



**EVERY COMMUNITY,
EVERY STORY,
EVERY VOICE**



**A Curriculum
for Middle School
Students**

Every Community, Every Story, Every Voice

A Curriculum Guide for Middle School Students

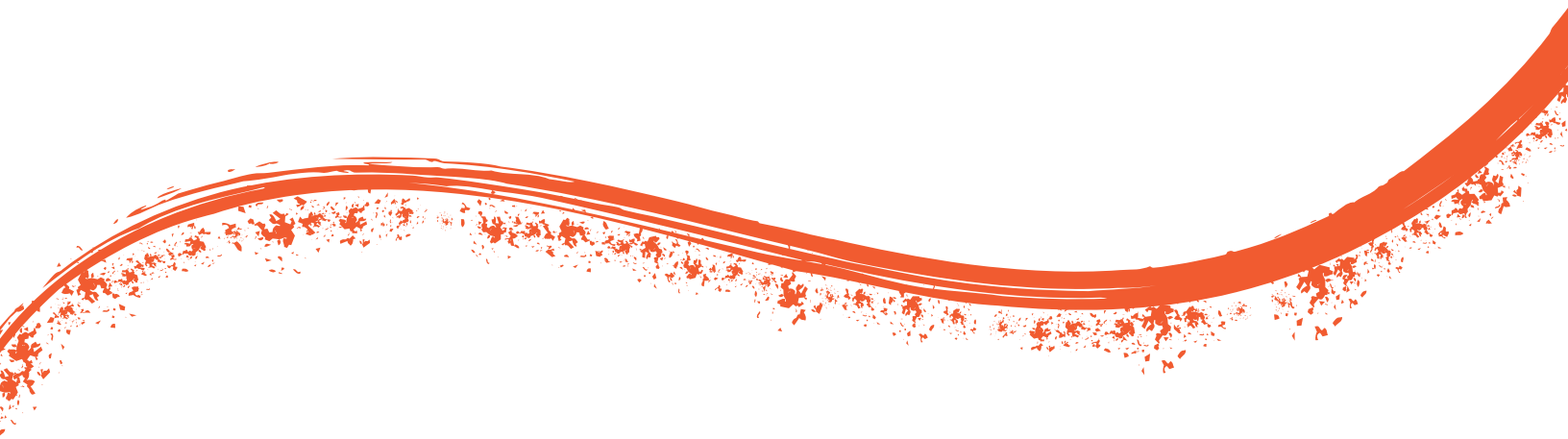
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With Carrie Wicker

Michigan State University Museum, 2025



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Teacher Introduction

Welcome!

Welcome to *Every Community, Every Story, Every Voice*! The Michigan State University Museum is delighted to offer this engaging, museum object-based set of learning experiences designed for students in Grades 6-8. The main goal is to help students learn about what communicating and understanding themselves and others means in the context of their lives and communities. The guide includes ready-to-use lesson plans, resource materials, and more. It incorporates multiple academic areas, including English language arts, science, social studies and history, and visual arts. The lessons are designed for active student participation. We hope these materials will help you to provide rich and meaningful learning experiences for your students. Thank you to everyone who contributed time and resources to this project (see “Acknowledgments”).

What do we hope students and teachers will experience?

In today’s world, more than ever, young people need to experience empathy, camaraderie, building community, and respect for themselves and others. Seeing what we have in common and appreciating differences is an important part of growing, learning, and being an active community member. Although we may all sometimes feel overwhelmed by the negative ways people perceive and act toward each other, there also is power in the ability to recognize these problems. Beauty and hope come from taking action toward making things better.

The *Every Community, Every Story, Every Voice* curriculum is designed to provide an engaging and thought-provoking way for middle school students to learn more about communication and understanding others. Through this series of lessons, students will develop skills in actively listening to others, asking questions, discussing what it means to be part of cultures and communities, and exploring how to understand practices and beliefs that are different from their own. We provide opportunities for students to communicate with each other through shared experiences that will help them to see each other as valued individuals with stories to tell and voices to be heard.

Each lesson uses museum objects and touchable reproductions as centerpieces for participatory, engaging, and fun activities that will get students talking and expressing their ideas. (For teachers in the Greater Lansing area, activity kits are available to check out for classroom use. For teachers not within range of the MSU Museum, digital alternatives are provided.) The objects act as attention-getters and conversation starters. Students are encouraged to explore the objects according to their own skills and abilities. The accessibility of objects—head, hands, heart—allows students to have powerful shared experiences.

Activities include object investigation, storytelling, role-playing, and student-created expressions of learning. Students don’t just get “talked at.” They do the investigation, lead the discussion, and create outcomes that show their learning. We hope these activities will provide outcomes that can be used to continue conversations and create connections at your school (for example, co-created or individual art pieces). Extension activities are suggested in each lesson.

Why did we create this curriculum?

The MSU Museum is an innovative and experimental collaboratory that exists to catalyze creativity. Here, people can openly explore, express, and experiment with ideas across disciplines and interests and indulge their natural curiosity about the world. Since 1857, the Museum has been collecting objects and specimens and creating exhibitions that reflect our shared histories and experiences. It is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is the state's first Smithsonian Affiliate (<https://museum.msu.edu>).

At the MSU Museum, we are deeply committed to using our resources to create experiences that allow people to explore ideas meaningful to them personally, our communities, and the world. One of the most important things the Museum does is spark conversations around objects and specimens by providing conversation starters, helping people find their voices, and supporting self-expression. Creating a curriculum centered on primary sources was very important to us. We also have a strong commitment to engaging our campus and greater community.

This curriculum guide was developed by a team of local veteran middle school educators from different disciplines, including English language arts, science, and social studies. When the Museum approached the teachers, their enthusiasm for this project was evident from the moment they heard about it. They wanted to develop materials that would help students experience the empathy, camaraderie, community building, and respect for themselves and others described above. These educators knew how important it would be for their own students to have these opportunities and were dedicated to shaping the curriculum into something valuable for all teachers and students. What they have created achieves this goal. We hope the range of educator voices in these lessons will provide interesting ways for students to learn and teachers to teach!

"It was so gratifying to develop lessons around content that is not typically included in classroom curriculum or linked to state standards. Topics like acknowledging environmental justice, the dangers of stereotypes, and the power of storytelling are so important, especially in this current era. Centering the lessons around MSU Museum artifacts makes these lessons place-based and more relevant to student experiences. I'm excited to share them with my students!" (Author Bridget Booth)

Curriculum Standard Connections

This curriculum guide provides Michigan Department of Education academic learning standards for each lesson. Additionally, we provide connections to the "Michigan Department of Education Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies and Indicators" and the Southern Poverty Law Center's "Social Justice Standards: The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Framework." As educators, we know that behind any content area lesson, there always exists a lesson of personal experience. Students do not walk into our classrooms and leave behind the rest of their lives at the door. Along with notebooks and pencils, they carry their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Whether we acknowledge it or not, students will be learning about themselves and others while they learn about our class content, including how they treat people or how they are treated, the words they hear and say, the way they feel included or ignored, and whether they leave with a sense of success or fear of failure.

We encourage educators to review the resources with each lesson. In planning and teaching, consider how your students might need more or less scaffolding in different parts of the learning sequence to make progress toward the academic and other standards aligned with the lessons. We hope that no matter the content goals, there will be a positive impact on the whole child.

Ways to use this curriculum

Teachers have many options for using *Every Community, Every Story, Every Voice*. The lessons and resources may be used all together or modularly, according to your instructional needs. We encourage people to be creative. Options include:

- ▶ Integrating lessons into content-area instruction
- ▶ Using as special instruction for social emotional learning or other topics (classroom, grade-level, or all-school enrichment programs)
- ▶ Using materials for after-school clubs or community organizations

Preparation ideas are included in each lesson. You may choose to use just parts of the lessons depending on the time you have and how you want to structure the learning experiences. Feel free to use the materials in creative ways that work for you and your students.

Accessibility

We want all students and teachers to be able to engage with this curriculum guide. The included museum objects/reproductions can often be accessible to people regardless of language, ability, or skill. We anticipate that teachers will find the curriculum materials and resources adaptable for their community of learners. In addition, we recommend and/or provide these resources for the lessons:

- ▶ **Accessible reading experiences:** Provide students with access to the curriculum PDF for use with a screen reader for student activities and object descriptions.
- ▶ **Accessible writing/drawing experiences:** Provide students with access to digital or other tools for writing or drawing according to ability.
- ▶ **Physical disabilities:** Students may need assistance with holding or touching objects.
- ▶ **Sensory processing:** If students are not able to touch objects, provide access to images instead (if appropriate for student needs).
- ▶ **Tactile:** Images included for some lesson objects.
- ▶ **Videos:** Use closed captioning.

Vocabulary

Most vocabulary words are defined using Wiktionary, The Free Dictionary (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page), used according to Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License and the GNU Free Documentation License, and in accordance with laws for educational use.

Thank you!

Thank you again for using the *Every Community, Every Story, Every Voice* curriculum guide. We hope it helps you create wonderful learning experiences for your students.

Classroom Interactions Suggestions

Justice, inclusion, respect, and empathy are important themes for interacting with others for our society. These can be very challenging and emotional topics because we all have differing beliefs, cultures, and upbringings. We want to encourage students to explore each other's experiences, while being open, sensitive, and empathetic in their approaches.

One important value of using the *Every Community, Every Story, Every Voice* curriculum is its potential for responsiveness, both in presenting teaching moments and following them. As a lesson progresses, you can pause, ask questions, and interrupt comments when needed. Even if you're not sure how to address something in the moment, you can model what it means to point something out and say that you need to think more about it. After a lesson concludes, you can circle back with your students and discuss the moment. These points, along with how we handle them, are an extension of students' learning beyond standards or curriculum and into their present and future citizenship.

