

The Power of Words: Recognizing and Responding to Anti-Immigrant Stereotypes

Educator Overview

This lesson plan is designed to help students critically analyze the impact of misinformation on perceptions of migration, recognize historical examples of anti-immigrant prejudice, and explore ways to foster inclusive communities. By examining both historical and contemporary sources, students will develop a nuanced understanding of how misinformation and stereotypes shape public perceptions and behaviors. This lesson is meant to be adapted to your local context to ensure it is culturally and community-responsive.

Significance

Understanding the historical context of anti-immigrant prejudice provides a valuable framework for students to recognize and respond to current misinformation. This lesson encourages students to make purposeful connections between past and present, fostering critical thinking and empathy. By engaging with both historical and contemporary sources, students can better appreciate the recurring nature of these issues and the importance of informed, inclusive communities.

Handling and Responding to Stereotypes

Creating a safe and respectful classroom environment is crucial when discussing stereotypes and misinformation. Here are some suggestions:

1. **Acknowledge Emotions:** Conversations about stereotypes and prejudice evoke strong emotions. Please encourage students to express their feelings and provide support as needed.
2. **Foster Open Dialogue:** Use open-ended questions to facilitate discussion and ensure all voices are heard. Encourage students to listen actively and respectfully to their peers.
3. **Provide Historical Context:** Help students understand the historical roots of stereotypes and how they have evolved. Use historical examples to illustrate the impact of prejudice and the importance of challenging misinformation.
4. **Promote Critical Thinking:** Encourage students to analyze sources critically, question assumptions, and seek out multiple perspectives. Use Project Zero thinking routines to guide their analysis.
5. **Model Empathy and Respect:** Demonstrate empathy and respect in your interactions with students. Highlight the importance of understanding different perspectives and the human dignity of all individuals.
6. **Address Misconceptions:** Be prepared to address and correct misconceptions or biased statements that may arise during discussions. Use these moments as teaching opportunities to promote understanding and inclusivity.

Adapting to Local Context

To ensure the lesson is culturally and community-responsive, consider the following:

- **Local Relevance:** Select historical and contemporary examples that resonate with your local community's experiences and histories.
- **Community Input:** Engage with community members, including parents and local organizations, to gather insights and perspectives to enrich the lesson.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Be mindful of the cultural backgrounds of your students and incorporate materials and discussions that respectfully reflect their diverse experiences.
- **Student-Centered:** Encourage students to share their own migration stories or those of their families, fostering a sense of belonging and validation.

Lesson Structure

1. [Lesson Plan Introduction](#)
2. [Part 1: Consequences of Anti-Immigrant Prejudice \(25 minutes\)](#)
 - Objective: Understand the impact of anti-immigrant prejudice on individuals, communities, and societies.
 - Activity: Introduce the topic using a PowerPoint on "Understanding Anti-Immigrant Tropes," followed by a reflection and discussion on the consequences of anti-immigrant prejudice.
3. [Part 2: Digging Deeper: Analyzing Anti-Immigrant Attitudes in Political Cartoons \(20 minutes\)](#)
 - Objective: Identify patterns of anti-immigrant stereotypes in political cartoons.
 - Activity: Analyze historical political cartoons to understand the negative messages and stereotypes about immigrants.
4. [Part 3: Critical Analysis of News Sources \(30 minutes\)](#)
 - Objective: Analyze newspaper articles to understand the role of misinformation in shaping perceptions of migration.
 - Activity: Work in small groups to critically analyze articles exploring false conspiracy theories about migration and voting, followed by group discussions.
5. [Stage 4: Turning to Action \(45 minutes\)](#)
 - Objective: Develop a campaign to counter misinformation and promote understanding.
 - Activity: Discuss strong anti-immigrant stereotypes heard in school, develop a school-based awareness campaign, and present campaign ideas to the class.

Lesson Plan

Guiding Questions

- How does misinformation about migration affect individuals and communities?
- What strategies can be employed to ensure our communities are informed and inclusive?
- How can understanding different migration stories help us build empathy and reduce stereotypes?

