

UNIT 1

Stereotypes and prejudices

What is identity?
How do I perceive others,
how do they see me?



1.1. How others see a person...

There is more to a person than one might think

1.2. How differently a person can be described...

How to get a better picture of a person

1.3. Stereotypes and prejudices

Our ideas about other people, groups or countries

1.4. Stereotypes about me!

How do I see myself – how do others see me?

UNIT 1: Stereotypes and prejudices

What is identity? How do I perceive others, how do they see me?

Who am I really? Every day, students experience a wide variety of values and ways of living together. In order to find their own position, they need to develop the ability to make choices. What may I do, what mustn't I do? What is right and what is wrong? Children and adolescents soon realise that these questions are not easy to answer. What may be right in one case may be wrong in another. How can I decide? What guidelines do I have?

Two important tools for personal guidance are a country's constitution and its approach to human rights. These are two points of reference which demonstrate the pluralism of values in a society. The most important principle is personal liberty, which allows every individual the right to develop his or her personality, against a background of mutual tolerance and responsibility, thus bringing benefits both for the community in which he or she lives and for mankind as a whole. We may differ widely in our views and interests, provided that we have agreed the rules on how to discuss our disagreements peacefully.

Children and adolescents should know that adults also wrestle with the challenges and demands that they encounter. They should also realise that teachers do not possess the key to absolute truth, but make mistakes and try to learn from them.

This teaching unit deals with some of the questions about the development of a person's identity and how people and groups perceive themselves and others. The students should understand that their identity is defined both by themselves and by their interaction with others. Identity is defined by marking both the differences between individuals and the need to belong to and be protected by the family or a peer group. Young people will understand themselves better if they explore their personal feelings and needs, their personal development and their wishes for the future. They need to experiment with different forms of behaviour, thus expanding their repertoire of interaction with others. They will learn this if they constructively contribute to situations of social interaction.

The social and political history of our country has a strong impact on our lives today. Students should become aware of this influence by regularly collecting information about current issues and discussing them, forming their personal opinions and listening to the opinions of others. They must pay careful attention to views, prejudices and stereotypes that are part of public opinion. A person needs to be aware of these subtle forms of influence in order to counteract them, and to critically reflect on his or her own choices and change them if necessary.

Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights

Through this series of lessons students will:

- be introduced to concepts of stereotyping and how prejudices are produced;
- realise that we are all constantly ascribing certain qualities to individuals and groups;
- understand that such ascription helps us to cope with the complexity of our daily lives;
- realise that ascription may be harmful and unfair;
- learn that ascription supports the formation of individual and group identities;
- learn that identity is a complex thing, and this means that each person can and must be understood and described differently.

UNIT 1: Stereotypes and prejudices

What is identity? How do I perceive others, how do they see me?

Lesson title	Learning objectives	Student tasks	Resources	Method
Lesson 1: How others see a person	The students experience the complexity of views and make their own choices.	The students are assigned specific roles and form their views. They learn how to switch perspectives.	Role descriptions, student handout 1.1 (groups 1-3), large sheets of paper, markers.	Group work
Lesson 2: How differently a person can be described	The students realise that different descriptions may refer to one and the same identity.	The students rehearse and act scenes and present their written work. They discuss the scenes they have seen.	The results of the first lesson become the basic material of the second. The students realise that without their participation and their input, the unit cannot be continued.	Role play, presentations and guided plenary discussion
Lesson 3: Stereotypes and prejudices	The students understand how stereotypes and prejudices are linked and how they may lead to simplified but also unfair views of individuals, groups of people and whole countries.	The students think about their views of others and discuss them in groups.	Blank sheets of paper and markers.	Group work, plenary discussion
Lesson 4: Stereotypes about me!	The students become aware of how they are perceived by others and learn to accept this. They understand better how others perceive their identity and react to it.	The students describe themselves and each other and they compare their results.	Student handout 1.2.	Work in pairs, plenary discussion

Lesson 1

How others see a person

There is more to a person than one might think

Learning objective	The students experience the complexity of views and make their own choices.
Student tasks	The students are assigned specific roles and form their views. They learn how to switch perspective.
Resources	Role descriptions, handouts 1.1 (groups 1-3), large sheets of paper, markers.
Method	Group work.

The lesson

The students form three groups and receive student handout 1.1 (in three different versions for different groups), a large sheet of paper and a marker. (In big classes more groups can be set up and the teacher then provides more scenes to be acted, or the same task is given to different groups. The latter might be an interesting scenario, as it will show how very different descriptions and understanding can be.) The teacher then tells the story about the boy who has moved house and is exploring his new environment. He tells the class about the boy's diary but does not read it aloud to the class, as each group only has only received part of the text.

