



LESSON

What is a Hate Crime?

This lesson leads students to analyze the nature of hate and explore legislation that addresses hate crimes.

Grade Level 3-5, 6-8

Topic: Race & Ethnicity

Subject: Reading & Language Arts, Civics

Social Justice Domain: Justice

OBJECTIVES

Activities meet the following objectives:

- understand the definition of “hate” and be able to use alternate words
- discover and understand how national laws are made
- apply that understanding to the concept of government protection

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is the nature of hate?
- What is the statistical picture of hate crimes in America?
- How does the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act expand protections against hate crimes?
- Who were Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr.?
- How does the new law compare to previous hate-crimes legislation?

MATERIALS

Pencil and paper

Internet access

Vocabulary

hate |hāt|

(*noun*) A strong feeling of dislike.

(*verb*) To strongly dislike.

crime |krīm|

(*noun*) An act or behavior that breaks a law. A crime is usually punished by a fine or prison time.

law |lô|

(*noun*) A rule that helps keep order within a society.

legislation |,ləjə'slā sh ən|

(*noun*) A law or laws passed by a government body.

Procedure

Reading/Language Arts/ELL

1. The word “hate” is a strong one. But we often use it in a casual way. Think about the times you have used it to describe your reaction to something.

2. Now, make a list of the things you “hate.” (*Examples might include things like broccoli, homework, rainy days or getting up early.*) Does your list include any people? What’s the difference between hating a thing and hating a person?

3. As a class, discuss the definition of the word “hate.” (*The word refers to a feeling of strong dislike – a feeling that demands action.*) What can happen when somebody acts on their feelings of hate? Discuss how those actions might impact your classroom, your school and your community.

4. Partner with another student or a small group of students. Take turns rephrasing your “I hate...” sentences so that they include more specific information. For instance: Instead of saying “I hate broccoli,” consider saying, “Broccoli doesn’t taste good to me” or “I like carrots better than broccoli.” If your list includes people, consider saying, “I wish my sister shared her toys” rather than “I hate my sister.” Why do you think these sentences are better choices? Share some examples of your new sentences with the rest of the class.

5. As a class, agree that you will keep checking your use of the word “hate.” Every time you hear it or read it, stop and think about it. If possible, discuss it with a classmate or friend. How would you rephrase the sentence?

Social Studies

1. As a class, brainstorm examples of rules that you live by every day – at home, school and in your community. Discuss some reasons for these rules or laws. *(Examples might be traffic laws intended to keep drivers safe, school rules that help keep students and teachers focused on learning, or laws in your community that protect its citizens from others who might harm them.)*

2. At the national level, Congress has the power to make laws. Congress represents the legislative branch of the U.S. government. Divide the class into three groups. Within your group, use the Internet to access the federal Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids.

3. Each group will have responsibility for researching and sharing information about one of the following:

- What Is a Law?
- Who Makes Laws?
- How Laws Are Made?

Within each group, take notes on the information needed for your group's presentation.

4. Present your information to the entire class. After all groups have presented, review the process from the time a bill is introduced to the time it is signed by the president.

5. President Barack Obama signed a law that would help protect Americans against hate crimes. *(Note: You may want to explain a bit about this law.)* A hate crime is an attack against somebody because of their differences, such as skin color, religion or disability. The law is called the Hate Crimes Prevention Act. Together, brainstorm ways this law might affect the everyday lives of people in your community. Using it as an example, evaluate the reasons that we have laws. Why are they important?

POLITICAL CARTOON



Reprinted with permission. Teachers may purchase individual cartoons for lesson plans at PoliticalCartoons.com.

In this editorial cartoon, artist Daryl Cagle depicts a group of students expressing “hate” for an undisclosed group of people. In pairs or small groups, discuss:

- What message is he trying to convey about the nature of hate? In this case, what word would you use to describe the group? (*Examples: ignorant, unaware or uneducated.*) How might their conversation be different if they had accurate information or a better understanding about “them?” Act out the conversation you imagine, or redraw the cartoon to reflect it.
- This cartoon was originally drawn on September 13, 2001. Based on this information, who might have been the “them” to which Cagle refers? If you are unsure, ask older students or family members what they recall about that time. What reaction to this group of people does Cagle’s cartoon describe? As a class, discuss whether these attitudes have changed since the cartoon was first drawn. If so, how? What might have caused those attitudes to change?

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