Objective: Students will critically analyze the impact of misinformation on migration perceptions, recognize historical examples of anti-immigrant prejudice, and explore ways to foster inclusive communities.

Stage 1: Consequences of Anti-Immigrant Prejudice (25 minutes)

- **Objective:** Recognize the impact of anti-immigrant prejudice on individuals and communities.
- **Instructions:**
 - **Introduce the topic:** Here's a way to introduce the [PowerPoint on "Understanding Anti-Immigrant Tropes"](#) to your students. Explain that the objective of the lesson is to explore and understand the impact of stereotypes and anti-immigrant tropes on individuals, communities, and societies.
 - Suggestions for sharing the PowerPoint:
 - Opening Statement: "Today, we will explore a critical topic that affects many people around the world, including in our own community. We will look at anti-immigrant tropes—stereotypes and misconceptions about immigrants—and understand their impact."
 - Introduction to Bias: "We all carry biases with us, learned through our socialization. These biases shape our perceptions, beliefs, and understanding of the world. Stereotypes are generalized ideas about groups of people, and they play a significant role in how we view immigrants."
 - Slide 1: The Role of Stereotypes: "A stereotype is an oversimplified and generalized belief about a group of people. They are pervasive and difficult to avoid, significantly influencing our views on immigrants. Common stereotypes can lead to misconceptions."
 - Slide 2: Trope #1: Immigrants and Crime: "Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, there is a long-standing stereotype linking immigrants to crime and terror. Negative portrayals in media and politics drive this prejudice. For example, a study from the Cato Institute found that undocumented immigrants are 37.1% less likely to be convicted of a crime."
 - Slide 3: Trope #2: Immigrants Are Bad for the Economy: "Immigrants are often portrayed as economic burdens. However, evidence shows that immigrants positively impact the economy by filling labor shortages, driving entrepreneurship, and contributing to tax revenues."
 - Slide 4: Trope #3: Immigrants Can't or Won't Fit In: "This trope includes fears about weakening social cohesion and cultural dilution. However,

evidence shows that immigrants are integrating into the U.S. as fast or faster than before, with high rates of English proficiency, educational attainment, and civic participation."

- Slide 5: Trope #4: Immigrants Bring Disease: "Immigrants are often stereotyped as carriers of diseases, leading to unfounded public health fears. In reality, many immigrants are healthier than average Americans, with lower rates of chronic diseases and higher life expectancy."
- Conclusion: "These stereotypes and prejudices are not new. Throughout history, various immigrant groups have faced similar biases. Understanding these historical patterns can help us address contemporary issues more effectively."
- **Reflection and Discussion:**
 - **Whole Group:** Start with an open-ended question to invite conversation: "What do you think are the consequences of anti-immigrant prejudice on individuals, communities, and societies?"
 - **Small Group:** Map the impact based on one of the following profiles:
 - A Middle School Student from an Immigrant Family?
 - An Immigrant Parent of an elementary school student,
 - A Non-immigrant Corporate Executive, A Community Politician,
 - A recent college graduate from an American family,
 - A multigenerational High School in an immigrant-rich community.
 - **Reflection:** Have students share their findings. Compare and contrast them.
 - Share Research-Based Insights with Students from slide eight of the PowerPoint.
 - **Significance:**
 - Introduce the [Project Zero Three Whys Thinking Routine](#) to discuss
 - Why does this matter to me?
 - Why does this matter to my community?
 - Why does this matter to the world?

Stage 2: Digging Deeper: Analyzing Anti-Immigrant Attitudes in Political Cartoons (20 minutes)

Preparation:

- Select several anti-immigrant cartoons from the mid to late 19th and early 20th centuries. Ensure the images are representative of the period and attitudes. Consider using the images from the PowerPoint presentation or refer to [this lesson](#) for a more extensive collection.