To ensure the best chance for all voices in your classroom to be heard, all perspectives to be included, and respectful interactions experienced, we offer classroom interaction suggestions for establishing behavioral expectations for all participants. If your school or classroom has its own expectations, you may choose to use those instead or in addition to the language below.

Suggested Classroom Contract

Topics that will be taught and learned in these lessons may evoke strong feelings and reactions, both positive and negative. It is vital for everyone to be heard and respected, as well as to include everyone as active participants in hearing and respecting other voices. We will interact with appropriate self-management and relationship skills. Our goal is to build a classroom culture where all feel welcome, confident, and safe discussing topics that have the potential for different viewpoints.

Ask students to be mindful that some lessons require you to talk about perspectives and cultures that are not your own, so it's important to avoid assumptions about lived experiences that you do not/did not share. We aim to amplify the words, stories, and voices of those who are impacted by issues raised in the curriculum.

Suggested Discussion Expectations

Here are recommended ground rules for discussion. You might start this discussion with students by reminding them about respect, turn-taking, and what it means to talk about something that feels personal and talk about it in non-personal ways.

- ▶ **ALL participants should...**
 - ▶ Be heard and respected
 - ▶ Feel safe
 - ▶ Raise their hand to be called on, so everyone is taking turns to speak, or do turn-taking in small groups
 - ▶ Be good, active listeners when someone is speaking
 - ▶ Bring attitudes of understanding, empathy, and respect
 - ▶ Never use insults, slurs, and other offensive language
 - ▶ Resolve conflict in respectful ways



Curriculum Standard Connections

Michigan Academic Standards

Michigan Department of Education. (2010). *Michigan K-12 Standards - English Language Arts*. https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Literacy/Content-Standards/ELA_Standards.pdf

Michigan Department of Education. (2015). *Michigan K-12 Standards - Science*. https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Literacy/Content-Standards/Science_Standards.pdf

Michigan Department of Education. (2019). *Michigan K-12 Standards - Social Studies*. https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Academic-Standards/Social_Studies_Standards.pdf

Michigan Department of Education. (2011). *Michigan Merit Curriculum: Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Content Expectations - Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater*. https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Year/2014/06/06/Complete_VPAA_Expectations_June_2011_356110_7.pdf

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Other Learning Standards

Michigan Department of Education Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies and Indicators

The *Every Community, Every Story, Every Voice* curriculum uses the Michigan Department of Education's "Early Childhood to Grade 12 Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies and Indicators" (2017) (https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/2018/04/12/SEL_Competencies-ADA_Compliant_FINAL.pdf).

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Southern Poverty Law Center's "Social Justice Standards: The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Framework"

This curriculum guide incorporates the "Social Justice Standards: The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Framework (2nd Ed.)" developed by The Southern Poverty Law Center, Inc. (<https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards>)

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LESSON 1



IDENTITY: MORE THAN A SINGLE STORY

**By:
Laura Allen**



Lesson Focus

Students learn about identity and how everyone is more than a single story.

Teacher Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to increase students' self-understanding and their empathy for others, resulting in a positive impact on class culture and students' lifelong social-emotional development. Using different types of resources, students will discuss the role of identity in society and their personal lives. The concepts of identity and story will be explored.

First, students will learn about the "single story" concept in a TED Talks video by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. After watching the video, students will have a chance to respond. Then, with this metaphor of seeing others as multi-sided, students will engage with two MSU Museum quilt reproductions: *Indian Woman* by Margaret Wood and *Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi: Champion of African American Quilters* by Marjorie Freeman. Each quilt challenges the single story but in different media, tones, colors, and techniques.

Wood's quilt represents a woman in clothing that is half-business suit and half-traditional Navajo clothing. It illustrates her challenge of being a woman in the Native and non-Native cultural worlds.

Freeman's quilt celebrates the life of Dr. Mazloomi, recognizing her achievements as a scholar and the founder of the Women of Color Quilters Network, as well as her personal success in balancing multiple identities, interests, pursuits, and talents.

Combined, these quilts paint a nuanced narrative of the featured subjects, thus prompting students to consider how single stories limit and misrepresent the multi-faceted lived experience of real people.

After discussing the artwork, students will respond with a creation of their own. Guided by Dr. Mazloomi's quilt, students will celebrate their many layers, many stories, and many identities through individual creativity and communal sharing by making a self-portrait to challenge the single story. They will have the opportunity to share their art with peers in the classroom.

After these reflections on identity and story, our hope is that students will deepen their views of themselves and others. As they consider the multiple aspects of identity, students might realize that their understanding of others is incomplete, which can inform their interactions. For example, they can offer respect and kindness to peers whose stories they don't fully know. Also, they can ask questions and listen with intent to better understand people's stories. Both of these paths forward will enhance students' empathy and challenge them to be more positive members of their communities. Additionally, these lessons are ones that will impact students' lives outside the classroom and in the years to come.

At the same time, though their interactions with others are important, an equally important goal of this lesson is for students to expand their views of themselves. To whatever extent they might feel limited or misunderstood by a single story, these discussions will culminate in a more holistic and boundless understanding of who students have been, who they are now, and who they can become.

We encourage you to review the learning standards provided and tailor the objectives for your students. Likewise, engage with the artwork on your own for a personal moment with the themes and takeaways the pieces offer. Your students' engagement will go even deeper as you share your authentic questions, insights, and experiences with the lesson. It's not just about modeling, but about truly learning alongside your students. We hope this lesson creates space for you and your students to see the multi-faceted identities we all carry, and even more, the undeniable dignity within each of us.

Learning Standards

Michigan English Language Arts Standards (Grades 6-8)

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS

Comprehension and Collaboration: 2

Gr. 6 SL.6.2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

Gr. 7 SL.7.2: Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

Gr. 8 SL.8.2: Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

Michigan Social Studies Standards (Grades 6-8)

READING AND COMMUNICATION – READ AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY P1

P1.1: Use appropriate strategies to read and analyze social science tables, graphs, graphics, maps, and texts.

INQUIRY, RESEARCH, AND ANALYSIS P2

P2.3: Know how to find, organize, and interpret information from a variety of sources.

P2.4: Use resources in multiple forms and from multiple perspectives to analyze issues.

Michigan Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater Standards (Grades 6-8)

ANALYZE, Standard 3: Analyze, describe, and evaluate works of art.

(VPAA: C2, C3, C4, C5, P2, P3, R1, R2, R3, R4)

Gr. 6 ART.VA.III.6.1: Observe, describe, and analyze visual characteristics at a developing level.

Gr. 6 ART.VA.III.6.2: Develop the skill of interpreting artwork, searching for embedded meaning, function, and personal connections at a developing level.

Gr. 7 ART.VA.III.7.1: Critically observe, describe, and analyze visual characteristics at an emerging level.

Gr. 7 ART.VA.III.7.2: Interpret artwork searching for embedded meaning, function, and personal connections at an emerging level.

Gr. 8 ART.VA.III.8.1: Critically observe, describe, and analyze visual characteristics within works of art.

Gr. 8 ART.VA.III.8.2: Effectively interpret artwork, searching for embedded meaning, function, and personal connections.

ANALYZE IN CONTEXT, Standard 4: Understand, analyze, and describe the arts in their historical, social, and cultural contexts.

(VPAA: C2, C3, C4, C5, P2, P3, R1, R2, R3, R4)

Gr. 6 ART.VA.IV.6.2: Develop an understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts of artwork with aesthetic sophistication.

Gr. 7 ART.VA.IV.7.2: Articulate an understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts of artwork with an emerging level of aesthetic sophistication.

Gr. 8 ART.VA.IV.8.2: Articulate an understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts of artwork with aesthetic sophistication.

Michigan Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies and Indicators (Grades 6-8)

Social Awareness 3A. Demonstrate awareness of other people's emotions and perspectives

- ▶ Analyze ways their behavior may affect the feelings of others and adjust accordingly.
- ▶ Accept and show respect for other people's opinions.

Social Awareness 3C. Demonstrate an awareness of different cultures and a respect for human dignity

- ▶ Explain how individual, social, and cultural differences may increase vulnerability to stereotyping and identify ways to address this.

Responsible Decision Making 5C. Play a developmentally appropriate role in classroom management and positive school climate

- ▶ Demonstrate behaviors that support classroom management and positive school culture.

Southern Poverty Law Center's "Social Justice Standards: The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Framework" (Grades 6-8)

Identity 3 ID.6-8.3: I know that overlapping identities combine to make me who I am and that none of my group identities on their own fully defines me or any other person.

Identity 4 ID.6-8.4: I feel good about my many identities and know they don't make me better than people with other identities.

Diversity 6 DI.6-8.6: I interact with people who are similar to and different from me, and I show respect to all people.

Diversity 7 DI.6-8.7: I can accurately and respectfully describe ways that people (including myself) are similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.

Diversity 10 DI.6-8.10: I can explain how the way groups of people are treated today, and the way they have been treated in the past, shapes their group identity and culture.

Justice 11 JU.6-8.11: I relate to people as individuals and not representatives of groups, and I can name some common stereotypes I observe people using.

Action 16 AC.6-8.16: I am concerned about how people (including myself) are treated and feel for people when they are excluded or mistreated because of their identities.

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Materials Needed

- ▶ Video link to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk (CC and transcript available): https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story
- ▶ *Indian Woman* fabric quilt reproduction and/or printed images
- ▶ *Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi* fabric quilt reproduction and/or printed image
- ▶ "Student Quilt Questions" document (printed or digital)
- ▶ "Self Portrait" template (printed or digital)
- ▶ Colored pencils or markers (or digital equivalent)



Vocabulary

From Wiktionary (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page)

identity

the sense of who something or someone or oneself is

stereotype

a conventional, formulaic, and often oversimplified or exaggerated conception, opinion, or image of a person or a group of people

Teaching the Lesson (50 minutes)

Review "Classroom Interaction Suggestions" in this guide with students as needed.