Background information for teachers

The complete text runs as follows:

"It is my first day in my new class. My family has moved here from another region and I still feel like a stranger. Dear diary, a lot has happened to me in the last few days. I will tell you about some of it.

We now live in an apartment near the river. One of the boys in my class lives a few doors away. He already came up to me on the third day to ask me to go fishing with him. I said no because my fishing rod is still packed in one of the boxes.

There is a big football pitch in front of our school building. I was happy about this because I like playing football. So I brought along my ball and wanted to start training. I had just started shooting a goal or two when the school warden stopped me. He was angry and asked me if I couldn't read. I hadn't seen the sign saying that the pitch was closed after it had rained. I was so shocked that I went home without saying a word.

An old man lives alone in the apartment above ours. When I came home yesterday, I met him at the front door with his shopping. He was carrying a bag with food and he was breathing heavily. I felt sorry for him. I asked if I could help him, and carried his bag up to his door."

The three versions of the handouts for the groups contain different parts of the diary. The groups' perception will differ depending on the information that they have received. Therefore, each group sees only part of the boy's identity and reflects this view in the role play. As required in the tasks, the groups first present their sets of adjectives. One member of each group collects the results from the group discussion on the large sheet for the presentation in the next lesson.

Now each group decides on a short role play that represents their interpretation. These role plays should first be explained and discussed in class and then rehearsed. This could take place in different corners of the classroom, or perhaps in conference rooms in the school building, in external buildings or, if the weather allows, in the playground. Even if the role play takes some time at the beginning, the effort will be worthwhile. For many students, what is often difficult to express in words may now be stated simply and clearly.

The objective for the students in this lesson is to have written the lists of adjectives on the posters and to have rehearsed the scene.

At the end of the lesson the teacher collects the posters (he will redistribute them at the beginning of the next lesson) and carries out a short debriefing. He gives positive feedback and looks at the topic of the following lesson.

Lesson 2

How differently a person can be described...

How to get a better picture of a person

Learning objective	The students realise that different descriptions may refer to one and the same identity.
Student tasks	The students rehearse and act scenes and present their written work. They discuss the scenes they have seen.
Resources	The results of the first lesson (the rehearsed role play and the lists of adjectives on posters) become the basic material of the second. The students realise that without their participation and their products, the unit cannot be continued.
Method	Role play, presentations and guided plenary discussion.

The lesson

Part 1

The teacher explains the procedure of the lesson. He gives the groups another five minutes to rehearse their scenes. The scenes are then presented.

First, one member of the group reads the entry from the diary to the class using the poster from the first lesson. Then the group acts the scene. It is recommended that all the scenes should be presented without interruption. If more than one group has received the same diary entry, they should act these scenes, with slight variations, one after the other.

After the groups have finished, the teacher gives positive feedback and again sums up the goal of this sequence of scenes. If the class is used to this form of teaching then the students can move on to the next step. If not, it is advisable to give the students the opportunity to review and reflect on the sequence of scenes, looking at aspects of content and form.

Here are some examples of how the teacher may prompt reflection on the role play:

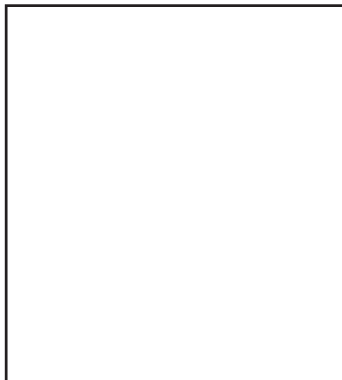
- What was our experience as a group?
- Have I discovered something new about myself?
- How did we manage to show the characters as they were?

Part 2

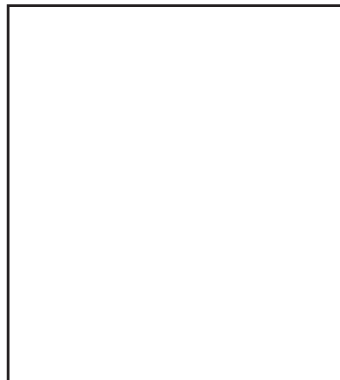
During the second part of the lesson, the students arrange their chairs in one or two semicircles around the blackboard. Then the teacher displays the posters side by side on the blackboard. The students watch how the presentation unfolds:

This is how the others see him:

The classmates



The teachers



The neighbours



In the follow-up discussion, the students should understand that it is perfectly normal for a person to be viewed differently by different people or groups. They should realise that they cannot use categories such as “true” and “false” to describe the viewpoints. In fact, in order to do justice to the boy, it would be wrong to allow only one point of view to describe him.

