



Following Up on a Cohen Center Presentation:

These ideas are for follow up discussions dealing with prejudice, bigotry, or biases that allow us 'other' other people. These ideas are from "Race Bridges for Schools".

Use these quotations at the beginning of the lesson or unit to spark student interest; try having students respond to them in writing or discuss them in small groups.



**Watch your thoughts, for they become words.
Watch your words, for they become actions.
Watch your actions, for they become habits.
Watch your habits, for they become character.
Watch you character, for it becomes your destiny.**

- Anonymous

What we think, we become.

- The Buddha

**If you keep on saying things are going
to be bad, you have a good chance
of becoming a prophet.**

- Isaac Bashevis Singer

A lesson starter on bias:



There is evidence that our biases can be altered: we can be “primed” so that we tap into unconscious biases or so that we avoid those biases. For example, a study was done where some subjects were told a positive story about a person from an ethnic group while others were told a negative story. Afterwards, subjects were asked to interview a member of that same ethnic group for a job. The subjects’ attitudes towards the interviewee—who behaved the same with all subjects—corresponded to the story they were told before the interview. This is an easy experiment to try with your own class and then discuss. You can design your own lesson or follow the suggestion below.

Choose a bias you would like to address (gender, race, age, even another school). Create two slips of paper: one slip of paper says “Think of a [name of group] who frightened or angered you” while the other slip says “Think of a [name of group] who is a role model of leadership.” Give half of your class the “negative” slip of paper; give the other half the “positive” slip of paper. Don’t allow them to look at each others’ papers. Allow them a few minutes to write down their thoughts.

When students are finished, show a picture of an anonymous person from the group you are focused on. Do *not* use a picture of someone students know; this will skew the results. Ask students to write down 2-4 words to describe the person in the picture. Have a few students share their opinions.

When you have heard a variety of opinions, ask students to speculate about why they see the picture differently. Then ask students who see this person in a positive light to raise their hands; then ask students who see this person in a negative light to raise their hands. Finally, reveal that students were asked to think about the group in different ways before looking at the picture. Ask students if their opinion of the person in the picture corresponded to the slip of paper they were given. Discuss.

Action: Ask students to discuss how they might use this new knowledge to prevent biases from clouding their attitude and behavior in the future. Have students practice this strategy for a week and then report back to class.

Use these questions to inspire your own thinking and teaching about the topic.

- How do you counter your biases when you feel them arise?
- How do you feel about those who demonstrate bias or even racism?
- Do you believe people can “unlearn” their biases?
- Think of the students in your classroom: for whom will this be a difficult discussion? Who will need extra attention or care around this topic?
- Remember the best “difficult” conversation you’ve had in your classroom: what went well? What did you do to facilitate the conversation? What is your strongest skill as a conversation facilitator?

<http://www.racebridgesforschools.com/>