

Character and Life Skills

Video Title: Civility, Inside Out Series

Lesson Title: The Civil Story

Grade Level: Middle School



Project and Purpose

Students use photographs as the inspiration for creating original stories around the theme of civility.

Essential Question

How do stories of civility help us understand the role of civility in our own lives?

Materials

- Photographs (provided; teacher are encouraged to find others online)
- Chairs in a large circle; in the second part of the lesson, chairs are moved to form several smaller circles
- Writing tools and/or computer writing programs

Procedure

1. Select one of the photos to model the lesson format.
2. Explain to students that in this session, they will use photographs as the inspiration for creating original stories around the theme of civility.
3. Have students arrange their chairs in a large circle and sit. Hold up or post one of the photographs and ask the group to look carefully at all the details. Tell students they will each take turns to say one sentence that describes the facts and only the facts of what they see. If using a hard copy of the photograph, have them hold it while speaking, and then pass it to the next person. They should not interpret the emotions or the possible subtext or try to guess what has happened or what is happening — at this point. For example, for the first photograph provided, they might say,
 - There is a white teen with reddish-blondish hair and a tan hat on the left side.
 - She holds a computer in front of her with both hands.
 - She wears a scoop necked blue shirt.
 - Her eyes are cast to the right.
 - She is not smiling but she is not frowning either.
 - Three other teenagers are standing in the background on the right side.
 - The white teen in the middle wears a red skirt with a blue and white design.
 - The black teen on the right wears a blue, black, and white shirt or jacket of some kind and has a messenger bag across his chest.
 - The black teen is smiling.
 - There is a brick wall in the background on the right.
 - Etc.

4. After everyone has made a factual, descriptive statement about the picture, ask students if was challenging NOT to create a story or interpret the emotions in the picture and have them defend their answers.
5. Explain that pictures often inspire us to create a story, but sometimes taking a moment to really look at the picture helps us TELL the story in more detail.
6. Tell them they are going to create the story of this picture, and it must include the theme of civility, whether it is present or absent. Civility affects the story and/or the outcome.
7. Ask them to take two minutes to silently create the story of the picture in their own heads: what has just happened? What is happening now? How do these people know each other? Why is the girl in front wearing a hat? Why is she holding her computer that way? How is civility—or a lack thereof—illustrated in the story? Add on other questions to stir their creative juices.
8. Ask students to quietly share their stories with someone near them in the circle; each partner will have one minute to speak. Call time when the first minute is up and the second minute begins.
9. At the end of the two minutes, ask students if they included any of the factual details in their stories. How did this help the listener understand the story more clearly? How did the stories incorporate civility?
10. Have the class break into smaller seated circles of 5-7 people and give each group its own photograph. They are to do the process they just practiced with this new picture: describe the facts of what they see without any story interpretation, silently create a story with civility as the theme, then share with a partner.
11. Discuss their stories, the use of details, and the theme of civility in each.
12. If time allows, do the exercise with one more picture per group.

Conclusion

Have students write or record their stories for a class presentation on civility. Discuss: how do stories of civility help us understand the role of civility in our own lives?

Notes



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