Possible prompts for the teacher to support critical thinking in class:

- When I see these different descriptions I feel a bit confused.
- So what’s true now?
- Who is Max really?

The teacher waits until a number of students have raised their hands and then lets them give different answers. He notes these answers in a list on the blackboard or, preferably, a flip chart:

What can we say about the boy?

- How can we describe him appropriately?
- Statement 1
- Statement 2
- Statement 3
- Statement 4
- Statement 5

At the end of the lesson the teacher sums up the insights gained by the students during the first two lessons. It is an advantage if a flip chart is available on which to note down these points so that they can be presented in the following lessons. The following points may prove useful:

Identity

- There are many sides to a person's identity.
- Often other people (neighbours, friends, teachers, strangers) have very different views of the same person.
- We must listen to different views if we want to know more about a person.
- ...
- ...

At the end of the lesson, the teacher asks the students for feedback, taking care not to comment on the students' remarks.

There are different ways in which this can be done. Asking the class as a whole is not always the best solution, as more often than not, the same few students will answer and the feedback will remain unspecific. The dartboard model is therefore recommended here. This is a method of getting quick feedback that allows each student to specify his or her answers. The appendix gives a detailed description of this form of feedback.

The teacher then gives a preview of the next two lessons, in which the class will not look at individual people, but at groups within society and at whole countries.

Lesson 3**Stereotypes and prejudices****Our ideas about other people, groups or countries**

Learning objective	The students understand how stereotypes and prejudices are linked and how they may lead to simplified but also unfair views of individuals, groups of people and whole countries.
Student tasks	The students think about their views of others and discuss them in groups.
Resources	Blank sheets of paper and markers.
Method	Group work, plenary discussion.

Key terms

Stereotypes: These are opinions that groups have about themselves or other groups.

Prejudices: These are emotionally charged opinions about social groups (often minorities) or certain people (often from minority groups).

The lesson

The objective of this lesson is to enable the students to transfer their understanding of how others are viewed on an individual level, to a more general one, that is, how larger groups, religious communities, ethnic groups or countries are judged.

The teacher prepares a brief, clearly structured lecture on the difference between stereotypes and prejudices to be given at the beginning of the lesson.

By summarising the processes of learning and the results and insights gained from the last two lessons, the teacher helps the students to understand the difference between stereotypes and prejudices. The teacher introduces the two concepts by referring to the different views of the boy who was studied in the previous two lessons. He/she tries to present these views as stereotypes and prejudices (see the background material for teachers at the end of this chapter, where a model for this brief key lecture has been included). In the next step, the students form small groups. They work on descriptions of social groups, for example:

- boys and girls;
- professions;
- ethnic groups;
- countries;
- continents.

It is important not to ask the students to give their personal views of others. Rather, they should imagine what society, the neighbours or the media might say or think about the groups that have been assigned to them in this task.

The students try to distinguish between stereotypes and prejudices, thus applying what they have heard from the teacher at the beginning of the lesson.

The teacher may give some hints on the blackboard and the students prepare their presentation of results in the form of a list by themselves. Experience has shown that a list prepared beforehand (see example below) will help the students to note ideas for use later in the discussion.

After the teacher's initial lecture about stereotypes and prejudices, the students work in groups of three or four for about 15 minutes to reflect on the above task. The teacher should consider carefully which of the above examples to offer. Depending on the political situation in the country concerned, it may be possible to choose examples close to the students' own experience. On the other hand, the teacher should only mention ethnic groups living in the country or the community if no one is hurt by such a choice and only if no discussions and disputes that might get out of hand are likely to be triggered off.

The groups' discussions and results should be presented in a plenary session. Each group agrees on a spokesperson, who will present the group's results following a pattern of criteria such as the following:

- our country, our group, our ethnic entity, our profession;
- stereotypes expressed by the group;
- prejudices expressed by the group;
- our assumptions why groups have such views;
- our opinions, including possible differences of opinion.

The teacher will help the students by recording each group's results (in note form) on a flip chart.

Example of how to record results to support the students:

Group	Country/profession/group	Stereotypes	Prejudices	Comments
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Finally, the teacher sums up the lesson, referring both to the procedure and the results, and informs the class about the next steps.