Introduce the Concepts (10 minutes)

- ▶ Introduce students to the idea of the "single story."
- ▶ Define identity. Explain that everyone has multiple aspects of themselves and their communities that they may or may not share with others. Parts of our identity can be seen, but other parts are unseen.
- ▶ Define stereotype. Explain it with the concept of a "single story" (as in Adichie's TED Talk) that is overly simplistic and limits a person's complexity. Though some stereotypes can be positive or true, they are more often negative or false. Either way, a stereotypical or single view of someone is incomplete and stops us from seeing the fullness of their identity.
- ▶ Introduce Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Show her picture at the start of the video and say she is a Nigerian writer. She explains why the "single story," as she calls it, is something we all need to challenge. Watch her TED Talk focusing on "The Danger of a Single Story" from 2:49-5:13. (If you have limited time, you may suggest that students watch the video before class.)

After the segment, students can discuss their reactions to Adichie's story about Fide. Ask: *How do these stereotypes get in the way of seeing people's full identities? How have you felt limited by the "single story" in your own experiences?*



Activity 1: Questioning the Artifacts (15 minutes)

1. Allow students to closely examine the two quilts (reproductions or images): *Indian Woman* and *Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi: Champion of African American Quilters*. This activity can be done individually, in pairs, or in small groups. You may choose to have individual students or groups examine one or both quilts.
2. Provide a quick overview of the quilts to give students some background without giving everything away. Consider the following key themes of the pieces as you interact with students or to help further their thinking. Encourage students to have their own personal, genuine reactions first.
 - ▶ *Indian Woman* quilt: Shows the challenge of being a woman in the Native and non-Native cultural worlds. The quilt represents a woman in clothing that is half-business suit and half-traditional Navajo clothing.
 - ▶ *Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi* quilt: Shows the many aspects of the subject's identity. It visually illustrates how people are multidimensional and multilayered.
3. Give each student, pair, or small group a copy of the "Student Quilt Questions" sheet.
4. Ways to structure the observation activity:
 - ▶ Option 1: Have students record their thoughts in writing during a period of silent observation, followed by partner or group discussion.
 - ▶ Option 2: Have students do their observations as a class.



Activity 2: Discussion Questions (15 minutes)

Once students complete their observations, discuss each quilt as a class. Provide information about the quilts as the students discuss.

Indian Woman Quilt

- ▶ Honors Native heritage through the artist, subject, and technique
- ▶ Acknowledges the challenge of how aspects of identity sometimes exist at odds with each other
- ▶ Considers how others may perceive us by only one aspect of identity
- ▶ Represents holding two seemingly different identities as equally important to who you are

Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi Quilt

- ▶ Dr. Mazloomi is honored for her contributions to Black communities, alongside other efforts
- ▶ Celebrates the life of Dr. Mazloomi for her achievement as a scholar, work as the founder of the Women of Color Quilters Network, and her personal successes with multiple identities, interests, pursuits, and talents

Additional Questions

- ▶ Are there stereotypes or single stories that people might take away if they don't look closely at the objects? What happens when you look closely and try to see multi-layered stories?
- ▶ Compare and contrast the quilts. Think about the representations of people's stories told in these objects. Consider body placement, expressions, story elements, etc. What do the two quilts have in common, and what are some differences?



Response/Product/Engagement (10 minutes)

Have students use the *Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi* quilt as a model to design their own self-portrait that shows different aspects of their identity using the “Self-Portrait” template and art tools. Students should consider the many sides to them beyond the single story. If helpful, offer suggestions to students and/or provide a model of your own list, including identities like artist, writer, friend, reader, athlete, etc.

Allow students to share their self-portraits with each other and discuss the following:



- ▶ What did you already know about each other?
- ▶ What new things did you learn about each other?
- ▶ How do your portraits show different stories about you?
- ▶ What stories do you share with others?
- ▶ How might we interact with each other in this class knowing what we learned today?

[This last question would serve well as a whole group debrief of the lesson. It would allow the teacher to incorporate students’ main takeaways into the classroom culture. Possible responses from students might include offering each other the benefit of the doubt because we don’t know each other’s full stories or asking more questions to learn more about others’ stories.]

These self-portraits can be displayed in the classroom or learning environment to help students recall their learning, remember their commitments to classmates and themselves, and/or engage in follow-up activities.

Extension ideas:

- ▶ In the days following the lesson, let students take a gallery walk through the self-portraits. Each day, ask them to notice something new, such as a commonality or difference with a classmate. Let them ask questions of each other. Alternatively, students could take a minute to use sticky notes to respectfully ask questions of classmates’ portraits. Students can then respond on the sticky note, creating a visual dialogue as they learn more about each other. To encourage more self-realization, ask students to return to their portraits throughout the year to remember their identities and consider the way their identity is continuing to form and evolve even now.
- ▶ Use a face outline to represent both your outer self and inner self.
- ▶ Design your own tattoo sleeve showing aspects of your identity.
- ▶ Design your own graffiti wall illustrating your identity communities.

Student Quilt Questions



What do you see/notice in the quilt? What is emphasized?



What responses do you have to the colors, design, or other things? What does the quilt make you feel?



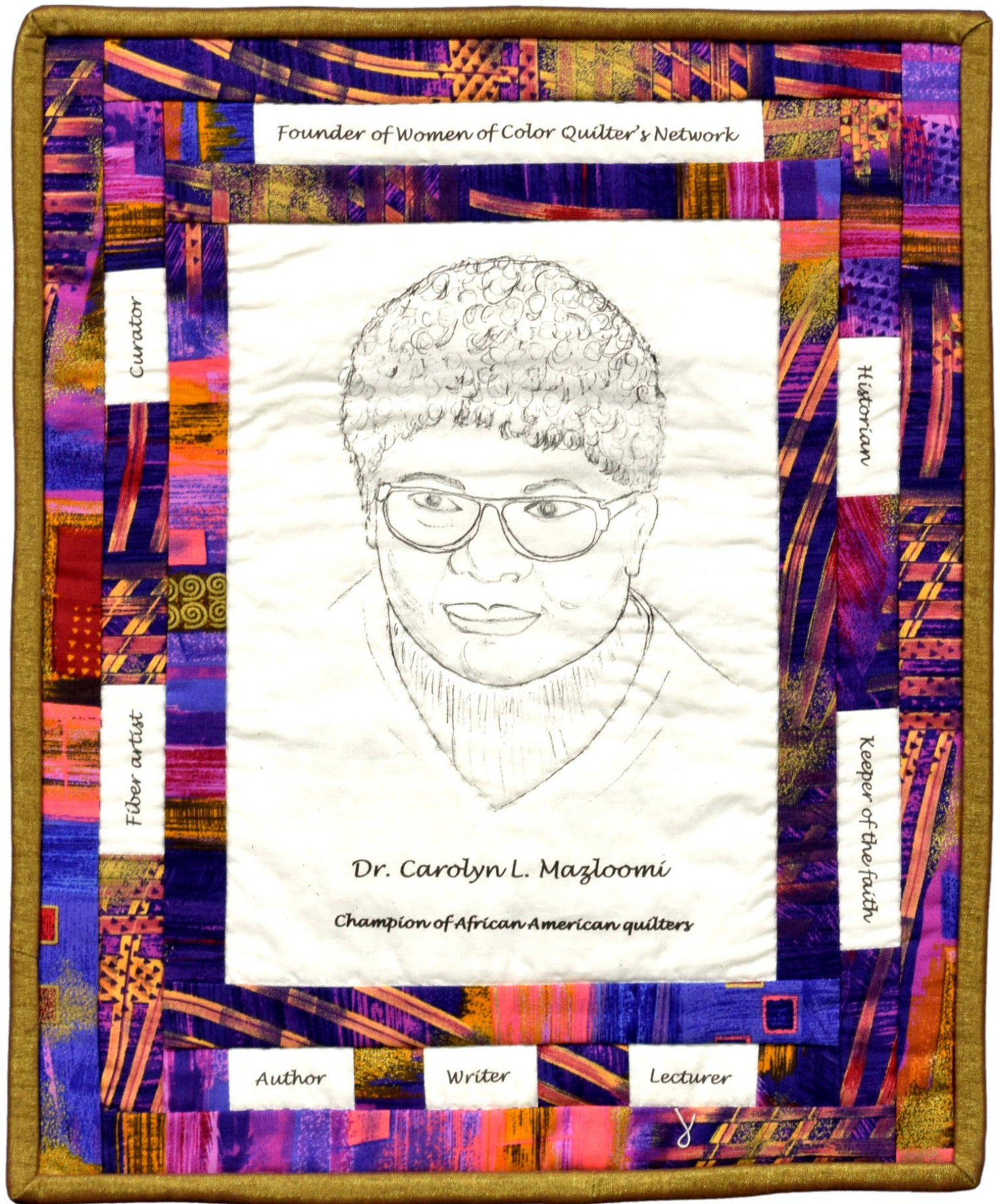
What do you think is the main message of this quilt? What story or stories is the quilt telling?



Indian Woman Quilt.

Artist: Margaret Wood

<https://quiltindex.org/view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-989>



Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi: Champion of African American Quilters Quilt

Artist: Marjorie Freeman

<https://quiltindex.dev.matrix.msu.edu/view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-6704>



LESSON 2

BREAKING THROUGH OBSTACLES: EXPLORING THE *ANYONE CAN FLY* QUILT

By:
Ben Pineda



Lesson Focus

Students will understand what justice, inclusion, equity, respect, and tolerance mean. They will talk about *obstacles*: what they are, how to talk about them, how to help yourself break through, and how to help others break through (solving problems together and being an ally).

