

Lesson Series for Language Arts: Divergence and Stigma

These lessons were created for a high school English/Language Arts class. They encourage students to explore philosophy, consider others' perspectives, and to question what they see in the media.

1 Introduction

2 Understanding Perspectives

3 Media Representation

4 Deep Dive

Title of Lesson: Introduction to Divergence and Stigma		
Date of Creation: Aug 8, 2022	Creator of the Lesson: Aly Nichols	
Grade Level: 11-12	Subject: English	Time Duration: full class time, can extend to multiple days
Summary of Lesson: This will serve as an entry point into later lessons that go into context, perspective, and media representation. It will be a broad discussion that narrows into disability within education specifically, and allows students to discover the background of a group and views of that group within society.		
DSE Alignment: This lesson aligns with the DSE tenet of "contextualize disability within political and social".		
Lesson Objectives and Assessments: Objective 1: Identify and define divergence and stigma Assessment 1: Post-activity discussion and short answer Objective 2: Demonstrate understanding of the history of disability Assessment 2: Post-activity reflection and short answer		
Teacher Guide: The class is going to be a cross between philosophy and ELA; the goal is to use critical thinking, analysis, and research skills to deeply dive into and explore mental health, disability, and stigma throughout history and how we have shaped into the society we are in today. Students will be asked to break down articles and videos, hold discussions in groups and as a class, and follow guide questions to respond to short open response questions. The teacher is to act as a facilitator, starting the discussion and exploration and providing channels for the students to lead their own learning. Questions that will be highlighted through the unit: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is stigma and how has it impacted the rights of those with a disability? 2. What are the major milestones in disability history? 3. What are the main issues still occurring around those with disabilities? Keywords: disability, stigma, neurodivergence, mental health, ableism, stereotype		

Anticipatory Set:

Use discussion to elicit students' prior understanding of disability, divergence, and stigma (personal experience, observational experience, or general knowledge).

Lesson Progression:

Open with a pre-lesson discussion to gather prior knowledge and experiences and offer students a chance to explore what they know. Offer a short lecture and presentation of historical aspects of disability, before students are given a set of guiding questions and put into groups to explore additional materials and develop a solid understanding through teamwork, research, and ingroup discussion. Students will return to the larger discussion to present their findings and contribute to a class timeline.

Students will write a short reflection that defines and pinpoints examples of the lesson topics and what they learned.

Required Materials/Equipment:

[A brief timeline](#)

[Disability Rights Timeline](#)

[Mental Illness & Stigma](#)

[Stigma & Discrimination](#)

Students will also be tasked with locating and examining various pieces of art

[Mental Health & Stigma short video](#)

[TEDTalk](#)

Extensions/Practice (Continuation of Engagement):

Students can continue their engagement with additional materials exploring specific instances of stigma or locate their own materials that – with this new understanding – they analyze to discuss the connection between stigma and how the material is presented. Additionally, they could choose a disability law/court case to go into deeper analysis and discuss the evolution of the law/court case.

Title of Lesson: Understanding Perspectives		
Date of Creation: Aug 8, 2022	Creator of the Lesson: Aly Nichols	
Grade Level: 11-12	Subject: English	Time Duration: full class time, can extend to multiple days
Summary of Lesson: The lesson will explore the concept of self-context and bias in relation to others. Students will be asked to do a deep analysis of themselves and to highlight any bias, prejudice, or stereotypes that they have held on to. They will also look at viewpoints and perspectives of their peers, select stories from those with diagnoses, and other cultures.		
DSE Alignment: This lesson aligns with the DSE tenet of “privilege the interest, agendas, and voices of people labeled with disability/disabled people”.		
Lesson Objectives and Assessments: Objective 1: Recognize self-perception, bias, and context Assessment 1: Post-activity discussion and reflection Objective 2: Develop understanding of the views of persons with personal experiences Assessment 2: Post-activity discussion and short paper		
Teacher Guide: Teachers are to provide options of videos and stories about those with personal experiences in disabilities across a variety of cultures and conditions, and gently guide students through analysis and exploration of themselves and others. Discussion is to be encouraged and facilitated, with room for healthy debate. Students are primarily researching and analyzing individually or in groups with occasional large discussions and small group presentations of their findings. Use of Socratic questioning to encourage metacognition. Questions happening throughout this unit: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the student’s personal context and what informs it? 2. When, if ever, is it appropriate to impart your context onto someone else? 3. How can the voices of those affected be lifted? Whose voices need to be loudest? Keywords: context, prejudice, perspective, diagnosis, culture/cultural, diversity, stereotypes, accommodation, accessibility <u>Anticipatory Set:</u> Students will be expected to understand context and approach the lesson with an open mind. They will be expected to carry information learned		

from the previous lesson on stigma and apply that knowledge to their analyses of themselves and others.

Lesson Progression:

Students will open the lesson by discussing any personal context and experience with disability and their observations. They will then spend time developing their self-context through use of guiding questions and thought experiments that seek to help them understand their initial reactions to certain things and be tasked with thinking about why they would react or think in that way. They will be tasked with looking at a few different stories from people who have a variety of disability experiences and breaking down their context and contributing factors to understand all the pieces. After individually assessing these stories, they will be put in groups to discuss and reflect on what they learned. They will be asked to look through additional stories and find a few different ones on their own to further analyze both personal stories but also cultures those stories come from and how environmental factors play a part in a person's acceptance of and access to their conditions and accommodation. Students will also be asked in groups to draw comparisons between stories of those with personal experiences to note commonalities. Then they will develop ideas on what is going right in disability rights and accessibility, and what still needs work.

