



Arab American National Museum

Recognizing Stereotypes, Developing Media Literacy

Description:

- This lesson is a broad introduction to thinking about stereotypes and learning to critically engage with popular television and media. It prepares students to discuss stereotypes about Arab Americans during their museum visit. Part two of the lesson is conducted at the Arab American National Museum with their tour guides or independently with their instructor. Part three is a follow-up exercise to be conducted after their museum visit and in conclusion to the unit. It encourages students to compare and contrast stereotypes and their function across different minority groups.
- Corresponds to GLCEs: K1.3, K1.5, K1.6, P1.1, P1.2, P1.3
- Corresponds to Common Core: RL3, RL7, RL9, RI7, RI9, W3, W8

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will learn to recognize recurring images and ideas in popular culture
- Students will learn how values are attached to recurring images and ideas and the role of power in the formation of stereotypes
- Students will begin to discuss the affect of images on individuals and communities, with particular attention to the effects of stereotypes across different ethnic groups

Part One

Materials:

- Article: Patricia Hill Collins “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images”
<http://www4.ncsu.edu/~mseth2/com417s12/readings/HillCollinsImages.PDF>

Procedure:

- Assign the students Hill-Collins piece “Mammies, Matriarch, and Other Controlling Images” to prepare for classroom discussion.
- Ask students to jointly define stereotypes via classroom discussion. Write down key aspects on board.
- Ask students to describe each of the controlling images in the article in turn. What features make them a stereotype?
- What commonalities and differences exist across the types? (e.g. most relay information about the types sexuality, relationship to family, and employment status).
- Why, according to Hill-Collins, is each controlling? Why are they controlling **together** for black women in North America?
- Ask students if they have encountered these types in the world. Ask if they have encountered similar types in other minority ethnic groups.

- What is the effect or imagined effect of having particular types for each ethnic group? Is it controlling, or does it deny certain groups' power while granting it to others? Why or how might this work?
- Ask students to continue to think about these kinds of controlling images for their visit to the museum, and pay particular attention to images and types prevalent in the representation of Arabs.

Part Two

Location:

- Arab American National Museum, 2nd Floor Gallery, Jack Shaheen/Stereotypes room.

Procedure:

- Tour guides or instructors can incorporate this lesson at any point during their movement through the museum.
- In the gallery, ask the students to study the wall with popular media images of Arabs and note repeating images. Are the images diverse or repetitive?
- What are the repeating images? If you had to name types from the material circulated, what would they be? What are their features?
- What are the differences between the representations of men and women?
- Is there an underlying message across the images of Arabs and Arab Americans? Like the PHC article and types for black women, do you see a central theme or motif within the threads?

Part Three

Assign the students the following 2-4 page prompt. If desired, allow classroom time for students to share their observations and to discuss prompts after they have completed the exercise.

Prompt:

In the following 2-4 pages, reflect on our discussion of Hill-Collins article and our visit to the Arab American to compare and contrast the content and function of stereotypes about 2-3 ethnic groups. What consistencies in stereotypes occur across racial and gendered lines? How do the types differ? Do the stereotypes serve the same purpose in each instance, or do particular ethnic types have different consequences than others? Your goal in this exercise is NOT to suggest that some stereotypes are more positive or better or worse than others, but to explore the relationship between the stereotypes and how they create difference/discrimination/etc together in a broad social context, as Hill-Collins attempted to illustrate.