

ACTIVITY 41

Gaining Perspective on Perspectives

Purpose: Consider how membership in a particular group can influence how people view those outside of that group, and identify examples of “we” and “they” distinctions in our community, country, and world.

ADVISOR NOTES:

1. Edit the Final Discussion Questions

This activity is designed to follow Activity 39: The Sneetches and/or Activity 40: What Is “Normal”? If you did not do either activity, adjust the final discussion questions.

APPROXIMATE TIME:

40 minutes

MATERIALS:

READING

“We and They”



HANDOUT

Talking about
“We and They”

PROCEDURE:

1. Reflect on “Perspective”

- Ask your advisees to respond to the following prompt in their journals. Let them know that they will be sharing their responses with their peers.
 - How do you get ideas and form impressions about people who live in your community or people who you interact with on a regular basis?
 - How do you get ideas and form impressions about people who live in places far away from you?
- Sitting in a circle and using the **Wraparound** or “popcorn” strategy (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy), have advisees share their responses to the first question. Then discuss the following question as a group:
 - How do we form opinions about people and the world around us?

2. Apply the Concept of Perspective to a Poem

- Either ask for volunteers to define “perspective” or provide this definition:
Perspective is your point of view. Perspective is how you see and understand the world and the people around you.
- If their journal discussion about the factors that shape how we see people and the world around us didn’t touch on this point, remind advisees that we each have a perspective that is influenced by our unique identity as well as the communities to which we belong.

- Next, pass out the reading **"We and They"** and ask for volunteers to read it out loud. Or you might choose a **read aloud** strategy like "popcorn style" (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy).
- Pass out the handout **Talking about "We and They"** and divide your advisory into pairs or small groups of three to discuss the poem together.
- Then form a circle for an advisory discussion that touches on some or all of the following questions:
 - What factors shape the idea of "We" and "They" in the poem?
 - What sorts of things does the "We" group focus on when describing the "They" group?
 - Kipling, who lived from 1865 to 1936, was a British journalist, writer, and poet who was born in Bombay (now Mumbai), India. At age five, he was sent to England for school, and he returned to India when he was 17 years old to start his career as a journalist before moving back to England when he was in his 20s. How might Kipling's childhood experiences have impacted his sense of identity? How might they have impacted his perspective on the world?
 - How do we make distinctions between "we" and "they" in our own lives, in the media, and online? When, if ever, are these distinctions beneficial? When, if ever, are they harmful?



"We and They"

By Rudyard Kipling

Father and Mother, and Me,
Sister and Auntie say
All the people like us are We,
And every one else is They.
And They live over the sea,
While We live over the way,
But—would you believe it—They look upon We
As only a sort of They!

We eat pork and beef
With cow-horn-handled knives.
They who gobble Their rice off a leaf,
Are horrified out of Their lives;
While they who live up a tree,
And feast on grubs and clay,
(Isn't it scandalous?) look upon We
As a simply disgusting They!

We shoot birds with a gun.
They stick lions with spears.
Their full-dress is un-.
We dress up to Our ears.
They like Their friends for tea.
We like Our friends to stay;
And, after all that, They look upon We
As an utterly ignorant They!

We eat kitcheny food.

We have doors that latch.

They drink milk or blood,

Under an open thatch.

We have Doctors to fee.

They have Wizards to pay.

And (impudent heathen!) They look upon We

As a quite impossible They!

All good people agree,

And all good people say,

All nice people, like Us, are We

And every one else is They:

But if you cross over the sea,

Instead of over the way,

You may end by (think of it!) looking on We

As only a sort of They!'

1 "We and They," Rudyard Kipling, "Debits and Credits" (1919–1923), Kipling Society website, http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems_wethey.htm.



Talking about “We and They”

Directions: Use Rudyard Kipling’s poem “We and They” to help answer the following questions.

1. In the first stanza, who is “We”? Who is “They”? How are the two groups different? How are they similar?
2. What words and phrases does the poet use to describe “We” and “They” in stanzas 2–4?

“We”	“They”

3. What does the poet realize in the final stanza of the poem?
4. How do we make distinctions about “we” and “they” in our own lives? How do we make them online? How do we see them made in the media?
5. When can distinctions between “we” and “they” be beneficial (positive)? When can they be harmful?