Teacher Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand how challenges in life are inevitable and that they can be successfully addressed. The diversity of our planet is a beautiful thing, but it can also be a major source of discrimination and injustice.

We all have obstacles in our lives. How we address these challenges with justice, inclusion, equity, respect, and tolerance in mind is an important skill set needed for a better tomorrow. This lesson will examine a quilt and use storytelling as the medium to examine these important societal themes. The foreground and background of the *Anyone Can Fly* quilt offer contrast in color and mood, which have potential for symbolism to investigate obstacles for individuals, as well as for our communities and society. Essential question prompts will help students delve deeper into these topics.

Everybody loves a good story! However, not everyone is comfortable with storytelling. Therefore, the lesson offers a variety of options to address storytelling, along with written options for the non-storyteller.



Learning Standards

Michigan English Language Arts Standards (Grades 6-8)

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS

Comprehension and Collaboration: 2

Gr. 6 SL.6.2: Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

Gr. 7 SL.7.2: Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

Gr. 8 SL.8.2: Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

Michigan Social Studies Standards (Grades 6-8)

READING AND COMMUNICATION – READ AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY P1

P1.1: Use appropriate strategies to read and analyze social science tables, graphs, graphics, maps, and texts.

INQUIRY, RESEARCH, AND ANALYSIS P2

P2.3: Know how to find, organize, and interpret information from a variety of sources.

P2.4: Use resources in multiple forms and from multiple perspectives to analyze issues.

Gr. 6 G2.2.5 Generalize about how human and natural factors have influenced how people make a living and perform other activities in a place.

Gr. 6 G4.1.4 Explain how culture influences the daily lives of people.

Gr. 6 G4.4.1 Identify factors that contribute to cooperation and conflict between and among cultural groups (control/use of natural resources, power, wealth, and cultural diversity).

Gr. 7 H1.4.2 Describe and use themes of history to study patterns of change and continuity.

Gr. 7 G4.4.1 Identify factors that contribute to conflict and cooperation between and among cultural groups.

Gr. 8 P4.2.3 Participate in projects to help or inform others.

Michigan Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies and Indicators (Grades 6-8)

Social Awareness 3A. Demonstrate awareness of other people's emotions and perspectives

- ▶ Analyze ways their behavior may affect the feelings of others and adjust accordingly
- ▶ Provide support and encouragement to others in need
- ▶ Accept and show respect for other people's opinions

Social Awareness 3B. Demonstrate consideration for others and a desire to positively contribute to the school and community

- ▶ Explore a community or global need and generate possible solutions
- ▶ Engage in social critique and make decisions that will lead to social change

Social Awareness 3C. Demonstrate an awareness of different cultures and a respect for human dignity

- ▶ Analyze how people of different groups can help one another and enjoy each other's company
- ▶ Explain how individual, social, and cultural differences may increase vulnerability to stereotyping and identify ways to address this

Social Awareness 3D. Can read social cues and respond constructively

- ▶ Observe social situations and respectfully respond in a culturally sensitive way, e.g. school dance, peer pressure situations, cliques, public speaking
- ▶ Demonstrate how your personal boundaries affect interactions with others

Relationship Skills 4A. Use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others

- ▶ Practice reflective listening
- ▶ Demonstrate an ability to take the necessary role, e.g., leader or team player, to achieve group goals
- ▶ Use understanding of how and why others respond in a given situation (assertive, passive, or aggressive) in order to respond respectfully and effectively to others

Southern Poverty Law Center's "Social Justice Standards: The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Framework" (Grades 6-8)

Identity 4 ID.6-8.4 I feel good about my many identities and know they don't make me better than people with other identities.

Identity 5 ID.6-8.5 I know there are similarities and differences between my home culture and the other environments and cultures I encounter, and I can be myself in a diversity of settings.

Diversity 9 DI.6-8.9 I know I am connected to other people and can relate to them even when we are different or when we disagree.

Diversity 10 DI.6-8.10 I can explain how the way groups of people are treated today, and the way they have been treated in the past, shapes their group identity and culture.

Justice 14 JU.6-8.14 I know that all people (including myself) have certain advantages and disadvantages in society based on who they are and where they were born.

Justice 15 JU.6-8.15 I know about some of the people, groups and events in social justice history and about the beliefs and ideas that influenced them.

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Vocabulary

From Wiktionary ([https:// en.wiktionary.org/wiki/ Wiktionary:Main_Page](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page)) unless otherwise noted.

active listening

“When you not only hear what someone is saying, but also attune to their thoughts and feelings” (<https://hbr.org/2024/01/what-is-active-listening>)

background

a part of the picture that depicts scenery to the rear or behind the main subject

empathy

the capacity to understand another person’s point of view

equity

fairness, impartiality, or justice as determined in the light of “natural law” or “natural right”

foreground

the subject of an image, often depicted at the bottom in a two-dimensional work

inclusion

the act of including

justice

the state or characteristic of being just or fair

obstacle

something that impedes, stands in the way of, or holds up progress, either physically or figuratively

respect

an attitude of consideration or high regard

theme

a subject, now especially of a talk or an artistic piece

tolerance

an acceptance of or patience with the beliefs, opinions and practices of others

understanding

the act of one that understands or comprehends



Materials Needed

- ▶ *Anyone Can Fly* quilt reproduction or image
- ▶ “Essential Question Prompts” sheet
- ▶ Paper for writing or drawing (or digital equivalent)
- ▶ Writing tools and/or art supplies (or digital equivalent)

Teaching the Lesson (50 minutes)

Review “Classroom Interaction Suggestions” in this guide with students as needed.



Activity 1: Questioning the Artifact (10 minutes)

Students will examine the *Anyone Can Fly* quilt by Arlene Kweli Jones. You can use the fabric reproduction, projected image, and/or color copies. Give students the quilt reproduction or images.



Ask students to consider these questions as they examine the object. Remind students that the themes of justice, inclusion, equity, respect, and tolerance will be the main focus. Review vocabulary as needed.

- ▶ What do you see/notice?
- ▶ What is emphasized?
- ▶ What is in the background?
- ▶ What is in the foreground?
- ▶ What different colors are used? Where?
- ▶ What does the quilt make you feel?
- ▶ What is the story of the city in the background and the flower in the foreground?

Share the artifact information with the students. (This can be done with this activity or as part of the closing debrief.)

Quilt title: *Anyone Can Fly*

Artist/maker: Arlene Kweli Jones

Ethnic/cultural origin: African American

Size: 26" x 34.5" (66 cm x 87.6 cm)

Original quilt materials: 100% cotton

Description: A narrative pictorial quilt incorporating elements of hope and positivity and displaying machine applique and machine piecing techniques.

Design source: Adapted from City Skylines



Activity 2: Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

Give each student an “Essential Question Prompts” sheet. Working individually, have them answer the questions.

- ▶ What obstacles is the flower facing in its environment?
- ▶ What obstacles do you face in your life?
- ▶ Does everyone face the same obstacles (equity, justice, etc.)?
- ▶ How do we feel when we break through an obstacle (positive, negative, mixture of both)?
As the quilt shows us, we can fly!
- ▶ How can we talk about obstacles we and our communities face (active listening, empathy, understanding)?

Artist Statement

“

The inspiration for this quilt came from viewing a video Faith Ringgold made several years ago, and my own relationship with my mother. In the video Ms. Ringgold mentions her fondness of the **George Washington Bridge** and so I included **The Bridge** in my quilt.

”



Beyond My Ken, CC BY-SA 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>), via Wikimedia Commons

“As a child, Ms. Ringgold had life threatening asthma attacks, but her mother told her ‘no one ever died from asthma.’ Although that statement was untrue, she believed what her mother told her. My mother repeated positive affirmations (as depicted on the cement sidewalk in my quilt) that helped to build my self-image, esteem and in essence, I believed I could fly, a recurring mantra in Ms. Ringgold’s works. Anyone can break through all types of obstacles, rise, blossom and work to make their dreams come true—hence, **ANYONE CAN FLY.**”

“From the song *A Rose In Spanish Harlem*:
‘It’s growing in the street right up through the concrete, but soft and sweet and dreamin’.”

“[The sentence] ‘**My roses are the flowers native to east and west Africa- Birds of Paradise**’ is typed on muslin and sewn onto the back near the bottom left side of the quilt.”



(<https://quiltindex.dev.matrix.msu.edu/view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-6706>)



Activity 3: Storytelling Session (25 minutes)

Engage students in the storytelling activity about overcoming obstacles. You may want to model a brief example of how a story might develop (see below).

Choose one or more of the storytelling options for your students. Since oral storytelling can be scary, encourage students to choose an option to play to their strengths or push their limits. They may write it out, create an outline, or draw. Students can work on their stories individually or in small groups. Encourage students to work with peers they don't normally work with.

- ▶ Tell the story of the flower in the *Anyone Can Fly* quilt.
- ▶ Tell your own story that is inspired by the theme(s) in the *Anyone Can Fly* quilt.
- ▶ Tell a story about an obstacle you or your community face(ed).
- ▶ Respond based on one or more of the Essential Question Prompts, with the audience actively listening or by turning in written work.
- ▶ Model a brief example of how a story might develop. You can frame this as something to be shared orally, written, or as an outline.
- ▶ **Storytelling model 1**—Tell a personal story about overcoming adversity (“One of the biggest obstacles in my life that I’ve overcome was...”)
- ▶ **Storytelling model 2**—Tell a story from the perspective of the flower (“As a lonely flower living in a desolate area, one of my biggest wishes is...”)
- ▶ **Storytelling model 3**—Tell a personal story that was inspired from one of the themes in the *Anyone Can Fly* quilt (“I would like to tell you a story about an important theme from the *Anyone Can Fly* quilt...”)

