

LESSON

I Feel Seen

Overview

About This Lesson

Being seen as you want to be seen is an invaluable gift, and students will understand how feelings of belonging and connection that come from supportive relationships have a powerful impact on self-esteem and self-development. In this lesson, students will engage with a short animated film to understand the power of cultivating positive and supportive relationships.

Essential Questions

- How do we become who we want to be in the world?

Guiding Questions

- Whose opinions and beliefs have the greatest effect on how I think about my own identity?
- Why is it important to develop relationships that help us feel seen, valued, and secure?

Facing History Learning Outcomes

- Practice perspective-taking in order to develop empathy and recognize the limits of any one person's point of view.
- Develop the tools, efficacy, and voice to envision and enact positive changes in their personal lives, communities, and world.

What's Included

This lesson uses the following texts and materials. Access materials and a lesson Plan-on-a-Page in this [Google Folder](#).

- Handout: "Pearl of Wisdom" Graphic Organizer

Preparing to Teach

A Note to Teachers

1. Framing This Lesson's Film with Intention

- The short animated film that students will watch in this lesson focuses on an adult's reflection on how she developed an understanding of her gender identity and who supported her on that journey. Introducing and modeling the use of respectful language when talking about gender and the gender spectrum will help foster an inclusive learning environment that supports a sense of belonging for all students. You might find it helpful to review the NPR feature [A Guide to Gender Identity Terms](#) as part of your lesson preparation process.
- Take time to review your classroom contract with students before beginning the lesson.

This will help to reinforce the norms you have established and the idea of the classroom as a safe space for students to voice concerns, raise questions, or express emotions that may arise.

2. Understanding How Pearls Are Made

This lesson focuses on the saying “pearls of wisdom” and will require you to briefly explain how a pearl is made. You might emphasize the idea that it involves something that is originally irritating or intrusive being changed over time into something beautiful: a pearl! The following definition from *Britannica Kids* may be helpful, but any basic overview will do: “Mollusks make pearls as a protection against irritants that sneak into their soft tissue. They do so by exuding layer upon layer of shell material. For some animals, this material is nacre, or mother of pearl.”¹

Lesson Plan

Activities

1. Reflect on Supportive Relationships

- Remind students about the discussion they had in the previous class about what it means to “feel seen.” Let them know that in today’s class, they are going to think about how supportive relationships can help people feel seen and valued. Prepare to watch this lesson’s short animated film by having students reflect in their journals on what it feels like when someone encourages you to be your true self. Let them know that they will not be required to share what they write.
- Use the following questions to prompt students’ thinking. Let them know that they should think about friends, family members, teammates, members of their church, mosque, or synagogue, teachers and coaches, or other mentors in their life. Ask:
 - Who are the people in your life, past and present, that have made you feel like you can be your true self?
 - What are some of the things those people have said or done to help you feel this way?
- If students feel comfortable, have them share ideas from their journal response with the class.

2. Watch a Short Animated Film about “Pearls of Wisdom”

- Have students watch the StoryCorps short video [The Door She Opened](#) (02:40). After watching, ask students to respond to the following questions in a Think-Pair-Share activity and then debrief as a whole class.

¹ *Britannica Kids*, s.v. “[pearl](#),” accessed September 20, 2022.

- What was the most impactful, important, or memorable moment in the film for you? What makes you say that?
 - How did Dee feel seen by Aunt Yaya? What does feeling seen look like, sound like, or feel like in the film?
- Then tell students that they are going to explore the idea of “pearls of wisdom” in a creative activity. Remind them of the final moments in the video where Dee Westenhauser reflects on her relationship with Aunt Yaya: “She gave me pearls of wisdom; you could string a necklace to the moon and back with everything she would share . . . I loved her, she loved me back, and behind that white door became the place where I could be the little girl that I needed to be.”
- Explain to students how pearls are created (see Note to Teacher) and let them know that this is why the phrase “pearl of wisdom” is often used to describe a positive lesson formed over time from an experience that was once painful or challenging. Tell students they are going to have the opportunity to think about the “pearls of wisdom” they’ve received from people who have made them feel like they belong, and how that wisdom has helped or is helping them be their best selves.

3. Create and Share “Pearls of Wisdom”

- Tell students that they will write and design “pearls of wisdom” to be posted in the classroom or somewhere in your school to create “a necklace you could string to the moon and back.” To do this, give students time to journal about the pearls of wisdom they have received. If they need more structure, prompt them with the following question:

Think of a wise saying, piece of advice, important lesson, or idea that has been passed on to you from someone who has supported you and made you feel seen.
- Then distribute the **“Pearl of Wisdom” Graphic Organizer** and tell students that they are going to write, draw, or make a collage depicting a piece of wisdom that is meaningful to them. Gather art supplies—colored pencils, pens, crayons, magazines—and then let students get to work creating their own pearls of wisdom.
- There are many ways that students can share their “pearls” with the class. They can post them around the room for a [gallery walk](#), present them in a circle discussion, or share them in pairs or triads.