

The school that tried to end racism

Topic

Unconscious bias and learning about racism

Aims

- To raise awareness of unconscious bias
- To practice listening skills
- To practice reading skills
- To focus on collocations
- To practice giving opinions in a discussion

Age group and level

B2+ secondary and adult learners

Time

60-90 minutes

Materials

The school that tried to end racism student worksheet

Video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1I3wJ7pJUjg>

Introduction

This lesson plan is based around a UK documentary called “The school that tried to end racism”. The documentary focuses on a project in a school in London in which 12- and 13-year-old students were tested for unconscious race bias, and then took part in a series of activities designed to tackle racism. In this lesson, students will watch a short clip from the documentary, read a text about the project, and focus on collocations. Learners will reflect on the key concepts that the project addresses. Finally, students have the opportunity to reflect on how people reacted to the documentary and why and reflect on their own opinions.

Procedure

Guidance	<p>The themes covered in this lesson should be dealt with in a sensitive way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sensitive to the different cultural/ethnic backgrounds of your students. • Start the class by reminding students that they may feel uncomfortable talking about race, and that is OK - they are free to give their opinions, but they must be respectful of everyone in the class. • Ensure that you are monitoring discussions and activities. • If you feel unable to deal with any issues that come up, say that you will address them in a future class, and steer the lesson back on track. This will give you an opportunity to plan how to address potentially difficult issues more effectively with appropriate support and resources.
1. Lead-in (10 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to look at the opinions on the worksheet. Students should think about which reflect their own ideas. Give them a minute to read to check they understand the ideas. • Then put students into pairs or small groups to compare their ideas. Encourage them to give reasons for their opinions.
2. Task 1: Discussion and video	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put students into different groups. Ask them to discuss the questions in task 1. You might need to explain some of the vocabulary here – particularly “stopped and searched”. Note that in question c students should insert the official language of their own country – e.g. “Is French your parents’ first language?” • This can be quite a brief activity, but you might want to get feedback from your students, especially if you have a very culturally diverse class. • Now tell students they are going to watch a short video. It’s about an activity in a secondary school in the UK. Students should mark the questions from Task 1 in the order they hear them. <i>Answers: 1. C, 2. E, 3. A, 4. D, 5. B</i> • Play the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=113wJ7pJUjg • After watching students should discuss the “After watching” questions. Again, get some feedback to check students have understood that the activity is designed to draw attention to underlying inequalities in society, and to find out if they think this is an effective activity. • PLEASE NOTE: It is not recommended that you recreate the race activity shown in the video in your classroom. This experiment should be only conducted by trained race experts. The idea here is to get learners thinking about what the objective of the activity is, and how effective it might be.

3. Task 2: Pre-Reading (vocabulary matching)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell students that the video is taken from a documentary which was made in the UK about a school that did an experiment to try to end racism. Students are now going to read more about the experiment and how it worked. • Before students read, ask them to work in pairs to match the words in the table with the definitions. All words appear in the text or in the previous video: <i>Answers: Awareness – knowing about something, Bias – supporting or opposing something in an unfair way because of your personal opinions or preferences, Diverse – including many different types of people or things, Ethnic – connected with a group of people who share a cultural tradition, White privilege – having advantages in life because of your race.</i> • Drill the pronunciation of these words, and ensure students understand the meaning
4. Task 3: Reading and comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now tell students to read the text for the first time. Do they think the experiment was a success? Why (not)? • Get some feedback, and then ask students to answer the comprehension questions in Task 3 individually. Then give them the opportunity to compare their answers, referring back to the text. <i>Answers: 1. It's described as ethnically diverse as there are around 50-50 White and Black, Asian, and ethnic minority students. Students should then compare this to their own school experience. 2. Unconscious bias is difficult to identify because we are not aware that we have it. In this programme, they used a test developed by Harvard academics which is widely regarded as an accurate measure of unconscious race bias. 3. Colour-blindness means not seeing different races or colours or pretending not to. Dr Rollock thinks its problematic because if we don't recognise racial differences, we deny that different races experience society differently. 4. Affinity groups are groups of students divided by race. The main difference was that the Black and Minority group felt more comfortable talking about race within their groups than the white students. 5. Some people felt the documentary caused some students to feel bad about their race, and also made students more aware of racial differences, which they hadn't thought about before.</i>
5. Task 4: Focus on collocations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to look for the five collocations in bold in the text. They should discuss in pairs what they mean. <i>Possible definitions: tackle racism head-on: to deal with / combat racism in a direct way, ethnically diverse: coming from different cultural/ racial experiences and backgrounds, widely accepted – most people agree with/ accept the idea, significant difference – a big difference, prove controversial – divide opinion – some people like it and some people don't.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Then ask students to complete the sentence using an appropriate collocation from the reading. <i>Answers: 1. Proved controversial, 2. Widely accepted, 3. Significant difference, 4. Tackle racism head-on, 5. Culturally diverse</i>
6. Task 5: Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask students to discuss the question in pairs / small groups. Encourage them to give reasons for their answers. Get feedback at the end of the discussion
7. Optional extra activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As an optional extra activity, you could show students some of the comments from the YouTube video that they watched. The video proved controversial. You could write up the following comments or project them on the board or choose a selection of comments from YouTube that you think are appropriate for your group. Ask students which comments they agree with. Why might people have these opinions? What do they think the researchers behind the project might say in response? Students can then write their own comment for the video. <p><i>“This is creating racism, not ending it”</i> <i>“Beautiful exercise for teaching kids about systemic racism. Thank you!”</i> <i>“I feel like white people are targeted unfairly about racism”</i> <i>“Thank you for presenting it this way. You’ve made it very clear for those who could not visualise exactly how racism makes people feel. Well done!”</i></p>

Contributed by

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