

No Place for Hate® Activity Library

Seeing My Identity, Seeing Me

Lesson Plan and Overview

Lesson Plan: Identity, Hair and Seeing Myself

In April 2021, seven-year-old Morgan Bugg of Tennessee was using a popular educational gaming app called Freckle, which gives students a chance to win coins while completing math and reading activities. Freckle has an online store where you can buy items for your avatar. Morgan wanted to buy a hairstyle for her avatar, but she noticed that they didn't have any hairstyles for Black girls, like an Afro or braids. This felt unfair and upsetting to Morgan, so she and her teacher decided to take action. They wrote to the Freckle company and expressed their concerns. As a result, Freckle added more hairstyle options as well as other inclusive aspects of identity.

Grade Level

Elementary School

Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about a young person who took action when she saw bias and lack of representation.
- Students understand what identity is and reflect on the aspects of their own identity that are important to them.

Materials Needed

- [A Tennessee first grader's effort to help make an educational app more inclusive](#) (video)
- [This 7-year-old persuaded an educational app to include 'Black-girl hair' like hers](#) (article, for teacher or other school staff)
- My Identity

Words You Might Use

Bias: An inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment.

Brave: Doing something you would not normally do that may be hard physically or emotionally.

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

Core Activity

Show students the video, [A Tennessee first grader's effort to help make an educational app more inclusive](#). Then engage students in a discussion by asking:

- What happened?
- How do you think Morgan felt when she couldn't find hairstyles for Black girls in the app? Why do you think she felt that way?
- When Morgan says, "I learned you don't have to be a grown-up to change the world," what does she mean?
- How did Morgan change the world?
- How would you like to change the world?

For the last question, have a few students share a way in which they think their school, community or the world needs changing and what they would do to change it.

Next, read aloud the article about Morgan Bugg, "[This 7-year-old persuaded an educational app to include 'Black-girl hair' like hers.](#)" You can read the whole article aloud, with some explanation while you are reading, or for younger students in grades K-2, just read the key parts of the story (i.e., a few paragraphs) so students can the overall idea of what happened. Make sure to include the following points.

- Morgan Bugg, a seven-year-old living in Brentwood, Tennessee, was using an educational gaming app called Freckle, which is used by more than 900,000 teachers across the country. This app gives students a chance to win coins while completing math and reading activities. It has an online store (the "Piggy Store") where you can buy items for your avatar."
- Morgan visited the online store to buy a hairstyle for her avatar but noticed that they didn't have any hairstyles for Black girls like an Afro, tight curls or braids. Morgan didn't see a hairstyle that was similar to hers and said, "There was no Black-girl hair. I felt super sad."
- Morgan's teacher noticed that Morgan was feeling upset and asked her, "How can we make it better?"
- Morgan suggested that they ask Freckle to add more hairstyle options. Together they wrote to Freckle, including a picture Morgan drew with several hairstyles to go along with the letter. Morgan said, "maybe they didn't know what Black-girl hair looks like."
- Two weeks later, Morgan and her teacher received a response from Freckle. It said, "Our product team recently added more hairstyles to the Piggy Store based directly on your feedback!"
- In addition to adding more hairstyle options, Freckle also added wig options, a wheelchair, head coverings, and the ability for students to select skin colors and hair colors for their characters.

Engage students in a discussion by asking some or all the following questions:

- What more did you learn about this story?
- Have you ever felt the way Morgan felt, not only about hairstyles but about another part of your identity? How so?
- Why is it important to see yourself in games, apps and other forms of media (TV, movies, books, etc.)?
- Why did someone at Freckle say that Morgan showed “bravery and leadership?”
- What does it mean to be brave?
- What does it mean to be a leader?

Finally, have students create My Identity charts that will represent and express aspects of their identity. Elicit/explain the definition of identity as: “The qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different from others.” In explaining identity, you can use an example such as parts of Morgan’s identity that you might know (child, girl, Black, sister, lives in Tennessee) or use parts of your own identity as an example. Discuss with students the other parts of one’s identity that can include appearance, race, religion, family structure, neighborhood/community, age, ability/disability, hobbies and interests, likes and dislikes and opinions.

Ask aloud: *What parts of your identity are important to you?* Have students turn and talk with someone sitting next to them and share a few aspects of their identity that are important to them. Then distribute a copy of the “My Identity” handout to each student. Have students write and/or draw in each of the boxes an important aspect of their identity. They can also include a few additional words about why that part of their identity is important to them. (For younger students in grades K-2, they can include drawing only or just a few words.) When students have completed their handouts, display the “My Identity” charts around the room (or whole school) and invite students to move around the room gallery style to see all of the “My Identity” charts of their classmates.

After, have a brief discussion by asking students:

- What do you notice?
- What do you wonder?

(Note: If some students don’t want to share or have included parts of their identity they prefer to remain private, provide that option for students.)

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.

- Have students create a mirror and window drawing (see Mirror and Window Example). Explain to students that we sometimes use the terms “mirrors and windows” to talk about books or other forms of media (TV, films apps, etc.), which help to explain the importance of seeing ourselves (mirrors) and seeing and learning about others (windows). Have students draw a picture of a window and a mirror on a piece of paper or use the form below. Have them write words on the mirror that describe parts of their own identity. Then have them use the window drawing and write words on that to describe parts of other people’s identities that they don’t have. Then have students share their mirrors and windows with their classmates or have them write an essay called “My Mirrors and Windows.”
- Remind students about how Morgan said she changed the world. Re-ask the question from above: *How would you like to change the world? What is something in your school, community or in the world you think needs changing and what would you do to change it?* Have students consider this question and then invite them to write a letter to a company (like Morgan did), an elected official, a friend or relative about something they want to do to change the world. A persuasive letter should include a greeting and introduction (why they are writing the letter), their reasons for their opinion or point of view on this issue (data, quotes, examples, information), a conclusion or ask (e.g., “Can you please include more hairstyles for Black girls?”) and a closing for the letter. For younger students who are not yet writing, have them make a video of themselves talking about what they think needs changing and how they would like to change it.
- Ask students: *How did Morgan use her voice for change? The ask, how do you want to use your voice for change?* Then have all students complete this sentence: “I can use my voice for change by _____.” Have them write it on a piece of construction paper and illustrate it if they want. Then display the papers all around the school. As an alternative, make a video of all students completing the sentence and then put it together for a class or school video to share with parents, families and the community.