Closure:

Students will either present, create a video, or write a short paper that explores their self-context and discusses the value in viewpoints from those with the experiences being held in discussion.

Required Materials/Equipment:

[Personal Stories with Stigma](#)

[NAMI Personal Stories](#)

[Special Books by Special Kids](#)

Sincerely, Your Autistic Child

[Culture & Mental Illness](#)

Extensions/Practice (Continuation of Engagement):

Students can further their closing assignment by contacting someone who has more personal experience and conducting an interview. Alternatively, they can volunteer for an event that has a focus on disabilities and write about their experiences and observations.

Title of Lesson: Media Representation		
Date of Creation: Aug 8, 2022	Creator of the Lesson: Aly Nichols	
Grade Level: 11-12	Subject: English	Time Duration: full class time, can extend to multiple days
Summary of Lesson: The lesson will explore how the media has represented a variety of diagnoses over the years. It will present fictionalized and real instances of coverage, discuss commonalities, and reflect on the way these representations can be harmful to the rights and stigma of the people they represent.		
DSE Alignment: This lesson aligns with the DSE tenet of “contextualize disability within political and social”.		
Lesson Objectives and Assessments: Objective 1: Identify problematic media representation Assessment 1: Post-activity discussion and reflection Objective 2: Identify appropriate steps for accurate media representation Assessment 2: Post-activity discussion and assignment		
Teacher Guide: Teachers are to provide options of videos and stories about those with disabilities across a variety of media representations. Teachers are to present an array of problematic and appropriate portrayals and facilitate discussions on which is which and why. The class should draw comparisons and have healthy debate on when media representation is harmful vs when it increases awareness. Questions happening throughout this unit: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How are diagnoses viewed in the media? 2. What responsibility does the media have towards representation? 3. What needs to be done to encourage positive representation? Keywords: diversity, representation, media, perspective, fan service, perception <u>Anticipatory Set:</u> Students will be expected to carry knowledge from previous sections into this one to further their analysis and understanding. They will also be expected to have a level of media literacy. <u>Lesson Progression:</u> The lesson will open with a discussion on media representation to allow students a chance to share prior knowledge of what diagnoses they’ve seen in the media and what they think about it. A short presentation of a few pieces of media as an example will be followed by students in small		

groups exploring these pieces of media and discussing further before returning to the larger group. Students will be tasked to analyze a piece of media for homework and return to discuss it with the class, building a class list of what makes representation accurate and appropriate. The next few activities will consist of analysis of multiple media sources, comparing fiction to real, past to modern, and use discussion on knowledge gained from previous lessons to understand how media may have shaped society's perception. Activities will consist of individual research, small group and class discussions, short reflections and guided questions, and group presentations.

Students will pick a format for a final presentation and choose one instance of media that has poor representation and one instance of media that they think has a good representation. They will compare and contrast these representations and discuss what could be done better for future media.

Required Materials/Equipment:

A selection of media both real and fictional including clips from:

TEDTalks

News reports

Five Flavors of Dumb

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime

Forrest Gump

What's Eating Gilbert Grape

Split

Glee

Rain Man

Extensions/Practice (Continuation of Engagement):

Students can further explore by finding media of their own. This can include new books, movies, or articles to dig deeper into and analyze what makes this representation stand out to them. They can talk about the marketing, the viewership and intended audience, and develop an outline of how to make this piece of media more appropriately representative should they remake it.

Title of Lesson: Deep Dive		
Date of Creation: Aug 8, 2022	Creator of the Lesson: Aly Nichols	
Grade Level: 11-12	Subject: English	Time Duration: full class time, can extend to multiple days
Summary of Lesson: The lesson will give students the chance to focus individual studies on a single diagnosis from a list, in order to better understand society, media, and personal experiences about that specific diagnosis.		
DSE Alignment: This lesson aligns with the DSE tenet of "contextualize disability within political and social", and "promote social justice, equitable and inclusive educational opportunities, and full and meaningful access to all aspects of society for people labeled with disability/disabled people".		
Lesson Objectives and Assessments: Objective 1: Identify the history of a particular stigmatized diagnosis Assessment 1: Post-activity discussion and reflection Objective 2: Explore the current and evolving situation Assessment 2: Post-activity discussion and outline Objective 3: Reflect on what this suggests for the future and steps that could be taken to benefit disability rights Assessment 3: Final Project		
Teacher Guide: This lesson will be primarily individualized with some teacher guidance and multiple rounds of peer review and discussion. Teachers are expected to create a list of diagnosis, a list of acceptable media for sources, as well as a list of questions and aspects the students must include in their final projects. <u>Anticipatory Set:</u> Students will be expected to carry knowledge from previous sections into this one to further their analysis and understanding. They will also be expected to have a level of media literacy and knowledge of research practices. <u>Lesson Progression:</u> The lesson will open with a discussion on what the students have learned thus far. In small groups, they will develop a list of the important takeaways from the lessons as well as questions they still have. Then the final project will be introduced and handouts on diagnoses, sources, and questions will be given out. Students will develop an outline after choosing a topic and use the questions from the handout and from their small group		

to design a paper plan. There will be several rounds of peer review and discussion to edit and guide their paper as well as develop questions and intentions. There will also be in-class research time. At least one draft will be read by the teacher prior to final submission.

Students will write a developed paper exploring the disability issue that they chose to research. They will be expected to follow guidelines on what areas to include in their findings.

Required Materials/Equipment:

List of disability topics to choose from
List of guiding questions
List of acceptable media sources
Example projects (if completed before)

Extensions/Practice (Continuation of Engagement):

Students can build a presentation or video to give to the class.

References:

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