

Prejudice and “Isms”

Objectives: (1) to understand the underlying meaning behind prejudice and various “isms” associated with prejudice and (2) to discuss ways in which students can combat prejudice.

Audience: High school juniors and seniors and adults

Materials needed: Movie clips; T.V. and VCR/DVD player; worksheets entitled “Definitions of ‘Isms,’” “Identifying Prejudice and ‘Isms,’” and “Combating Prejudice and ‘Isms,’”; writing utensils; blank sheets of paper.

Time required: 2 class periods (approx. 2 hours; can be modified). Preparation time also needed.

Teacher Instructions: This lesson defines prejudice and several different types of “isms” as they exist in society. This lesson uses movie clips to help students to identify types of prejudice and to consider ways to combat various “isms.”

Preparation for Day #1: Before Day #1 of this lesson, you will need to locate and review movie scenes to show to your class. Several movies scenes have been recommended to give you a place to start (see “Movie Selections”; also may wish to consult the “Media” page of this web site). The recommended scenes display a variety of examples of prejudice, however, some may not be appropriate for your class given the age of your students. Please choose clips that you think are best suited for the lesson and your students’ maturity level. Cue the movie clips to the right scenes to save time. Copies of the following handouts should be prepared for your students: “Definition of Isms” and “Identifying Prejudice and ‘Isms.’”

Day #1: To begin the lesson, ask students to state in their own words what they think the definition of “prejudice” is. Write their responses on the board. Next ask them to define various “isms” (e.g., racism, ableism, ageism). After this, break students into small groups (4 or 5 students/group would be ideal). Next, distribute the handout entitled “Definitions of ‘Isms,’” to the groups. They should compare their personal definitions of the terms with those on the worksheet. Before proceeding to the next activity, make sure that the students have a clear understanding of the definitions on the worksheet. Spend no more than 20 minutes on this initial portion of the lesson.

After you finish this initial activity, distribute the “Identifying Prejudice and ‘Isms,’” handout. Begin showing the movie clips. After each clip, allow the groups 2-5 minutes to respond to the items on the handout that correspond to each scene that you show. Students should have extra sheets of paper if more room is needed to respond to the questions. You should be able to examine two-three movie scenes in this class period. Break out of small groups and, as a class, discuss the students’ answers to items on the handout. Your goal is to make sure that they have appropriately applied the definitions of the various “isms” and can appropriately identify and explain examples of the “isms.”

Day #2: On Day #2, students should reform in their groups. Distribute the “Combating Prejudice and ‘Isms,’” handout. To complete this handout, you may reflect on the movie scenes shown on Day #1 or show several additional movie scenes. Allow the groups’ time to discuss appropriate ways in which the “ism” associated with each scene might be combated (either by themselves if they were a bystander to the situation or by the characters in the scene). You may wish to set parameters for what is an appropriate guideline (e.g., does not put you in physical danger, consider the impact on your relationships) or allow the students to develop their own criteria. Allow the students to share their ideas with the class and discuss the implications of these ideas.