

LESSON: Intersectionality **GRADE: 10th-12th** **TIME: 100 min.**

SUMMARY

In this lesson students will examine their identity. This examination will serve as a springboard to discuss privilege, the social construction of identity and intersectionality, all high level concepts. During this lesson students will journal and work in jigsaw groups to examine these new concepts more fully. They will finish by creating their own cartoon commentary on identity.

OBJECTIVES

Social Studies

- **SS.9-12.BS.6** Understand the process of how humans develop, learn, adapt to their environment, and internalize their culture.

Literacy

- **RH.6-8.1** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- Small note cards or slips of paper, 8 per student
- Markers or pens
- Notebooks/journals
- Copies of vocabulary graphic organizer sheet, 1 per student
- (Optional) Copies of “Why Intersectionality Can’t Wait”

PRESENTATION

Tell students that today is about examining their identities and exploring new concepts. Explain that students should work individually on the activity so they have privacy. Use the directions below to guide students through the activity, reflection, new vocabulary and group jigsaw using graphic organizers.

DIRECTIONS

1. Students make their own ‘identity cards’ of “The Big Eight”--major characteristics of identity: race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, religion, sexual orientation, ability (physical & mental), age, and nationality.
2. Next, students write how they identify with each identity trait on the card. For instance, on the race card the students might write white, black, Latino, or straight, bisexual, gay for sexual orientation. Let students define themselves. Be open to more than binaries and even to learning new vocabulary from your students.
3. Have them sort their cards in terms of their pride around these different aspects of their identities (most important things about their identity on top to least important on the bottom of the stack).
 - Have students fill in this sentence from their top three ‘pride cards’
My name is _____ and I am _____, _____, and _____.
4. Now have them sort their cards in order of their awareness of these identities (groups they are most aware of being a member of on top to least on the bottom).
5. Have students fill in this sentence from their top three ‘most aware’ ranking
My name is _____ and I am _____, _____, and _____.
- Ask students to journal about these two sentences: How are these sentences different? How do they make you feel?
6. Introduce new concepts. As you introduce concepts, ask students if they can think of examples from their own lives. This will ensure that students hear each new vocabulary word defined *and* put into context. Additionally, tie each concept back to the exercise above. The three concepts are:
 - *Social construction*—All of the Big Eight categories have certain meanings in our culture. This is NOT because these identifiers actually have a real value, but because our society has constructed them to mean something. This meaning doesn’t stay the same; it evolves over time. Look at womanhood and how it has changed over time. Tie-in to activity: look at the Big Eight, which of these identifiers are socially constructed? (Note: all of them have at least some aspect that has a socially constructed meaning)

- *Privilege points*—These are the identity traits that society automatically ascribes points to based on how they perceive you. Examples for this might be times when a person in authority treated you differently because they gauged you to be ‘safe’ or ‘harmless’, often because of identity markers related to race or gender. *Tie-in to activity: look at the Big 8, which of these identifiers carry the most ‘privilege points’?*
 - *Intersectionality*—This concept teaches that people have overlapping and intersecting identities that hold different statuses and interpretations in our society. The concept teaches that understanding the intersectionality of our identities can help us to better understand power, privilege and marginality in our society. For instance, we can’t look at a poor black woman and try to understand all her problems and challenges as a result of sexism. We would be ignoring the economic obstacles and racism that have also contributed to her struggles, since these are other parts of her identity that hold a socially constructed meaning in our society. *Tie-in to activity: look at what you put down on your cards for the Big 8 and list the three traits you think others judge you by the most.*
7. Now choose one to change to a different trait. How much do you think this would change the way people perceive you?
Optional: Have students read the article “Why Intersectionality Can’t Wait” for a great example of the intersection of race and gender.
8. Make jigsaw groups and have students complete graphic organizers to help them define one of the new vocabulary/concepts in their own words. Each student in the group will complete their own sheet but groups can discuss & work together to gain clarity of what the word means. These graphic organizers ask students to master the meaning of a word by examining and using it in a variety of ways.
9. Mix up the jigsaw groups so that each small group has at least one person who ‘mastered’ each of the three terms. Let the groups have a few minutes to teach/explain the examples they came up with for their term and the pictures they drew to remind themselves what the word means.
10. Next, students look at the cartoon “*Street Calculus*” and explain how it connects to the idea of social construction of identity and intersectionality.

REFLECTION/JOURNAL PROMPT

Have students create cartoons that reflect on identity and terms they learned today (social construction, intersectionality, privilege points). If you have students who don't want to cartoon they can respond to a writing prompt, such as:

- Examine an interaction you've recently had. Explain how the situation might have been different if you'd changed one aspect about your identity. (For instance, instead of being a Hispanic woman in that situation you'd been a white woman.)