead blind people. We wander as](#)

- [one.](#)"
- Stephens, John Franklin. [Open letter to Ann Coulter after she referred to then-President Obama as the "r-word."](#)
  - Hitzelberger, Karin. ["WHY I REFUSE TO SAY I 'FIGHT' MY DISABILITY."](#)
  - Mairs, Nancy. ["HERS."](#)
  - (Video) Fleishmann, Carly. ["Carly's Cafe - Experience Autism Through Carly's Eyes."](#)

Students will need access to technology to view the "Carly's Cafe" video.

### **Extensions/Practice (Continuation of Engagement):**

The "Carly's Cafe" video can be assigned as homework after this lesson, instead of being part of the jigsaw activity. Students can watch the video and then create a response based on their experiences of viewing a narrative, rather than reading it, and how the video adds to the activity that was done in class.

### **References:**

Valle, J. W., & Connor, D. J. (2010). Rethinking disability: A disability studies approach to inclusive practices. Routledge.