After 5-7 minutes, ask for volunteers to share their stories addressing obstacles. Students can explain how their story exemplifies the themes of justice, inclusion, equity, respect, and/or tolerance. Instruct the student audience to actively listen.



4. Response/Product/Engagement (5 minutes)

Hold a closing debrief session and discussion of the stories told. (You may want to include the information about the quilt, unless you did this earlier in the lesson.)

Extension ideas:

- ▶ Continue with a second or third day of storytelling.
- ▶ Create an essay, poem, speech, or artwork that addresses the theme of facing obstacles in life.
- ▶ Discussion: What actions can be taken to address obstacles? What action can be taken to help to remove obstacles for others?
- ▶ Visit the Anyone Can Fly Foundation website for more resources about Great African American Artists and Scholars (www.anyonecanflyfoundation.org/).

Essential Question Prompts



What obstacles is the flower facing in its environment?



What obstacles do you face in your life?



Does everyone face the same obstacles (equity, justice, etc.)?



How do we feel when we break through an obstacle (positive, negative, mixture of both)?



How can we talk about obstacles we and our communities face (active listening, empathy, understanding)?



Anyone Can Fly Quilt
 Artist: Arlene Kweli Jones

LESSON 3



POWER OF VOICE: COMMUNICATING ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE THROUGH ART

By: Bridget Booth



Lesson Focus

Students learn about the power of youth voice and how they can use it to take collective action against injustice.

Teacher Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce students to two important concepts: human connectivity to the environment and working together to identify and address injustice. This lesson is focused on Native American baskets, which will help students learn about environmental injustice faced by Indigenous people, both historically and currently. It offers an opportunity to discuss how baskets, both beautiful and functional, are made from plants in specific U.S. regions, reflecting particular tribes' connections to their local environments. The baskets provide the focal point for the discussions connecting between people and plants, show how an artist used her "voice" to highlight an environmental concern, and serve as a metaphor for weaving our voices together to take action.

The lesson also centers Indigenous knowledge of plant and animal beings and the interconnectivity of life on this planet. This knowledge is vast, yet traditional science typically overlooks these "ways of knowing." Many people in North America have become largely disconnected from their environments, perhaps because these Indigenous perspectives often are dismissed rather than explored. Imagine how much more would be known if people listened.

The central artifact, made by artist Pat Courtney Gold, is a twined root-digging bag completed in 2005. It is entitled *Sally Bag* and features sturgeon imagery. Two columns of five fish angle downward toward the right. At the bottom of one column, the inside of the fish is filled with gold metallic fiber, symbolic of an irradiated fish suffering from water pollution. This object reminds us that we can listen and learn from Indigenous voices, especially those that shine a light on environmental injustice. Gold was a Wasco Native from the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon's Columbia River area, who worked as a mathematician before becoming a weaver later in life. Her work incorporates environmental justice themes.

You can learn more about artist Pat Courtney Gold at

- ▶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pat_Courtney_Gold
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFzT2gCRQCE>
- ▶ <https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/pat-courtney-gold>

When talking about her work, Gold said,

“

Even though I was learning the old traditions, I could also make something reflecting my own period of existence...I also make statements about what's going on now. Since we're tied to the **Columbia River, I've always been concerned about the pollution in the river. The Hanford nuclear plant, where the Army created atomic bombs, is upriver. And now they're working to try to bring back atomic nuclear reactors for generating electricity.**

Unfortunately, in that same area there's a lot of chemical waste buried in 55 gallon barrels which are starting to leak into the groundwater that seeps into the **Columbia River.**

I do sturgeon images—sturgeon are not a fish, they're a very old being, millions of years old and absolutely fascinating creatures. They're bottom feeders and can get up to a thousand pounds and live close to a hundred years. I'm worried about them now because of the chemicals, so I do variations of the sturgeon on my baskets. When I put the sturgeon on a basket, I always put in what I call a Hanford sturgeon, which usually has a deformity somewhere in it. I have these on exhibit, and I always tell people, 'Look for the Hanford sturgeon.'

”

(<https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage/pat-courtney-gold>)

Interview text courtesy of the National Endowment for the Arts

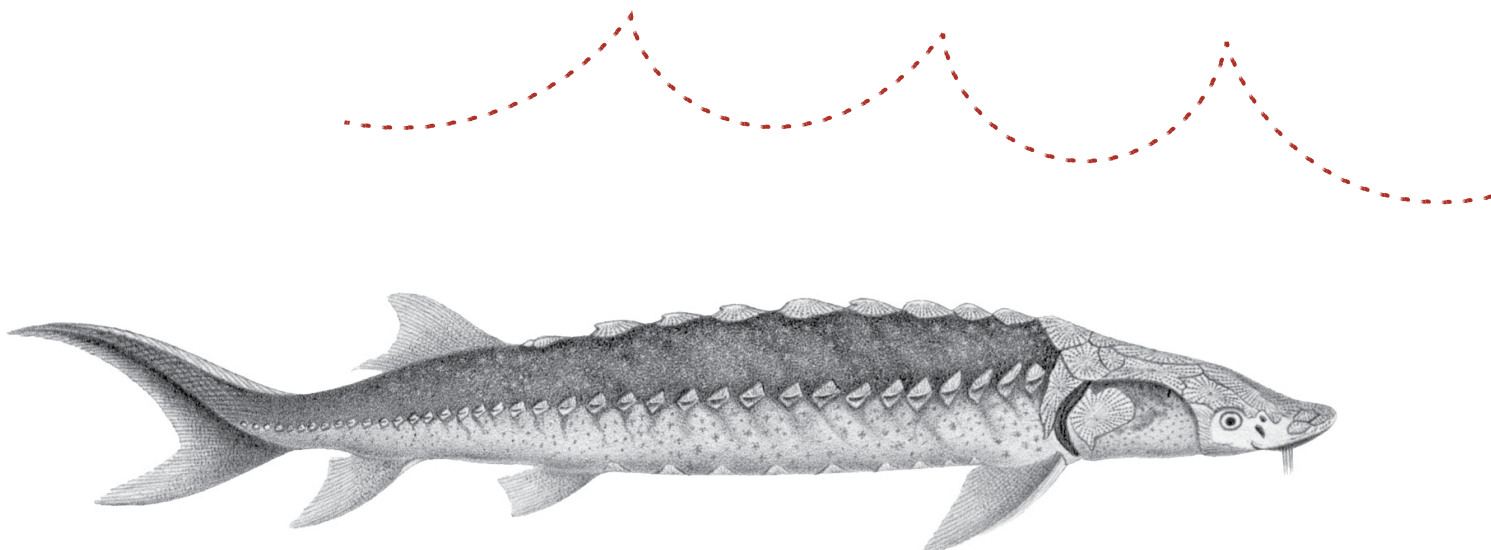
Teacher Introduction (continued)

Pat Courtney Gold’s example helps transition the lesson to the power of youth voice to generate collective action. A paper weaving activity will help students discover how their voices can be woven or combined with others’ voices to create change. This activity is meant to provide a place-based connection to the content of this lesson and the potential environmental issues present in your community. You can use it as an opportunity to get students involved in identifying and addressing these problems, especially those that disproportionately impact specific populations. Students’ “voice” can be shared through any medium—art, music, poetry, advocacy—and if they find other voices to combine with, they can build collective action. (See the extension activity recommended at the end of this lesson.)

Additionally, excerpts from *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Kimmerer, 2022) will be used to emphasize and explain concepts of connectivity and injustice. Students will read and respond to quotes from the book, providing opportunities for rich conversation. We recommend that you reflect on them in advance so that you can more easily facilitate conversation with your students around the discussion questions.

The reading prompts and discussion questions are taken from the following sections:

- ▶ Council of Pecans (pgs. 32-33): The author provides background on historical injustice faced by Native people. Topics include people’s forced removal from their environment, changes to essential ways of life (such as diet), and suppression of Indigenous ways of life and human connections with the environment.
- ▶ Asters & Goldenrods (pgs. 58 - 63): The author describes her experiences attending university and studying science with an Indigenous worldview. Topics include limitations of Western science and dismissal of Indigenous knowledge, “ways of knowing” the natural world, and shifting worldview from plants as teachers to plants as objects and how this narrow view might diminish the relationship between people and nature.



Learning Standards

Michigan English Language Arts Standards (Grades 6-8)

SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS

Comprehension and Collaboration: 1

Gr 6 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Gr 7 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Gr 8 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Michigan Science Standards (Grades 6-8)

EARTH AND SPACE SCIENCES - Human Impacts

MS-ESS3-3 Apply scientific principles to design a method for monitoring and minimizing a human impact on the environment.

MS-ESS3-4 Construct an argument supported by evidence for how increases in human population and per-capita consumption of natural resources impact Earth's systems.

Michigan Social Studies Standards (Grades 6-8)

G2 PLACES AND REGIONS

Gr 6 G2.2.5: Generalize about how human and natural factors have influenced how people make a living and perform other activities in a place.

G4 HUMAN SYSTEMS

Gr 6 G4.3.2: Describe patterns of settlement and explain why people settle where they do and how people make their livings.

Gr 7 G4.3.3: Explain the patterns, causes and consequences of major human migrations.

G5 HUMAN ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY

Gr 7 G5.1.3: Explain how people defined and used natural resources in the era being studied.

PUBLIC DISCOURSE, DECISION MAKING, AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Gr 6-8 P4.2.1: Assess options for individuals and groups to plan and conduct activities intended to advance views on matters of public policy.

USHG ERA 4 – EXPANSION AND REFORM (1792-1861)

Gr 8 U4.2.3: Westward Expansion - analyze the annexation of the west through the Louisiana Purchase, the removal of Indigenous Peoples from their ancestral homelands, the Mexican-American War, the growth of a system of commercial agriculture, and the idea of Manifest Destiny.

