

# Identifying Stereotypes and Countering Them

## Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies  
Grade Level: Grade 4  
Suggested Duration: 2-3 fifty-minute periods

## Stage 1 Desired Results

### Established Goals

#### Social Studies

- (1) The civics and government content standards for fourth grade are that each student will:
- (a) demonstrate civic participation within the classroom or school.
- (4) The history content standards for fourth grade are that each student will:
- (d) describe how historical accounts are impacted by individual perspectives.

### Essential Understandings

IEFA Essential Understanding 2: Just as there is great diversity among tribal nations, there is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations, and people. There is no generic American Indian.

IEFA Essential Understanding 6: History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

### Understandings

- Every person is an individual. Grouping people based on perceived characteristics is stereotyping.
- Our own experiences influence our understandings of others.
- American Indians have often been stereotyped as violent and primitive in historical narratives and American popular culture.
- We should respect the diversity of all cultures.

### Essential Questions

- What is stereotyping?
- What is a bias?
- How can a bias or stereotype be identified?
- Is it possible to be unbiased?



- Can a stereotype be positive?
- How do stereotypes affect cross-cultural understanding?

### Students will be able to...

- use online resources to create portraits of present-day American Indians.
- learn to evaluate website content and recognize online stereotypes.

### Students will know...

- ways our own experiences influence our understanding of others.

## Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks

1. Teachers evaluate students on the accuracy of the information in their reports.
2. Each student evaluates information quality – accuracy, usefulness, fact/fiction.

## Stage 3 Learning Plan

### Learning Activities

To begin discussion, ask students if there has ever been a time when someone assumed something about them based upon their appearance positive or negative; e.g., they were lazy, must like a certain type of video game, food, or music. Collect responses with an eye towards concrete examples of stereotyping. As students provide their responses, ask them how it made them feel. How did they know the person was making assumptions about them?

Stereotype is more of how we describe people and prejudice deals with how we feel about people.

Activity: Ask students to draw a scientist and have students share their drawings with a partner. Did they have any similarities? Did students make any assumptions about what a scientist should look like?

Next, conduct a google search using the word “scientist”. Google has a menu bar that displays images so click on the images tab and have students conduct a Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) as they examine the images. This could be done via large group or if students have access to Chromebooks, they could do this activity with a partner.

Consider using these three questions for analyzing the images:

- What is going on in this image?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Go back to their pictures and discuss the Essential Questions with students. Take time to talk about new vocabulary words such as Stereotypes and Bias.

Now transition to stereotypes and Native Americans.

Generic Indian identity – Educators should avoid materials that imply there is a generic “American Indian” identity or that suggest American Indians are mono-cultural or mono-linguistic. At the time of European contact, there were over 1,000 unique indigenous groups in what is now the United States, each with its own language and culture. Today, there are over 500 different federally recognized tribes who speak over 300 distinct languages. Indigenous languages are not dialects, and most are not mutually intelligible. Some are language isolates (languages that are unrelated to any other existing language). Beware of instructional materials and literary works that mix and match tribal attributes without distinction. Even today, all tribes do not share the same values, norms, spiritual beliefs, customs, kinship systems, material culture, economies, political systems, physical attributes, or specific histories.

Ask students to do the same Google search using the term Native American and conduct another VTS and facilitate a class discussion.

Note: If using this activity with Native American students your discussions might be more tribal specific regarding their reactions to the images.

Conclude the activity by sharing some of the key concepts from the OPI publication, *Evaluating American Indian Materials and Resources for the Classroom* (see pages 7–16 for concepts to highlight)

### **Student Research Activity**

Brainstorm with students a list of notable Native Americans. How many can they come up with? Were they all historical figures or were any contemporary Native Americans identified?

Explain to students they will create a written portrait of the life of a present-day member of their selected tribe. Have students use the recommended websites in the resource section to locate information about the individuals to create their portraits. Remind students to use the “Identifying Biases and Stereotypes in Instructional Materials – Websites and Online Content” to verify the reliability of the sites they use and to avoid stereotypes/bias in their reports.

Include at a minimum the following information in their report:

- ✓ What tribe(s) is the individual from?
- ✓ What are some notable accomplishments of that person?
- ✓ Why did you choose this person?
- ✓ What lessons did you learn and how can you apply this to your behavior?

Ask students to present their portrait reports to the class. Discuss how the Indians depicted in the portraits differ from the images of Native Americans students had before writing their reports.

Revisit the Understandings and Essential Questions to summarize key concepts learned.

*This grade 4 topic on examples of stereotypes is pivotal, students will begin to identify stereotypes of Indian people based on perceived group characteristics, and they will be able to identify the misconceptions.*

## Resources

[\*American Indians 101 - Frequently Asked Questions\*](#)

[\*Evaluating American Indian Materials and Resources for the Classroom\*](#)

[Everyday Native Project](#)

[How \(Not\) to Teach Kids about Native Cultures](#)

[Indian Education for All Poster Series](#)

[Montana Official State Travel Site](#) This website has general information about each reservation regarding people, location, economy, and points of interest.”

[Native American Hall of Fame Curriculum for grades 8-12](#)

[Native Appropriations | Representations Matter](#)