Home Connection

Share ADL’s Table Talk [Why We Need Diverse Books](#) or [Diversity in Media and Why Visibility Matters](#) (upper elementary age) with families.

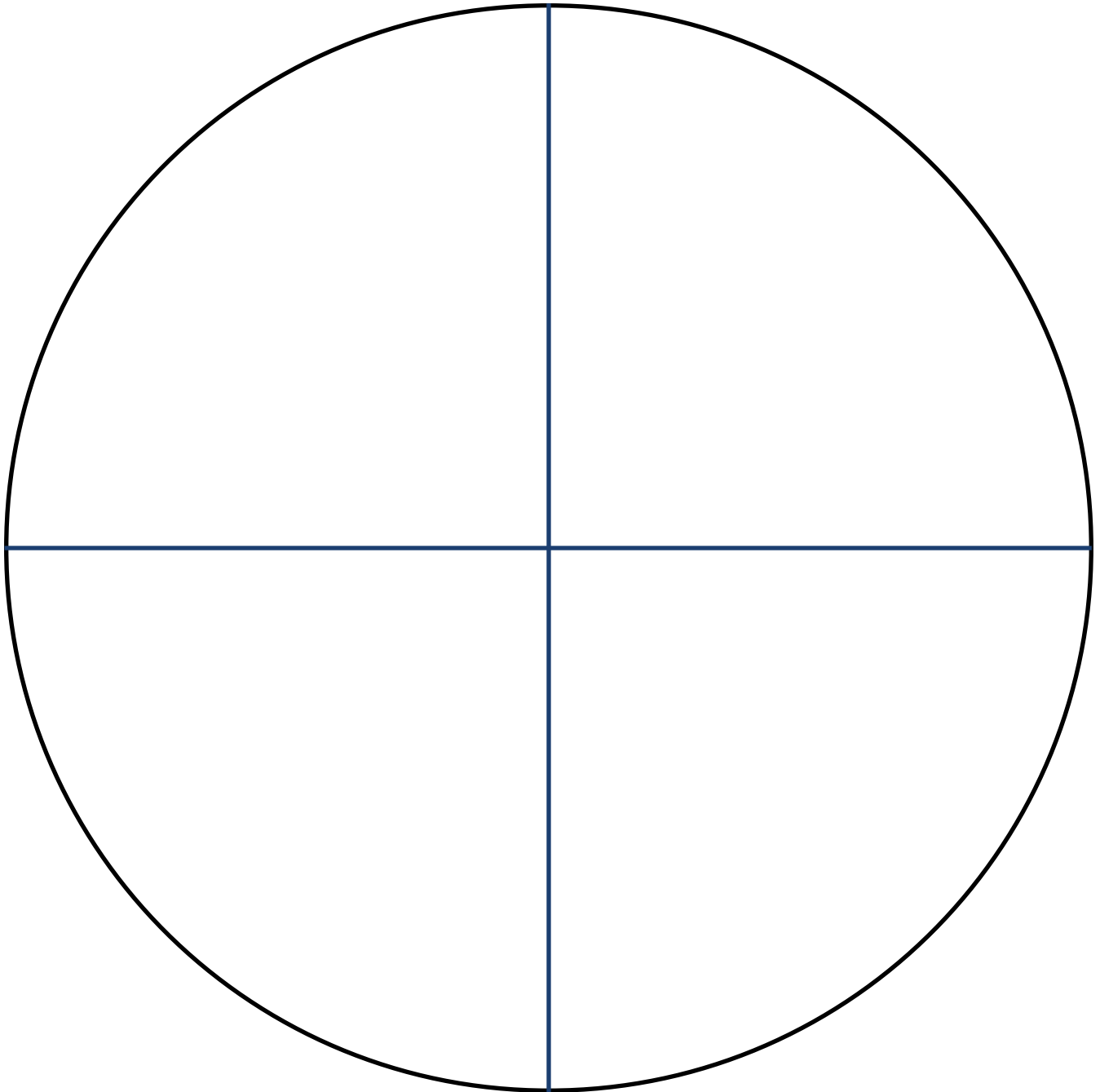
How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

All students will engage in discussions about identity and the importance of seeing oneself in the media they consume—including apps, TV, movies, books, etc. Students will discuss aspects of identity that are important to them, and they will explore and learn about the identity of others. Representation and visibility are essential for children and adults alike. Students will also see a role model of someone who experienced an injustice and did something about it to make a difference, which will inspire their own reflections about something they want to change to make the world better.

Virtual Variation

Have students watch the video about Morgan Bugg on their own or with a family member. After watching, engage students in a virtual classroom conversation using the discussion questions or have them respond in writing (or make a short video) to one or two of the questions. For the read aloud part of the activity, make (and share) a short video of yourself reading the essay (or parts of it) aloud, and sharing aloud the main information about Morgan Bugg's story. In the final activity, explain the My Identity handout (create one of your own in advance to share) to students in a virtual classroom conversation and have students create their own. Then share their My Identity charts on the school or classroom website.

My Identity



Mirror and Window Example

