

### Lesson Plan and Overview

#### Lesson: [The Identity Iceberg](#)

There are many aspects to a person's identity, including the social identity groups to which they belong (race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.). Some parts of identity are clearly visible, and many are not. When you first meet a person, you may think you can clearly see aspects of their identity, but in fact, many aspects of one's identity are not visible when you first see a person. An iceberg is a helpful metaphor when exploring identity. You can only see a small part of an iceberg (about 13%) that is above the waterline. Like an iceberg, only a few aspects of one's identity are immediately visible and apparent. We must go below the waterline to see people in their full complexity.

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### Grade Level

Grades 6–12

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### Learning Objectives

- Students will explore the various parts of identity, especially social identity, that make up who the person is.
- Students will understand that when you first meet someone, what's visible is only a small part of their identity.
- Students will reflect on their own identity and create an identity iceberg that convey aspects of their identity at different places in the iceberg.

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### Materials Needed

- [The Identity Iceberg](#) student mini-lesson
- [Identity Iceberg Worksheet](#)

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### Words You Might Use

**Bias:** A preference either for or against an individual or group that affects fair judgment.

**Identity:** The qualities, beliefs, etc. that make a particular person or group different from others.

**Stereotype:** The false idea that all members of a group are the same and think and behave in the same way.

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## Core Activity

First, have students watch [The Identity Iceberg](#) student mini-lesson either on their own or show it during class time (in person or virtual). After watching, engage students in a class discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:

- How is identity like an iceberg?
- If you had to explain the identity iceberg to someone else, how would you explain it?
- What can you tell by just looking at a person, either online or in person? What can't you tell?
- Did you find yourself changing your mind about where an aspect of identity fit on the identity iceberg? Why do you think that is?
- Why do you think it is important to "go below the waterline?"
- What did you learn that you didn't know before?
- How has your thinking about identity been impacted by watching this?
- What is your biggest takeaway from this activity? What did you learn?
- What didn't you understand or what do you want to know more about?
- What was something that surprised you in doing this activity?
- How can we get to know who people are beyond just what we see when we look at them?

Next, have students turn and talk with someone sitting next to them. Have each student share with their partner one aspect of their identity for each level of the iceberg. Before getting into pairs, provide an example such as: "Aspects of my identity include I have light brown skin (above the water line), I am a woman (at the water line), and I am Mexican (below the water line)." After students have shared with a partner, reconvene the class and ask the following questions:

- What was it like to share information about ourselves and our identities?
- Did you intentionally choose to share some aspects of your identity and not others?
- Why might we be selective about what parts of our identity we choose to share with others?

Finally, have students use the [Identity Iceberg Worksheet](#) and indicate an identity characteristic about themselves at each level (above, at and below the waterline). They should identify what identity characteristics would go above the waterline (if they have long hair, they should write "long hair" and not the general "physical appearance" from the model), what identity characteristics would

be at the water line (again, this should be something specific about the individual and not a general category) and those at below the waterline. Remind them to place on the iceberg identity parts that they feel comfortable sharing, as these will be displayed in some way for others to view and learn from. Then, determine the best way to share these with others, either by displaying on bulletin boards around school, on the school or classroom website, or create a video that pans the collection of posters. For the video, you could also include a short verbal description by each student that they share about their identity iceberg.

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## Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further

**Note: These additional activities can be done as follow-ups to the core activity and they can also serve as an additional NPFH activity if the core activity is completed first.**

- Engage students in a discussion and activity where they make connections between identity and bias. Ask students to raise hands or signal in some way if they or someone they know has ever been targeted based on an aspect of their identity. Explain that being targeted can take place in person or online and can include being bullied, cyberbullied, called names or slurs, be excluded, be discriminated against, etc. After the hand-raising, have students write a short essay about this experience including what happened, what aspect of their or someone else's identity was targeted, how they felt, and what they or someone else did, if anything. Have some students read their essays aloud to the class.
- Have students do an analysis of different identity groups represented on TV shows, movies, or video games. They can watch one movie, or a few TV shows or games where they analyze the main characters, collecting information on what aspects of identity they see represented on the program and what aspects of identity they cannot see (i.e., those that are at or below the waterline). Students can also share what they notice about what aspects of identity are represented and what aspects are either not represented at all or are minimally represented. For example, do we see more white people than people of color? Do we see people with disabilities and if so, how are they portrayed? Have students share their findings by creating a PowerPoint presentation, short video or infographic/chart.
- Based on what they learned from the activity above, have students make a video (or poster) that responds to the prompt: *Why representation of \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with aspect of identity) matters.* In addition the response, they can include more words, an explanation or a visual representation of their message. These can then be shared among the school community.

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## Home Connection

Share ADL's Table Talk [Diversity in Media and Why Visibility Matters](#) with families.

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## How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

All students will engage in discussions about identity, how some aspects of identity are visible, but some are hard to know for sure until getting to know people. They will also reflect on their own identities and the identities of their classmates. This will contribute to a school and classroom environment where discussing identity is encouraged and students begin to make connections between identity and bias.

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## Virtual Variation

Have students watch [The Identity Iceberg](#) student mini-lesson on their own or with a family member. After watching, have them choose four of the questions from the "Core Activity" above to respond to and do so in writing or by making an audio recording of their responses. For the next part of the activity, have students have a video or phone conversation with a family member of a friend or peer and share one aspect of their identity from each of the three parts of the iceberg (above, at and below the waterline). For the final activity, have students complete their [iceberg](#) and share from their video while engaging in online learning or upload to teacher or school staff so that it can be shared with others.

# Identity Iceberg Worksheet

