

LESSON

Discovering My Identity

In this lesson, students will describe aspects of their identities such as race, gender, ability, religion and more. Then after exploring Marley Dias' Black Girls Books campaign, students will analyze book illustrations and write their own book review noting how characters are similar and different from them.

Grade Level 3-5

Topic: Race & Ethnicity, Ability, Bullying & Bias

Subject: Reading & Language Arts

Social Justice Domain: Identity

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to describe their various group identities.
- Students will be able to analyze how people's identities are represented in books.
- Students will be able to write a book review evaluating how characters' identities are similar to and different from their own.
- **Enduring Understandings:**
 - Everyone has multiple identities.
 - Peoples' identities are similar in some ways and different in others.
 - It is important to see my identities as well as the identities of others in the stories I read.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What makes me who I am?
- How are other people similar to and different from me?
- What do stories teach us about identity?

MATERIALS

- NJTV interview with Marley Dias and transcript (available on YouTube page)
- NPR story on Marley Dias
- Book Review Graphic Organizer
- Reading Diversity Checklist

Vocabulary

ability [uh-**bil**-i-tee] (*noun*) capacity, talent or skill

culture [**kuhl**-cher] (*noun*) a way of living that is passed down through generations—including food, religion, language, family and gender roles, beliefs, etc.

ethnic [**eth**-nik] (*adjective*) sharing a unique culture, religion or language

gender [**jen**-dur] (*noun*) gender identity refers to a person's sense of being male, female, neither or both; gender expression refers to how a person shows their gender to the world

identity [ahy-**den**-ti-tee] (*noun*) the qualities, characteristics or beliefs that make a person who they are

precocious [pri-**koh**-shuh s] (*adjective*) a word used to describe a young person who acts like a grown up or understands grown-up ideas

stereotype [**ster**-ee-uh-tahyp] (*noun*) an overly simple, unfair and untrue belief about a group of people

race [reys] (*noun*) one way to group people, usually based on characteristics like skin color, facial features, hair texture or geographic ancestry

(Note: There are many different ways to define the term "race." We provide a working definition, but one of the goals of this lesson is for students to come to individual and collective understandings of the term that make sense to them and satisfy their personal and developmental needs.)

Procedure

WARM-UP DISCUSSION

1. Talk with your students about their identities and what makes them who they are. List words that help describe a person's identity such as: gender, race, religion and ability. Help students define any words they may not be familiar with.

2. Pick a well-known character from a book that the class has read recently or a historical or famous figure. Brainstorm words that identify this person. Briefly highlight stereotypes and caution against making assumptions or judging people based on a single characteristic. For instance, being a girl doesn't necessarily mean you like to play with dolls; being a boy doesn't necessarily mean you like to play sports. You can find ideas to help facilitate this warm-up in this *Let's Talk!* resource.

MAIN ACTIVITY

1. Show students the NJTV News clip, then discuss these questions:
 - What is the goal of Marley's campaign?
 - Why did Marley start this campaign?
 - Thinking back on the identity terms discussed earlier, what were some of the things Marley looked for in the books she read?
 - Why is it important to read about how people's identities are similar and different from our own?
2. Visit your school or local library and check out an assortment of illustrated children's books featuring racially diverse characters. You can also find free excerpts of diverse stories in our Student Texts library.
3. Ask students to form small groups. Give each group three or four books or Student Texts; ask the group to read and review them. Have each student record their observations in their Book Review Graphic Organizer. Tell them to mark down on the organizer whether they would recommend the book to someone else.
4. After each small group of students has read their stories and completed their graphic organizers, bring the full class together to share their findings. Based on the prior discussion of identity characteristics, ask students how they are similar to and different from the characters in the stories they read. Ask how that made them feel.

DO SOMETHING

1. Have students choose one book from their first handout and follow the notes from their Book Review Graphic Organizer to fill out the Reading Diversity Checklist handout.
2. For an extended activity, students can use these tools to compose a book review about why they would or would not recommend a certain book. Students should explain their recommendations using one or two questions from the Reading Diversity Checklist handout. Consider making these reviews available to students in other classes.
3. Send the book reviews to Marley Dias via the Grassroots Community Foundation.

Alignment to Common Core State Standards/College and Career

Readiness Anchor Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3.4, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2, CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

EXTERNAL LINKS

Grassroots Community Foundation <http://grassrootscommunityfoundation.org/>

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