Why is it Important to See Ourselves Reflected in and Represented by Emojis? (MS)

Student Learning

Why is it important to see ourselves reflected in and represented by emojis?

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic global crisis, we are communicating more online. Most of us use emojis without giving it much thought. Use these resources and activities to expand your understanding of emojis and create your own.

Grade level: Middle School    Lesson Plan: Emojis and Me
History of Emojis

Did you know?
- In 2009, a pair of Apple engineers, Yasuo Kida and Peter Edberg, submitted an official proposal to adopt 625 new emoji characters into the Unicode Standard. In 2010, Unicode officially adopted emoji, adding hundreds more. The Unicode Consortium oversees the official set of emojis that come on most smartphones.
- The emoji craze caught on so rapidly in 2012 that it was added as a word by Oxford Dictionaries in August 2013.
- In 2015, Unicode diversified the emojis by introducing the option to change the skin tone on people emoji, along with same-sex couples and additions to include more types of people doing more types of things.
- Recently Unicode has taken steps toward creating gender-neutral emoji, emoji that represent people with disabilities and other symbols to represent the full spectrum of emoji users.
- As of March 2019, there were a total of 3,019 emojis in the Unicode Standard.

Building Common Vocabulary
- **Bias**: The qualities, beliefs, etc. that make a particular person or group different from others.
- **Identity**: Small digital images that convey or represent an idea, emotion, symbol or object.
- **Emoji**: An inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment.

Tell us what you think...
*What do you think emojis convey? What do they say about identity?*
Who is O’Plérou Grebet?

A 22-year-old digital artist from the Ivory Coast named O’Plérou Grebet was recently in the news because he created his own emojis, reflecting life in contemporary West Africa. Using a YouTube instruction video, Grebet created more than 365 emojis and a free app where the emojis can be downloaded. The app was named the best app of 2019 by The African Talents Awards, which recognizes young Africans in creative fields.

The student creating African emojis to change the story of Africa from poverty to beauty

When Ivorian artist O’Plérou Denis Grebet was looking for free stock images of Africa for a project at the time, he only came across negative images of disease and poverty. He decided to do something about it.

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- What are some of your favorite emojis on Grebet’s Instagram?
- How does Grebet, through the emojis, convey information about himself, his culture and his identity?

What emoji would you create?
ASSIGNMENT
Create your own emoji that reflects something about your identity. It can include: your social identity groups (race, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, etc.), your hobbies or interests, topics that are important to you, emotions or moods that are part of who you are, or important relationships or some other aspect of identity.

Watch this video on how to make an emoji online. Or use your pencils and markers and draw one.

Share your ideas...
What emoji did you draw? How does it represent your identity?

Did you know?
You can submit emojis to the Unicode Consortium, who oversee the official set of emojis that come on most smartphones. This is the Emoji Proposals form.

This activity is also available on Flipgrid.

Reminder: The teacher-facing version of this lesson can be found here: https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/emojis-and-me.