Activity: Analyzing Anti-Immigrant Attitudes in Political Cartoons

- **Objective:** Identify patterns of anti-immigrant stereotypes in political cartoons.
- **Instructions:**
 - You can facilitate the activity with a whole group, small groups, or pairs.
 - **Describe the Image:** Encourage students to describe what they see objectively.
 - **Analyze the Elements:** Focus on various elements of the picture and identify negative messages and stereotypes about immigrants.

- **Interpretation:** Reflect on how the identified stereotypes contribute to the cartoon's editorial message.
- **Wrap-up:** Discuss how the images reflected the patterns introduced earlier. Are there other themes that emerged from close looking?

Stage 3: Critical Analysis of News Sources

- **Objective:** Analyze newspaper articles to understand the role of misinformation in shaping perceptions of migration.
- **Introduction:** This activity aims to understand how misinformation shapes perceptions of migration. While the examples featured below involve statements made by politicians, this is not intended as a political exercise. We have chosen these examples because they are widely shared online and by prominent figures, making it essential to understand their impact. This activity will help you develop media and news literacy skills by critically analyzing sources and identifying misinformation.
- **Small Group Work:** Provide students with copies of articles exploring false conspiracy theories about migration and voting.
 - **Suggested Resources:**
 - **Springfield, Ohio Pets**
 - [Immigrants-eat-pets trope is a century-old stereotype and 'very old racism,' USA Today](#)
 - [False claim that immigrants are stealing and eating pets continues to spread. Rumor Guard from the News Literacy Project](#)
 - **Aurora, Colorado, Gangs**
 - [Aurora police chief says there's no evidence that Venezuelan gang took over apartment, NPR](#)
 - [Viral falsehoods depict fake Venezuelan gang invasions in U.S. cities. Rumor Guard from the News Literacy Project](#)
 - **Nationwide, Voting**
 - [What the data actually shows about whether undocumented immigrants vote in U.S. elections, CNN](#)
 - [Posts falsely claim surge in migrants registering to vote without photo ID. Rumor Guard from the News Literacy Project](#)
 - [The GOP is making false claims about noncitizens voting. It's affecting real voters. NPR](#)
- **Discussion Part 1 (small groups):**
 - Identify where and when the article was published and what they know about the organization that published it.
 - Discuss the evidence (or lack thereof) presented in the article.
- **Discussion Part 2 (whole group):**
 - Explain the different reasons that people either believe this conspiracy or are sharing it.
 - Reflect on the effectiveness of the reporting to counter the conspiracy.

Stage 4: Turning to Action

Activity: School-Based Awareness Campaign

Objective: Develop a campaign to counter misinformation and promote understanding.

Instructions:

1. Local Stories Discussion (10 minutes):

- Begin by discussing strong anti-immigrant stereotypes heard in school. Ask students to share any stereotypes or prejudices they have encountered or heard about. Encourage an open and respectful dialogue.
- Use the Project Zero thinking routine to guide their analysis:
 - **Why does this matter to me?**
 - **Why does this matter to my community?**
 - **Why does this matter to the world?**

2. Campaign Development (25 minutes):

- Divide students into small groups and assign each group a specific stereotype to counter.
- **Part One:** Have them research the stereotypes using a fact-check website.
- **Part Two:** Each group will work together to create a part of the campaign, such as:
 - **Posters:** Design posters that debunk common stereotypes and provide factual information.
 - **Social Media Posts:** Create social media content to raise awareness and promote understanding.
 - **Presentations:** Develop short presentations to educate peers about the impact of anti-immigrant prejudice.
 - **Events:** Plan school events or activities that celebrate diversity and foster inclusion.

3. Presentation and Reflection (10 minutes):

- Have each group present their campaign ideas to the class. Encourage students to provide constructive feedback and suggestions.
- Reflect on the importance of countering misinformation and promoting understanding. Discuss how their campaigns can make a difference in their school and community.

Conclusion:

- Emphasize the importance of taking action to create an inclusive and respectful environment. Highlight the role of students in fostering understanding and countering prejudice.
- You might encourage students to continue their efforts beyond the classroom and involve their families and communities in promoting awareness and inclusion.