Michigan Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater Standards (Grades 6-8)

ANALYZE IN CONTEXT. Standard 4: Understand, analyze, and describe the arts in their historical, social, and cultural contexts.

(VPAA: C2, C3, C4, C5, P2, P3, R1, R2, R3, R4)

Gr 6 ART.VA.IV.6.2: Develop an understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts of artwork with aesthetic sophistication.

GR 7 ART.VA.IV.7.2: Articulate an understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts of artwork with an emerging level of aesthetic sophistication.

Gr 8 ART.VA.IV.8.2: Articulate an understanding of the historical, social, and cultural contexts of artwork with aesthetic sophistication.

Michigan Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies and Indicators (Grades 6-8)

Social Awareness 3A. Demonstrate awareness of other people's emotions and perspectives

- ▶ Provide support and encouragement to others in need

Social Awareness 3B. Demonstrate consideration for others and a desire to positively contribute to the school and community

- ▶ Explore a community or global need and generate possible solutions
- ▶ Engage in social critique and make decisions that will lead to social change

Social Awareness 3C. Demonstrate an awareness of different cultures and a respect for human dignity

- ▶ Analyze how people of different groups can help one another and enjoy each other's company

Relationship Skills 4A. Use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others

- ▶ Demonstrate an ability to take the necessary role, e.g., leader or team player, to achieve group goals

Southern Poverty Law Center's "Social Justice Standards: The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Framework" (Grades 6-8)

Diversity 10 DI.6-8.10: I can explain how the way groups of people are treated today, and the way they have been treated in the past, shapes their group identity and culture.

Justice 12 JU.6-8.12: I can recognize and describe unfairness and injustice in many forms including attitudes, speech, behaviors, practices and laws.

Justice 14 JU.6-8.14: I know that all people (including myself) have certain advantages and disadvantages in society based on who they are and where they were born.

Action 20 AC.6-8.20: I will work with friends, family and community members to make our world fairer for everyone, and we will plan and coordinate our actions in order to achieve our goals.

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Materials Needed

- ▶ Baskets and quill boxes (sweet grass and birch bark) and/or images
- ▶ Basket making materials (sweet grass and birch bark) and/or images
- ▶ *Sally Bag* images
- ▶ Sturgeon image
- ▶ Copies or projection of books and excerpts from *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults*
- ▶ Strips of recycled paper or digital equivalent, about 1.5-2" (3.8-5cm) high
- ▶ Writing tools or digital equivalent
- ▶ Tape or glue
- ▶ Scissors



Vocabulary

From Wiktionary, unless otherwise noted (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page)

collective action

an action taken by a group of individuals acting together

environmental injustice

the opposite of environmental justice

environmental justice

all people should have the same environmental protections (<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement>)

Indigenous

born or originating in, native to a land or region, especially before an intrusion

voice

the faculty or power of utterance

worldview

a person's personal view of the world and how one interprets it

Teaching the Lesson (50 minutes)

Review “Classroom Interaction Suggestions” in this guide with students as needed.



Activity 1: Introduce the Concepts - *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults* Jigsaw (15 minutes)

- ▶ Define the terms “environmental justice” and “environmental injustice” for the students. Ask them to provide examples of how people experience injustice through the treatment of their places. (Michigan examples: Flint water crisis, Detroit air quality, urban heat islands, etc.)
- ▶ Ask students whether different people experience environmental change/impact equally. Why or why not? (Marginalized communities often face the most environmental issues. They don’t have as much power as other groups.)
- ▶ Explain that Native Americans, in particular, experienced environmental injustice, both in the past and today. The students will explore this now in an activity.
- ▶ Give each small group an excerpt from *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. Have students read their excerpt and discuss an answer to their question prompt.
- ▶ Have groups share their quotes and answers.



Activity 2: Introduce the Objects (15 minutes)

Explore the collection of Native American baskets and basket-making materials (objects or images).

Ask students:



- ▶ *What materials are the baskets made from?*
- ▶ *How might the materials reflect the artist’s relationship to the environment? (What was available or not available in the environment, characteristics of materials, etc.)*
- ▶ *Why did/do people make baskets? (practical needs, multiple uses)*

Show the picture of Sally Bag (root-digging bag) by Pat Courtney Gold and ask students:



- ▶ *What is this sally bag made from?*
- ▶ *What do you notice about the patterns in the basket?*
- ▶ *What is being shown from the natural environment?*
- ▶ *What story could this piece be telling? (Point out sturgeon weaving at the bottom of the bag with the gold thread indicating irradiation. Show students the sturgeon image so they can see what the animal looks like.)*

Give context for *Sally Bag*: Share information about the artist’s location (Oregon) and the statement she made about what is happening to her environment (river pollution from various sources and the impact on people and animals).

Ask students:



- ▶ *What does sharing this environmental injustice through artwork do?*
- ▶ *How does it impact you, the viewer?*
- ▶ *How might it affect you differently if you just heard or read about the issue, instead of seeing the bag and learning about the art?*



Activity 3: Capturing Youth Voices (20 minutes)

Discuss how the artist, Pat Courtney Gold, uses her sally bag to make people aware of environmental issues her community members are facing today. Gold's art is her "voice." She uses her voice to communicate and educate others.

Ask the students:



- ▶ *What kind of "voice" do you have as a young person or as a group of young people? (A voice can be a way of communicating, a platform, art, a type of group, etc.)*
- ▶ *Can you think of examples of youth using their voices to create change or make a difference on important issues? (Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg, Mari Copeny "Little Miss Flint," local students in your area, etc.)*

Give each student a strip of recycled paper. Ask them to think about the most powerful individual "voice" they have for environmental justice as a young person or as a part of a group of young people (art, music, public speaking, writing, political or environmental activism, etc.). Have them write this voice on their paper strip.

Allow students to move around the room and try to find someone whose strip might be communicating something similar or if they have a "common voice." Talk with this person about your common voice.

Come back together as a class and discuss the power of communicating on important issues, especially as a young person, and how collective voice can lead to action.

The teacher and/or students can weave the strips into a finished piece (taped or glued together) that can be kept in the classroom to remind students of the lesson and to help start future conversations. See an example on the next page.





Extension idea:

[illegible]

Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults Jigsaw Readings

Reading 1 (p. 32)

"Settlers wanted our lands around Lake Michigan. In long lines, surrounded by soldiers, my people were marched at gunpoint along what became known as the Trail of Death. They took us to a new place, far from our lakes and forests. In the span of a single generation, my ancestors were 'removed' three times—Wisconsin to Kansas, points in between, and then to Oklahoma."

Question: How did this forced removal affect Indigenous people?

Reading 2 (pp. 32-33)

"The federal government's Indian removal policies wrenched many Native peoples from our homelands. It separated us from our traditional knowledge, our ways of life, and our connection to the land and water. From the bones of our ancestors and the plants that had sustained us for generations."

Question: How is this an example of environmental injustice?

Reading 3 (p. 60)

"In moving from a childhood in the woods to university, I had unknowingly shifted between worldviews. From a worldview where I knew plants as teachers and companions to whom I shared a mutual responsibility and where we asked questions like 'Who are you?' to a scientific worldview where questions were, 'What is it?' No one asked plants, 'What can you tell us?' The primary question was 'How does it work?' Plants were reduced to objects. They were not subjects."

Question: How does your view of caring for living things change when you don't think of them as objects?

Reading 4 (p. 63)

"I circled right back to where I had begun, to the question of beauty. Back to the questions that science does not ask. Not because they aren't important but because science's way of knowing is too narrow for the task. I remembered to pay deep attention to the living world, not only their names but also their songs. Having heard those songs, I felt a deep responsibility to share them. To see if in some way, the songs and our stories could help people fall in love with the world again."

Question: How might environmental action start with "paying deep attention"?

References

Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants Text © 2022 by Lerner Publishing Group Illustrations © 2022 by Nicole Neidhardt. Adapted from *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* © 2013 by Robin Wall Kimmerer Published by Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis, MN. Published by arrangement with Zest BooksTM, a division of Lerner Publishing Group, Inc., 241 First Avenue North, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401, U.S.A.

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Artifact Images

- ▶ Sweet grass basket
- ▶ Sweet grass and birch bark quill box 1-3
- ▶ Sweet grass material
- ▶ *Sally Bag* images



Sweetgrass basket (image courtesy of MSU Museum)



Quill boxes (image courtesy of MSU Museum)



Sweetgrass braid (image courtesy of MSU Museum)



Sally Bag (side) by Pat Courtney Gold (image courtesy of MSU Museum)



Sally Bag (bottom) by Pat Courtney Gold (image courtesy of MSU Museum)



Sturgeon (Photo by Carrie Wicker)

LESSON 4



STEREOTYPES: EXPLORING NEW WAYS TO RESPOND

By: Denice Blair, PhD



Lesson Focus

Students talk about stereotypes: what they are, where they come from, how they affect people, and how to address them using the PALS approach.

Teacher Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand what stereotypes are and how they can harm others and create division. Stereotypes usually are about people from different groups or cultures and focus on how they look, behave, or live. Often, these exaggerations or untrue things about others are used to create an outgroup, by marking certain people as different or inferior. We can think of ways that stereotypes have harmed ourselves or others. Current media culture is filled with examples.

Stereotyping, of course, is not a new thing. To help students understand the historical and present-day results of stereotyping, they will explore historical stereotype images on postcards and trade cards from the 1860s-1910s. They will compare these images to modern imagery and ideas. Students will also learn and practice using a dialogue technique called PALS, which is a way to address potentially harmful things when they are heard in conversation, seen online, etc. The goals are to emphasize how important it is for all of us to learn about and appreciate our differences and to learn how to communicate about them.



