

“What’s an Ism?”

(Adapted from Tony Sturgeon, Fishers Jr. High, Fishers, IN)

Objective: To examine how mediated messages convey stereotypes

Audience: Eighth grade students

Standards: Indiana Health Education Standard 8.5 - Interpersonal Communication

Materials Needed: Handouts entitled “Isms in the Movies,” “Isms in my Opinion,” and “Prejudices on Television”; movie clips; television; DVD/VCR; writing utensils

Time Required: Three class periods. Preparation time also is need

Teacher Instructions: This lesson addresses the media’s influence on stereotypes through a three-day process. The activities in this lesson use clips from movies and television shows to demonstrate how mediated images contain stereotypes. The lesson also defines different types of “isms” and how they are viewed in our culture.

Preparation for Day #1: Before Day One of this series, you will need to locate movie clips to show your class. The clips need to contain portrayals that feature various “isms” in society (e.g., ableism, ageism, racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism). The attached handout entitled “Isms in the Movies” provides suggestions of movies and particular movie scenes that work well for this activity. (The handout also offers questions for the students to answer.) Feel free to use your own movie ideas if you wish. Cue the videos to the right point to save time in class. Also, you will need to have definitions ready for the types of “isms” that are identified on the “Isms in My Opinion” handout.

Day #1: Distribute the handout entitled “Isms in my Opinion.” Help students define the “isms” on the handout. Next, ask them to “rate” the “isms.” Do so by saying, “A rating of 1 means the “ism” is the worst. Then just increase the number as you see fit.” The language in the directions is important. You should not tell them that they have to put the “isms” in order or rank them on a scale of 1-10. The hope is that they will rank all of the “isms” as a 1 - - the message you wish to convey is that no type of discrimination is any "better" or "worse" than another kind. Next, have students write a brief explanation for each ranking they give. Discuss their rankings as a class and explain to them the actual purpose of the activity. (This activity should take no more than ten minutes.)

After you finish this activity, distribute the “Isms in the Movies” handout. Begin showing the clips. After each clip, allow students two or three minutes to answer the question about that clip that appears on the handout. Students should answer the questions on another sheet of paper to have enough room to fully respond. You should be able to get through four clips in one class period.

Day #2: On Day Two, continue showing the clips as you did on Day One. You should be able to get through at least five clips on Day Two. At the end of Day Two, distribute the handout entitled “Prejudices on Television.”

See the Prejudices on Television curriculum piece for directions and handout.

Day #3: For Day Three, finish watching the remaining movie clips. After you have gone through these, use any remaining time in class to discuss the questions on the “Prejudices on Television” handout. If you run out of time, you may want to find a few moments in another class period to complete the conversation. Decide when students should turn in their responses to the clips and finalize the assignment.