

Grade 5

Health Objective 3.01

Interpret stereotyping and discrimination as limiting and hurtful behaviors and demonstrate how to address these behaviors in a positive manner

Language Arts Objective 2.09

Listen actively and critically by: asking questions, delving deeper into the topic, elaborating on the information an ideas presented, evaluating information and ideas, making inferences and drawing conclusions and making judgments.

Materials Needed:

The Woman Who Outshone the Sun from a poem by Alejandro Cruz Martinez (Children's Book Press, 1994)

Focus:

- Begin the lesson by telling the students that some people do not understand and accept the differences among people and that those individuals can be very cruel and hateful to everyone that is different from them.
- Have all students stand up right beside their desks.
- Have students with brown eyes sit back down.
- Have students with black hair sit down.
- Have students with green eyes sit down.
- Continue asking the students to sit down until only those few with blonde hair and blue eyes are left standing. In most classes, the number of students with blond hair and blue eyes is very small.
- Tell the class to look around the room. Only those few students left standing would have survived the time period when the Holocaust took place because Hitler had such a strong hatred of people without blonde hair and blue eyes, he tried to get rid of them so that a dominant race would emerge.
- Explain to children that this is an extreme case of discrimination. However, no matter how small a negative comment or action may seem to you, others may be really hurt.

Teacher Input:

Write the words *stereotype*, and *discrimination* on the board and ask students to say what they think each means as you jot notes next to each word. Then have a volunteer look up each word in the dictionary and read the definition aloud. Discuss whether or not their definitions were similar to the dictionary definitions.

- What are some examples of stereotypes we or others might have? How can they be harmful? How can they lead to discrimination?
- Your goal is to lead students to understand that *identity* is how we view and define ourselves and what we're like. We are also affected by how others see us, but we can learn to define our own identities and reject negative labels that others might put on us. A *stereotype* is an oversimplified opinion that *every member* of a certain group of people *always* acts or looks a certain way. Stereotypes can keep us from seeing what an individual is really like and make us reject people before we know them. *Discrimination* is when we treat someone unfairly because he or she is different; it may be a consequence of stereotypes. What are some examples of stereotypes we or others might have? How can they be harmful? How can they lead to discrimination?

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always acts or looks a certain way. Stereotypes can keep us from seeing what an individual is really like and make us reject people before we know them. *Discrimination* is when we treat someone unfairly because he or she is different; it may be a consequence of stereotypes.

Ask students to share examples of discrimination they have experienced, seen, or heard of. Encourage as many students as possible to participate.

Practice & Assessment:

Introduce *The Woman Who Outshone the Sun*, explaining that the story is a legend from a Zapotec village in Oaxaca, Mexico. Point out where this location is on a map. Explain that the Zapotecs are one of the most important indigenous groups from the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Monte Alban was their ceremonial center and many people still go there to visit its impressive pyramids. Many Zapotecs still speak their indigenous language today as well as Spanish. Read the title as you show students the cover and ask if anyone has predictions as to what the story will be about.

While you read, make sure all students can see the pictures and elicit comments about the artwork. Throughout the book, ask students what magical or fantasy elements they notice in both the pictures and the story. Elicit their opinions about the content of the illustrations; for example, why is the woman encompassing the sky?

After the read-aloud, ask students the following questions:

- Why is the woman feared?
- Do people discriminate against her? How?
- Do people sometimes discriminate because of fear of the unknown? Why do you think they do this?
- What is the environmental message in the story?
- What is the message about gender (male/female issues) in this story?

The goal of your discussion is to help students understand that sometimes discrimination is a product of fear, especially fear of difference. You also want students to explore the idea that people and nature are connected and that if we do not respect each other, we may not respect the environment, which has consequences for all of us. Another issue to consider is gender discrimination. In this case, it is possible that the villagers discriminated against the main character because she was a strong woman who lived by herself.