

UNDERSTANDING STEREOTYPES IN MEDIA



RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 9 to 12

SUBJECT: Media Studies

Suggested time: 120 minutes

Essential Question: What is the impact of stereotyping in the media and cultural appropriation.

LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Explore and deconstruct common stereotypes about First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples in commercial media
- Identify stereotypes and challenge them through inquiry in order to better understand the experiences of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples

WORD BANK

Cultural appropriation—taking over of creative or artistic forms, themes, or practices by one cultural group from another. It is in general used to describe Western appropriations of non-Western or non-white forms, and carries connotations of exploitation and dominance.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

- Computers and projector
- Link to "I Am Not the Indian You Had in Mind" short film
- Friesen, Andrew "A Tribe Called Red asks fans to 'stop wearing headdresses and war paint' to their shows" www.cbc.ca/manitoba/scene/music/2013/07/12/a-tribe-called-red-asks-fans-to-stop-showing-up-in-redface/
- King, Thomas "I'm not the Indian you had in mind" www.nsi-canada.ca/2012/03/im-not-the-indian-you-had-in-mind/#
- "Native Appropriations: Examining Representations of Indigenous Peoples" nativeappropriations.com

Activity

1.

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING: Begin with a conversation about stereotypes. Have students work in groups to discuss the following questions, then ask a few members of the class to share main thoughts.

- a. What is a stereotype?
- b. What are some examples of stereotypes
- c. How do you think stereotypes affect people?
- d. What do you think happens when stereotypes are perpetuated by the media?
- e. How do you think stereotypes in the media affect their audiences?

2.

Tell students you will be discussing stereotypes surrounding people who identify as First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Introduce students to the short film "I Am Not the Indian You Had in Mind" (5:28). This film illustrates a poem of the same name, by Thomas King and challenges common stereotypes about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. It shows several clips of how Indigenous Peoples have been stereotypically portrayed in media.

3.

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING: Before viewing the film, have students prepare a reflective or double entry journal. In a reflective double entry journal students write the questions on the left hand side of their notebooks with their responses then add thoughts collected from the class discussion. On the right hand side they will write their personal reflection on the film. Arrows may then be drawn between the two to show connections. Select from the following questions and write them on the board for students to record. Students should leave enough room between questions for their answers as well as any comments they want to add during the class discussion of the questions.

- Given the title of the poem/film, what do you think is the intended message of this video?
- What the film what you expected? Explain your answer.
- What stereotypes are being challenged in the video?
- In what way are the stereotypes deconstructed (broken down and examined)? Do you think it is an effective way to convey the film's message?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What do you think this video is trying to achieve? What is the purpose?

4. After watching the film but before reviewing the questions, have students reflect on the right handed side of the reflection journal.
5. Review the questions with the class. Once the discussion slows, instruct students to draw arrows between their reflection journal and the class discussion notes indicating the relationship between their personal experiences with those of their peers.
6. One way in which consumer media continues to perpetuate stereotypes about First Nations, Métis and Inuit people is through cultural appropriation. Appropriation is the act of taking something from someone's culture and making it one's own—often without permission.
7. Discuss appropriation with students and what it means. Ask students if they can think of examples of cultural appropriation (e.g., "dressing up" as First Nations, Métis and Inuit people for Halloween, wearing headdresses to concerts, etc.).
8. Share with students an example of cultural appropriation and stereotypes in the media. **A Tribe Called Red** is a trio of First Nations DJs who mash up electronic music with Indigenous music. The music group asked fans to stop wearing headdresses to their concerts because they are not an accurate representation of their culture and are disrespectful.

Distribute the following CBC Music article to students:
www.cbc.ca/manitoba/scene/music/2013/07/12/a-tribe-called-red-asks-fans-to-stop-showing-up-in-redface/

More examples of appropriation and stereotypes in consumer media can be found at: nativeappropriations.com
9. Have students discuss the CBC music article in groups. Ask the following guiding questions:
 - a. What do you think the impact is on an audience when media tries to "sell" a representation of someone else's culture?
 - b. Reflecting on the earlier discussion on stereotypes, what is the impact on an audience when the media represents a culture as a product in a stereotypical way?
10. Instruct students to research examples of stereotypes in advertisements and media. Once they have their examples, each student must select one media clip of First Nations, Métis or Inuit people or culture being stereotyped.
11. Students will then research the cultural symbols, traditions or representations in their chosen advertisement and answer the question: What is the impact when this symbol or tradition is used as a product in consumer media? (E.g., what is the history of headdresses and what might the impact be on audiences when they are used as a product?).

12.

RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING: Using the poem/film from earlier in the class as a model, have students share their findings through film, poems, stories, visual representation, posters, etc. Allow students to choose the way in which they share their final product.

Students should justify their choice of medium (e.g., considering target audience and considering the most effective way to conveying their message) in their presentation.