MSU Museum Materials

The lessons are centered on material from the “Immigration and Caricature: Ethnic Images from the Appel Collection” (“Appel Collection”) at the MSU Museum, a collection of over 4,000 images donated to the Museum by John and Selma Appel. This collection includes postcards, posters, prints, trade cards, and other visual media. It documents examples of stereotypes of different racial and ethnic groups from the Civil War through World War I.

Although the content can be challenging to view, these primary sources can be used to learn about the past. Museums collect these kinds of objects to show change over time, both positive and negative. If students have questions or concerns about using the materials, encourage them to tell you. Also, you may want to talk with your administrator about using these images and address any instructional concerns with them.

The post/trade cards used in this lesson include the following. Full descriptions are provided in the “Primary Sources List” for the curriculum guide.



“Grand-Pap Embarrassed”: A color drawing of a young Black girl showing her slate to her grandfather.



“Great American Tea Company”: A color drawing of a Chinese man holding a tray of dirty dishes up by one finger and balancing a tray full of cups of tea on his head.



“Indian and Irishman” postcard reproduction: An image of a Native American man with a peace pipe and an Irish man holding a pipe.



“Is Business Picking Up”: A color drawing of an Italian man dressed in old clothes using a stick to pick up rags. He is carrying a patched sack on his back.

Another aspect of the cards is the art form. The postcard and trade card images are caricatures. A caricature is an “pictorial representation of someone in which distinguishing features are exaggerated for comic effect or grotesque misrepresentation.” (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page). This art form began in the early 1500s. Caricatures can be used to compliment or insult people; think of the differences between fun caricatures drawn at a fair versus racist or negative political imagery. Here are some additional resources on stereotypes and caricature to use when talking with your students:

Caricature and Stereotype Resources

- ▶ “Caricature Art: Introducing the Art of Exaggeration,” ArtFileMagazine, <https://artfilemagazine.com/caricature-art/>
- ▶ “Caricature Art: The Fascinating History of the Art of Exaggeration,” My Modern MET, <https://mymodernmet.com/caricature-art/>

Stereotypes

- ▶ “How Do Stereotypes Shape Your Judgment,” Greater Good Magazine, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_do_stereotypes_shape_your_judgment
- ▶ “Stereotyping: Definition, Examples, and Consequences,” Berkeley Well-Being Institute, <https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/stereotyping.html>
- ▶ “Where Bias Begins: The Truth about Stereotypes,” Psychology Today, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/199805/where-bias-begins-the-truth-about-stereotypes>

PALS Approach

The lesson features the PALS approach, which was designed as a way to facilitate difficult conversations. Donna Rich Kaplowitz, PhD, and colleagues developed this approach for people to use when encountering resistance and conflict. The framework can be used to teach people how to respond to hurtful or problematic statements (Hicks & Kaplowitz, 2024; Kaplowitz, Griffin, & Seyka, 2019). PALS uses four steps to interrupt and facilitate conversation (MSU Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives, 2022):

- ▶ Step 1: P = Pause. Pause, halt, slow, or stop the conversation.
- ▶ Step 2: A = Acknowledge/Ask. Ask for clarification, be sure you understood what was said.
- ▶ Step 3: L = Listen. Use active, engaged listening to the person’s response.
- ▶ Step 4: S = Speak your truth/Share stories. Describe your objection, calmly share your learning.

PALS can be used for many different kinds of dialogues, including classroom discussions, personal interactions, and restorative justice. We hope that teaching this approach to middle school students and giving them opportunities to see it modeled and practiced it will equip them for disrupting stereotype use in productive ways. You can learn more about the PALS approach by reading the books by Kaplowitz and colleagues (see reference list at end of lesson).

Learning Standards

Michigan Social Studies Standards (Grades 6-8)

P1 READING AND COMMUNICATION – READ AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

P1.2 Interpret primary and secondary source documents for point of view, context, bias, and frame of reference or perspective.

P1.3 Express social science ideas clearly in written, spoken, and graphic forms, including tables, line graphs, bar graphs, pie charts, maps, and images.

P1.4 Present an argument supported with evidence.

P2 INQUIRY, RESEARCH, AND ANALYSIS

P2.1 Use compelling and supporting questions to investigate social scientific problems.

P2.4 Use resources in multiple forms and from multiple perspectives to analyze issues.

P3 PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND DECISION MAKING

P3.4 Explain the challenges people have faced and actions they have taken to address issues at different times and places.

Michigan Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater Standards (Grades 6-8)

ANALYZE, Standard 3: Analyze, describe, and evaluate works of art.

(VPAA: C2, C3, C4, C5, P2, P3, R1, R2, R3, R4)

Gr. 6 ART.VA.III.6.1: Observe, describe, and analyze visual characteristics at a developing level.

Gr. 6 ART.VA.III.6.2: Develop the skill of interpreting artwork, searching for embedded meaning, function, and personal connections at a developing level.

Gr. 7 ART.VA.III.7.1: Critically observe, describe, and analyze visual characteristics at an emerging level.

Gr. 7 ART.VA.III.7.2: Interpret artwork searching for embedded meaning, function, and personal connections at an emerging level.

Gr. 8 ART.VA.III.8.1: Critically observe, describe, and analyze visual characteristics within works of art.

Gr. 8 ART.VA.III.8.2: Effectively interpret artwork, searching for embedded meaning, function, and personal connections.

Michigan Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies and Indicators (Grades 6-8)

Social Awareness 3C. Demonstrate an awareness of different cultures and a respect for human dignity

- ▶ Explain how individual, social, and cultural differences may increase vulnerability to stereotyping and identify ways to address this

Social Awareness 3D. Can read social cues and respond constructively

- ▶ Observe social situations and respectfully respond in a culturally sensitive way, e.g. school dance, peer pressure situations, cliques, public speaking

Relationship Skills 4A. Use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others

- ▶ Practice reflective listening
- ▶ Demonstrate an ability to take the necessary role, e.g., leader or team player, to achieve group goals
- ▶ Use understanding of how and why others respond in a given situation (assertive, passive, or aggressive) in order to respond respectfully and effectively to others

Relationship Skills 4C. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in helpful ways

- ▶ Apply conflict resolution skills to de-escalate, defuse, and resolve differences
- ▶ Generate ideas about how all parties in conflict might get their needs met
- ▶ Access positive supports when needed in a conflict situation/crisis

Southern Poverty Law Center's "Social Justice Standards: The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Framework" (Grades 6-8)

Identity 3 ID.6-8.3 I know that overlapping identities combine to make me who I am and that none of my group identities on their own fully defines me or any other person.

Identity 4 ID.6-8.4 I feel good about my many identities and know they don't make me better than people with other identities.

Diversity 6 DI.6-8.6 I interact with people who are similar to and different from me, and I show respect to all people.

Diversity 7 DI.6-8.7 I can accurately and respectfully describe ways that people (including myself) are similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.

Diversity 10 DI.6-8.10 I can explain how the way groups of people are treated today, and the way they have been treated in the past, shapes their group identity and culture.

Justice 11 JU.6-8.11 I relate to people as individuals and not representatives of groups, and I can name some common stereotypes I observe people using.

Action 16 AC.6-8.16 I am concerned about how people (including myself) are treated and feel for people when they are excluded or mistreated because of their identities.

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<https://www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/social-justice-standards>

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Materials Needed

- ▶ Trash cans image
- ▶ 4 “Appel Collection” postcards/trade cards (printed or digital version)
- ▶ PALS poster
- ▶ 4 PALS cards for teacher
- ▶ Role playing scripts (6 copies)



Vocabulary

From Wiktionary unless otherwise noted (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page)

collective action

an action taken by a group of individuals acting together

caricature

a pictorial representation of someone in which distinguishing features are exaggerated for comic effect

exaggerate

to overstate, to describe more than the fact

primary source

a historical object, especially a written document, that was created at or near the time of the events studied

stereotype

a conventional, formulaic, and often oversimplified or exaggerated conception, opinion, or image of (a person or a group of people)

Teaching the Lesson (50 minutes)

Review “Classroom Interaction Suggestions” in this guide with students as needed.

1. Introduce the Concepts (10 minutes)

Explain that people often have beliefs about people from different groups or cultures. These beliefs may be about how people look, behave, or live. Often these are not based on facts, and the exaggerations are used to make all members of the group seem the same or to put people down. Beliefs like these are called stereotypes.

- ▶ Write or project the word “stereotype” on the board.
- ▶ Show students the “Trash Cans” image.



- ▶ **Ask:** What are the stereotypes shown here? List some of the stereotypes. Talk about students’ reactions. Why would people use these stereotypes? (to make fun of different groups, to make people believe things about others that aren’t true, to create an “in group” feeling by marking some people as less than, etc.)
- ▶ Tell students that people have always used stereotypes. Throughout history, people have used stereotypes for different reasons, just like they are used today.



Activity 1: Questioning the Artifacts (15 minutes)

Decide which of the postcards/trade cards you want to use with your students. This may depend on how many pairs or small groups you will have. It could work to have everyone use the same card.

Give students a brief introduction to the postcards/trade cards. Explain that they are from the late 1800s to early 1900s. They show how people then commonly used ethnic and racial stereotypes. Tell students that these objects are primary sources that can be used to learn about the past. Emphasize that they are using these sources to learn about stereotypes. Museums collect these kinds of objects to show change over time, positive and negative. If students have questions or concerns, they should tell you.

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Have them examine the historical postcards/trade cards.



Ask students to discuss these questions in their groups. Have one person be the group recorder.

- ▶ What do you notice about the images?
- ▶ Do you notice any stereotypes? What are they?
- ▶ How might these stereotypes impact people?

Discuss the students’ responses as a group.



Activity 2: Responding to Stereotypes (15 minutes)

This activity helps model how people can respond when people use a stereotype.