Lesson 4

Identity: Stereotypes about me!

How do I see myself – how do others see me?

Learning objectives	The students become aware of how they are perceived by others and learn to accept this. They understand better how others view and react to their identity. They explore the effect their identity has on others.
Student tasks	The students describe themselves and each other and compare their results.
Resources	Student handout 1.2.
Method	Work in pairs. Plenary discussion.

The lesson

The teacher begins the lesson by summarising the results of the two previous lessons and explaining the schedule for today’s lesson.

The teacher then reminds the class that they had started by looking at an individual (the personal situation of a boy) and that they had then moved on to study how larger groups, such as professions, ethnic groups and whole countries, are viewed. Now they will again focus on the individual, but this time the students themselves – everyone in the classroom – will be the focus. They will concentrate on the question:

Who am I?	
How would I describe myself?	self-perception
How would a student in class describe me?	perception by others

The teacher supports his introduction to the lesson by drawing this table on the blackboard or on a flip chart. He or she may also ask the students to repeat what they have learnt in the last two lessons about the difference between self-perception and perception by others. In addition, or as an alternative, he may repeat the key concepts of stereotypes and prejudices.

The teacher now takes the handouts showing the students’ descriptions of Max. These should help the students to think of as many qualities and characteristics of people as possible. The students are given the task of listing as many adjectives as possible that may be used to describe a person. The teacher will certainly have to give some ideas and suggestions at this point. For example, the students can be guided by categories which give descriptive adjectives meaning and focus. Such categories could include the following:

How would we describe people:

- if they are in a good mood?
- if they are in a bad mood or even furious?
- if they are good friends?
- if we want to describe what they look like?
- if we want to describe them as students?
- ...

Rather than asking a few students to give some ideas in a frontal teaching situation, the whole class should be involved. This can be achieved by the following exercise,⁵ in which the students work alone to produce a variety of ideas. In the corners of the classroom, or on separate tables, large sheets of paper should have been hung up or laid out. On these sheets, different keywords or categories have been given as headings. The students move about the room in silence and write down their ideas on the posters (ideally with markers provided with each poster). As they can read what other students have written, the students should not repeat one another, but may respond with comments and new ideas.

5. The exercise suggested here is a variant of “The Wall of Silence” (see EDC/HRE Volume VI, *Developing New Ideas in EDC/HRE*).

The result of such an exercise might look like this:

What is a person like when he is in a good mood?

- cheerful
- joking
- relaxed
- communicative
- singing
- charming
- ...
- ...

No follow-up in the plenary discussion is necessary, as the purpose of this exercise is to give the students ideas to work with in the following step. The teacher should have already considered which students could work together in pairs at this stage. This is important, as the topic the students will deal with is a delicate one. The teacher should therefore avoid putting students together who dislike each other, and should make sure nobody's feelings get hurt.

The teams receive the following task:

You will now explore how you perceive yourselves and each other. Do this in the following way:

- First, work by yourselves.
- Look at the many descriptions on the posters in the classroom and choose words that, in your opinion, describe you well. Write them on the handout.
- Add your qualities and the descriptions of yourself in certain situations that you have not found on the posters. Write them on the handout.
- Then describe your partner in the same way.
- When you have both finished, share your results. It will be interesting to see which descriptions and judgments match and which differ or even contradict each other. Express your thoughts and feelings:
 - What surprises me?
 - What makes me happy?
 - What annoys me?
 - What hurts me?
 - Can you back up your judgment with some examples?
 - Which descriptions are (positive or negative) stereotypes?

The teacher should decide whether to arrange a final plenary debriefing at the end of this lesson (which is also the end of this unit, although continuations are possible) or whether to summarise the process of learning over the past four lessons. Whichever method he chooses, the teacher will notice that the working atmosphere in the class has improved during the course of this unit. The

students will have developed closer relationships to one another and will have made interesting discoveries and shared them with each other. They can now distinguish between:

- stereotypes and prejudices;
- self-perception and perception by others.

They have made progress in developing their social competence, which will benefit them in their daily lives, both in class and school as a whole. The students will often come across the themes raised by these four lessons, thus consolidating what they have learnt.

Student handout 1.1
(Group 1)
Role play

Agree on a representative of your group who will read aloud the short entry from the diary and the task for your group.

Appoint another member of your group who will take notes of your results and present them to the class.

Entry from Max's diary:

"It is my first day in my new class. My family has moved here from another region and I still feel I am a stranger. Dear diary, a lot has happened to me in the last few days. I will tell you about some of it.

