

No Place for Hate[®] Activity Library

Seeing Ourselves, Seeing Others: Identity and the Books That Reflect Us

Lesson Plan and Overview

Identity shapes how we see ourselves and how we understand the people around us, yet it is not always easy to recognize or articulate what makes up our own sense of self. Books and stories offer a powerful way into this work: they can act as mirrors that reflect our own experiences back to us, windows that offer a view into lives different from our own, and sliding glass doors that invite us to step into someone else's world with empathy and understanding. Learning to recognize these different roles that literature can play helps students value diverse stories, build empathy across lines of difference, and develop the language and confidence to reflect on and express their own identities.

Grade Level

Grades 6-12

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explore the concepts of Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors as they relate to literature and identity.
- Identify and analyze examples of books that serve as Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors based on their own reading experiences.
- Reflect on their own identity and story through creative writing and art.

Materials Needed

- Video: [Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors](#)
- Handouts:
 - [Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors](#)
 - [Identity Book Jackets—Who Am I?](#)

Words You Might Use

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

Core Activity

- **Begin by asking students:** *Have you ever read a book that made you feel seen? What was that book and why did it make you feel that way?*
- **Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors--Video**
 - Transition by explaining that: *Books and stories are really powerful tools that can take us to new places, times past, invented planets, etc. But they can also serve as doors, mirrors and windows. Books can serve as doors into unfamiliar experiences, mirrors for those of us with a shared background and windows that can help to create understanding and empathy across lines of difference.*
 - Show the [Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors Video](#).
 - After viewing, ask students: *Why do you think it's important to read books that are Windows, Mirrors AND Sliding Glass Doors?*
- **Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors—Activity**
 - Break students into small groups and provide them with a Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors handout.
 - Explain to students that they will have the next 10 minutes to work together to come up with the names of books (with explanations) that act as Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors. If students can't agree, they are welcome to come up with more than one for each category.
 - If space allows, consider displaying these for others to see.
 - After the 10 minutes, ask students to share the titles they came up with and the explanation.
- **Transition by asking students:** *How does it feel to read a book that reflects your own identity? Why do you think this is important?*
- **Identity Book Jackets:**
 - Explain to students that they are going to use the remainder of class to imagine they are writing their autobiography or identity story. Their goal is to create the book jacket for their story—a cover that represents an aspect of their identity and a short description of what their identity story would include.
 - Distribute the Identity Book Jackets handout to each student.
 - Consider working with your librarian for examples of identity books to provide students with exemplars.
 - Ensure students understand what an identity story is: An identity story is a short, personal piece of writing that captures who you are, not just on the surface, but in the ways that feel most true and important to you. It is not a biography or a list of facts. It is a window into your experience. (This is on the handout as well).
 - If time and space allow, consider having students either share their book jackets with the class or display them in the classroom or hallways.
- **Closing Question:** *What was the most important thing that you emphasized in writing your own identity story? Why do you think that is?*

Student Leadership Suggestions

How can students take more leadership during this lesson?

- **Facilitate a discussion question.** Invite a student to pose one of the discussion questions to the class (for example, the opening question about a book that made them feel seen, or the closing question about their identity story) and call on classmates to share, rather than having the teacher run the full discussion.
- **Lead their small group during the Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors activity.** Assign a rotating “group leader” role for each small group who is responsible for keeping the group on task, making sure every voice is heard when brainstorming book titles, and reporting the group’s ideas back to the class.
- **Model vulnerability and openness by sharing their book jacket.** Ask for a student volunteer to share their identity book jacket with the class before others do, setting a tone of trust and openness for the rest of

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.

- After students have completed the core activity above, have students write their identity stories to accompany their book jackets and covers. (If time is an issue, consider having students write a chapter or portion of their story).
- Now that students have completed the core activity, have students delve further into windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors by evaluating books that they have read for school recently—placing the books into the appropriate categories based on the [Windows, Mirrors & Sliding Glass Doors video](#).
- After students have engaged in the core activity, have students explore the school or community library catalog (either in-person or digitally). Ask students to think about which books in the Young Adult or Juvenile sections serve as windows, mirrors or sliding glass doors. Have students brainstorm additional book recommendations to ensure that all categories are represented in their local library.

Home Connection

Share the [Windows, Mirrors & Sliding Glass Doors](#) video with families.

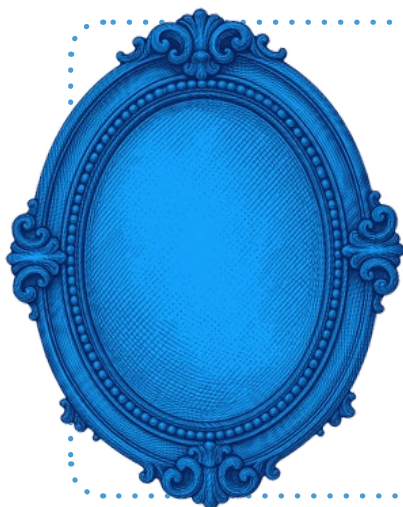
How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

Students will engage in learning, reflection and discussion about the importance of identity representation in books. This will contribute to a school and classroom environment where discussing representation and identity, and the importance of diversity are encouraged.

Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors



Window:



Mirror:



Sliding Glass Door:

Identity Book Jackets—Who Am I?

What is an identity story?

An identity story is a short, personal piece of writing that captures who you are, not just on the surface, but in the ways that feel most true and important to you. It is not a biography or a list of facts. It is a window into your experience.

Draw the cover for your identity story here. Consider what symbols, colors or images would best highlight important aspects of your identity).

Use the space below to draft the summary of your identity story. Think about: what parts of you would you most want others to know? Feeling stuck? Some ways to start your story are: "Most people see me as _____, but what they don't know is..."; "Growing up, I learned that being _____ means..."; "One thing that shaped who I am is..."