- ▶ Choose which role play(s) you want to use with your students. The number may depend on time or student interest.
- ▶ **Tell students:**
 - ▶ Stereotypes aren't just found in history. Unfortunately, we find them today in things we read, videos, advertisements, and many other places.
 - ▶ We can respond to stereotypes when we see or hear them.
 - ▶ We are going to learn about a way to respond to stereotypes when we hear someone use one.
 - ▶ Explain the PALS approach.
 - ▶ Use the role play scripts to model the PALS approach.
 - ▶ Select the role play scripts you want to use.
 - ▶ Choose students to play the roles.
 - ▶ Be prepared to hold up the PALS cards at intervals indicated in the scripts to illustrate the PALS approach flow.

PALS RESPONSE APPROACH

P = Pause

A = Acknowledge/Ask

L = Listen

S = Speak Your Truth/Share Stories

Response/Product/Engagement (10 minutes)



- ▶ **Ask students:**
 - ▶ Is PALS something you could do? Why or why not?
 - ▶ Why might you respond to stereotypes?
 - ▶ Are there times when it's better NOT to respond, like when you feel unsafe, etc.?

Extension idea:

- ▶ Students create their own PALS dialogue and practice the technique. Be sure this activity is well supervised and that students feel safe and supported.
- ▶ Give students the opportunity to write or draw about their reactions to the stereotype card primary sources. Discuss what they create.

References

Hicks, S. D., & Kaplowitz, D. R. (Eds.) (2024). *Facilitating transformational dialogues: Creating socially just communities*. Teachers College Press.

Kaplowitz, D. R., Griffin, S. R., & Seyka, S. (2019). *Race dialogues: A facilitator's guide to tackling the elephant in the classroom*. Teachers College Press.

MSU Office for Inclusion and Intercultural Initiatives. (2022). How to interrupt bias—PALS poster. <https://inclusion.msu.edu/about/communications/building-inclusive-communities.html>

Resources

Role Play 1: Older People Don't Have a Clue ("Grand-Pap Embarrassed" Postcard)

STUDENT 1:

There's no way my grandfather will be able to learn to use a new phone. Older people can't do this stuff.

[Teacher holds up "Pause" card]

STUDENT 2:

Um, hold on a second.

[Teacher holds up "Ask" card: What could they ask?]

STUDENT 2:

Are you saying that just because someone is older that they can't learn technology?

[Teacher holds up "Listen" card]

STUDENT 1:

Yeah. Everybody knows that.

[Teacher holds up "Speak Your Truth/Share" card]

STUDENT 2:

That's really a stereotype about older people. Maybe try not to assume your grandfather can't learn a new phone?

STUDENT 1:

Maybe I shouldn't just assume. And maybe I can be the one to help him out!

Role Play 2: Gender in School Work

STUDENT 1:

My sister is thinking about joining the math club.

STUDENT 2:

Are you serious? Girls don't have the math skills for that.

[Teacher holds up "Pause" card]

STUDENT 1:

Um, hold up.

[Teacher holds up "Ask" card: What could they ask?]

STUDENT 1:

Where did you get that information?

[Teacher holds up "Listen" card]

STUDENT 2:

Boys are better at math than girls—known fact.

[Teacher holds up "Speak Your Truth/Share" card]

STUDENT 1:

That's a stereotype about girls and math. Girls can have the same math ability as anyone else. It might be better not to assume things about someone.

STUDENT 2:

Okay, sure, that's fair.

Role Play 3: Middle School Students Don't Care

ADULT AT SCHOOL MEETING:

These middle school students won't help with the park clean-up day. They're too young to really care about anything important.

[Teacher holds up "Pause" card]

STUDENT:

Um, wait a second.

[Teacher holds up "Ask" card: What could they ask?]

STUDENT:

What I hear you saying is that we middle schoolers are too young to care about anything. Is that what you meant?

[Teacher holds up "Listen" card]

ADULT AT SCHOOL MEETING:

Yeah. You only care about yourselves and your phones.

[Teacher holds up "Speak Your Truth/Share" card]

STUDENT:

You might want to learn more about kids like me. It's a stereotype that kids don't really care about anything. We know a lot about what's going on in our town and want to help.

ADULT AT SCHOOL MEETING:

Maybe I was wrong. I should get the facts before I say things about people.



Trash cans image (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Traditional_gender_role_trash_cans.jpg)
(Credit: Image by Jengod: Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International)



"Grand-Pap Embarrassed" postcard (image courtesy of MSU Museum)



"Great American Tea Company" trade card (image courtesy of MSU Museum)



854.

The Indian and his pipe of peace
soon will pass away.

But the Irishman with his piece of pipe
will last for many a day.

"Indian and Irishman" postcard (image courtesy of MSU Museum)



"Is Business Picking Up" postcard (image courtesy of MSU Museum)



HOW TO INTERRUPT BIAS

PALS is a methodology to use when someone communicates something that may be problematic or hurtful to a specific group of people or yourself. Try to make meaning out of what was mentioned, even if it is at odds with your own ideas.

P

Pause the conversation.

“Wait a second...”

A

Acknowledge what the person communicated

“What I understood is...”

L

Listen or be attuned to what is being conveyed.

Understand what matters to that person.

S

Speak or express your truth.

“I have learned that it is harmful to...”

Credit: Donna Rich Kaplowitz



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**SPEAK YOUR TRUTH /
SHARE STORIES**

Primary Sources List

All sources courtesy of the MSU Museum

Anyone Can Fly quilt reproduction

(Lesson 2) Fabric quilt reproduction (or image) of *Anyone Can Fly*, finished in 2011 by Arlene Kweli Jones. Original is made from 100% commercial cotton. Size is 26" x 34.5" (66 cm x 87.6 cm). MSU Museum Cultural Collections (<https://quiltindex.org//view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-6706>)

Basket making materials

(Lesson 3) Sweetgrass (*Hierochloe odorata*) samples (or image). Odorata means "fragrant." Sweetgrass grows in cool and wet areas and can help limit erosion. Indigenous uses include incense for spiritual ceremonies, medicinal tea, basketry and braiding, and perfume. 7", 11", and 25.25" (17.8 cm, 28 cm, 64 cm) pieces of braided sweetgrass at in a bag. MSU Museum Education Team Collections

Birch bark, sweetgrass, and porcupine quill boxes

(Lesson 3) Three 3.5" (8.9 cm) diameter birch bark boxes (or images) with sweetgrass edging and porcupine quillwork in flower motifs on the tops. MSU Museum Education Team Collections

Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi: Champion of African American Quilters quilt reproduction

(Lesson 1) Fabric quilt reproduction (or image) of *Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi: Champion of African American Quilters*, finished in 2008 by Marjorie Freeman. Original is made from cotton, cotton thread, ink, and paint. Size is 12" x 14 ½" (30.5 cm x 36.8 cm). MSU Museum Cultural Collections (<https://quiltindex.dev.matrix.msu.edu//view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-6704>)

"Grand-Pap Embarrassed" postcard reproduction

(Lesson 4) Postcard reproduction (or image) of a young Black girl showing a slate to her grandfather. Original is made of paper. Size is 5.5" x 3.5" (14 cm x 8.9 cm). Part of the "Immigration and Caricature: Ethnic Images from the Appel Collection" at the MSU Museum (1996:69.159)

"Great American Tea Company" trade card reproduction

(Lesson 4) Trade card reproduction (or image) of a color drawing of a Chinese man holding a tray of dirty dishes up by one finger and balancing a tray full of cups of tea on his head. Original is made of paper. Size is 4.375" x 2.875" (11.1 cm x 7.3 cm). Part of the "Immigration and Caricature: Ethnic Images from the Appel Collection" at the MSU Museum (1996:69.986.7)

"Indian and Irishman" postcard reproduction

(Lesson 4) Postcard reproduction (or image) of a Native American man with a peace pipe and an Irish man holding a pipe. Original is made of paper. Size is 5.5" x 3.5" (14 cm x 8.9 cm). Part of the "Immigration and Caricature: Ethnic Images from the Appel Collection" at the MSU Museum (1996:69.478)

Indian Woman quilt reproduction

(Lesson 1) Fabric quilt reproduction or image of Indian Woman, finished in 1991 by Margaret Wood. Original is made from cotton, polyester, ultrasuede, metal, shell, black onyx, turquoise, and human hair wig. Size is 56" x 83 1/2" (142.2 cm x 212 cm). MSU Museum Cultural Collections (<https://quiltindex.org//view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-989>)

"Is Business Picking Up" postcard reproduction

(Lesson 4) Postcard reproduction or image of a color drawing of an Italian man dressed in old clothes using a stick to pick up rags. Original is made of paper. Size is 5 ½" x 3 ½" (14 cm x 8.9 cm). Part of the "Immigration and Caricature: Ethnic Images from the Appel Collection" at the MSU Museum (1996:69.408)

"Sally Bag" basket image

(Lesson 3) Image of a woven bag with images of fish and water by Pat Courtney Gold. Completed in 2005. Original is made from twined tule, cattail, sedge grass, red cedar bark, dogbane, and various reeds, colored cotton yarn, metallic fiber, and hemp. Two columns of five fish angle downward toward the right. At the bottom of one column, the inside of the fish is filled with gold metallic fiber, symbolic of an irradiated fish suffering from water pollution. Size is 8 ¾" high and 5" diameter (21.3 cm x 12.7 cm). MSU Museum Cultural Collections (2006:103.13)

Sweetgrass basket

(Lesson 3) Sweetgrass basket (or image) with red fabric and beading. Size is 4 ¼" wide x 1 ¾" high (10.8cm x 4.4cm). MSU Museum Education Team Collections

Acknowledgments

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Teacher Feedback Survey

Thank you for using the *Every Community, Every Story, Every Voice* curriculum guide with your students. We appreciate your feedback to help us learn more about your experience!

https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1YTI7m1BCYHpBqu