We now live in an apartment near the river. One of the boys in my class lives a few doors away. He already came up to me on the third day to ask me to go fishing with him. I said no because my fishing rod is still packed in one of the boxes."

Tasks:

1. Collect a list of adjectives that you think Max's fellow students in class would use to describe him (brainstorming in your group).
2. What do you think a student in Max's class will tell the other students about him? Rehearse a short scene that you can act in class.

Student handout 1.1
(Group 2)
Role play

Agree on a representative of your group who will read aloud the short entry from the diary and the task for your group.

Appoint another member of your group who will take notes of your results and present them to the class.

Entry from Max's diary:

“There is a big football pitch in front of our school building. I was happy about this because I like playing football. So I brought along my ball and wanted to start training. I had just started shooting a goal or two when the school warden stopped me. He was angry and asked me if I couldn't read. I hadn't seen the sign saying that the pitch was closed after it had rained. I was so shocked that I went home without saying a word.”

Tasks:

1. Collect a list of adjectives that you think Max's fellow students in class would use to describe him (brainstorming in your group).
2. What do you think a student in Max's class will tell the other students about him? Rehearse a short scene that you can act in class.

Student handout 1.1
(Group 3)
Role play

Agree on a representative of your group who will read aloud the short entry from the diary and the task for your group.

Appoint another member of your group who will take notes of your results and present them to the class.

Entry from Max's diary:

"It is my first day in my new class. My family has moved here from another region and I still feel I am a stranger. Dear diary, a lot has happened to me in the last few days. I will tell you about some of it.

An old man lives alone in the apartment above ours. When I came home yesterday I met him at the front door with his shopping. He was carrying a bag with food and he was breathing heavily. I felt sorry for him. I asked if I could help him, and carried his bag up to his door."

Tasks:

1. Collect a list of adjectives that you think Max's fellow students in class would use to describe him (brainstorming in your group).
2. What do you think a student in Max's class will tell the other students about him? Rehearse a short scene that you can act in class.

Background material for teachers

Stereotypes and prejudices

What is a stereotype?

People are often defined as members of groups, depending on their culture, their religious beliefs, their origin or external features such as the colour of their skin, their size, hairstyle or clothing.

Often this definition of groups goes together with assigning specific qualities to people, so that specific images are associated with certain groups. If these images are exaggerated to the extent that they hardly correspond to reality any longer, we call them stereotypes.

Stereotypes can also be found in books (even school textbooks), comics, advertisements or movies. You almost certainly have come across such stereotypes yourself. Think, for example, about the image of African women wearing skirts made of palm leaves, having thick lips and little bones stuck in their noses.

From a stereotype to a prejudice

If a person or a group is judged based only on stereotypes and not as an individual or group of individuals, we are dealing with a prejudice. An opinion has been formed about a person or a group without actually knowing them. Such views and ideas most often have nothing to do with reality and they are also often unfavourable or hostile.

“Positive” stereotypes

However, there are also positive stereotypes. For example if someone says that black people are fast runners, we can call this a positive stereotype. “Well, what’s wrong with that?” you might think. But in this case people are also being wrongly lumped together. Just think: is it really true that all black people can run fast?

What are stereotypes good for?

Prejudices seem to make the world simpler and less complicated. If people meet others who seem to be strange it often gives them a feeling of uneasiness. In such situations, prejudices allow people to conceal their uneasiness – I can pretend that I know everything about the other/s and need not ask any questions. But as a result, from the very beginning, a meaningful encounter and a real understanding have become impossible.

What is the effect of prejudices?

Prejudices are offensive. Primarily, they are used to treat someone unfairly. Prejudices deprive people of the opportunity to show who they are and what they are capable of achieving. For example, an employer may not give Turkish applicants a job because he has heard that “they” always come to work late. Some people will cling on to prejudices and populist ideas although they know no one who could confirm these negative views.

What can we do against prejudices?

Prejudices die hard and are therefore hard to deal with. But there is no need to lose hope: no one is born with prejudices. They have been learnt and can therefore be unlearned. Before judging a person, ask him or her to explain why he or she has done whatever is under discussion. Remember that you surely would not like being judged without being listened to.

Student handout 1.2

Self-perception – perception by others

Work in pairs

Comments after the discussion - Where our views match - Where our views differ - Remarks	How I describe myself (my self-perception)	How I describe my fellow student (My perception of someone else, written by me)	Comments after the discussion - Where our views match - Where our views differ - Remarks