



FOUNDATION  
AGAINST  
INTOLERANCE  
& RACISM

**Lesson and Unit Titles:** Unit: FAIR's Principles of Peaceful Change; Lesson One: Stories Can Be Bridge Builders

**Recommended Grade Levels:** 9-10

**Recommended Pacing:** 60-75 minutes

**FAIR Standards and Objectives:**

HM. 9-12.1: I respect people's freedom to develop and enact their character because it is essential to their quality of life.

US 9-12.15: I resist racism and intolerance because they inevitably involve forcing people into identity categories that flatten and diminish them.

FR.9-12.20: I promote justice and civil discourse to vitalize our individual and collective productive powers of character.

**Theme(s):** Stories of Heroism and Hope

**Era(s):** Current

**Areas of Focus:** Stories, Civil Rights, Racism, Intolerance, Understanding

**Lesson Objectives:** I will be able to explain how having more than one story can promote peaceful change by helping build bridges between people of different races, ethnicities, beliefs, and backgrounds.

**Teacher Instructions:**

**Background**

As human beings we encounter stories every day. We encounter the story we tell about ourselves and the stories we tell about others. We also encounter the stories told to us by our families,

society, media outlets, social media, and advertising agencies (among others). These stories often inform our unconscious perceptions of ourselves and others--influencing our ability to find common ground/common humanity in our conversations with diverse people. While stories have the power to create and reify the categories we place people into, stories also have the power to connect us and give us dignity as human beings. This lesson is an introduction to understanding the role stories play in our lives and how stories have the power to connect human beings. Subsequent lessons will draw on this lesson. Throughout the remainder of the unit, students will explore [FAIR's Principles of Peaceful Change](#) and they will continually reflect on the ways that having multiple stories of others allows us to have productive conversations with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

## Materials

“The Danger of a Single Story” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie ([transcript](#) and [video](#))

## Opening

- Teacher posts the bellringer on the board/projector.
  - Free write in your Identity Journal-Tell about a time you assumed something about someone that you later found out was incorrect OR tell about a time when someone assumed something about you that was incorrect. Write for five minutes.
- Turn and talk- Teacher asks students to turn to a shoulder partner and share what they wrote.
- Whole group share-Teacher facilitates deeper discussion about freewrites. Some questions the teacher might ask are:
  - What was the situation you were in when the incorrect assumptions were being made?
  - How did the incorrect assumption make you or other people feel? How do you know this?
  - What ultimately happened that made you or the other person aware that your assumption was incorrect?
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## Guided Practice

- Teacher asks students to listen/watch/read [“The Danger of a Single Story”](#) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.
- While students are listening/watching/reading the teacher should ask students to complete these comprehension questions in their journals:
  - What assumptions did Chimamanda make about stories when she was young? What characteristics did she believe all stories had? Why did she believe this?
  - When did Chimamanda’s idea of what characterized a story change? Why did this change for her?
  - What was the single story Chimamanda had of Fide? What assumptions did Chimamanda have of Fide and his family? What made Chimamanda recognize that her assumptions were a single story?
  - When Chimamanda moved to the United States to attend a university, what assumptions did her roommate and professors make about Chimamanda and Africans (as a whole)? What was the single story being told? How did this make Chimamanda feel?

- What assumptions did Chimamanda make about Mexicans before she visited Mexico? What contributed to Chimamanda’s single story of Mexico and Mexicans? What changed Chimamanda’s perceptions?
- How are stories defined by the principle of “Nkali”?

**Independent and/or Group Work**

- Four Corners-
  - Teacher posts these four quotes in each corner of the room.
    - “All of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience and to overlook the many other stories that formed me.”
    - “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete.”
    - Stories have been used to dispossess and malign, but stories can also be used to empower and humanize.”
    - “Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.”
  - Teacher directs students to stand in the corner of the quotation chosen (teacher may need to facilitate this by directing certain students to certain corners if the majority of students choose one or two quotes). When all students have chosen their quote, ask each group of students to discuss these questions related to their chosen quote:
    - What does this quotation mean to you as an individual?
    - What does this quotation mean to you as a friend, family member, community member, and citizen?
    - What does your quotation say about the ways that stories can create challenges for the ways we perceive and are perceived by others?
    - What does your quotation say about the ways that stories can provide hope for our individual and collective futures?

**Discussion and Closing**

- To facilitate the discussion about the quotations, the teacher will create two columns on the board and take note of students’ responses as each group shares out. In particular, the teacher should record challenges shared (i.e. single stories, stereotypes, etc.) and the hope that is shared (i.e. common humanity, multiple stories, etc.).

Challenges in Telling Stories	Hope in Telling Stories

- Following students’ sharing out, the teacher will close by asking students to reflect on this prompt (this could be a whole group discussion or a written exit ticket depending on time):

- At the end of her TED talk, Chimamanda states that stories can help us “regain a kind of paradise.” Do you believe this is true? What do you think she means by this? Explain your thoughts.

### **Assessment Ideas for the Lesson**

- Ask students to write a descriptive memoir or create a comic telling about a time they changed a personal assumption they had about someone because they chose to be open to multiple “stories” about that person.
- Watch [“Klan We Talk?”](#) by Daryl Davis. Ask students to write an essay in response to the question: “What was the single story that Daryl Davis was in danger of internalizing (either about himself and/or others)? What choices did Davis make (or what actions did he take) to resist the temptation to succumb to this single story? What specific character traits did Davis demonstrate that helped build bridges across seemingly impossible divides? What communication tools did Davis use to create these bridges of understanding?”

### **Assessment Ideas for the Unit**

- At the end of the unit, students will be asked to write a letter to another student that takes a clear stand in response to this question: “What is the most important way that we, as a society, can promote change?” Students will be asked to use evidence to support their stance. Evidence should ideally come from the readings/videos provided in each lesson. Thus, students’ letters should begin with something like: “The most important way we can promote changes is by...”

### **Extension Activities:**

- Ask students to explore [“The Hope Storytelling Project”](#) or engage students in beginning to write stories/poems on their own using prompts provided.
- Have students listen to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s [“I Have a Dream Speech”](#) in its entirety. Ask students to think about the stories being told in this speech. What is the hope that King conveys in this speech? How does King use stories and storytelling to convey that hope?
- Listen/read several “This I Believe” episodes about hope (some suggestions are: [“Tomorrow Will Be a Better Day,”](#) [“Empowered By Paradox,”](#) and [“Unhardened Hearts”](#)). Ask students to identify how these speakers/writers use stories and storytelling to convey hope. What elements convey hope to their audience? Then, guide students through their own “This I Believe” essay and create a collection of “This is I Believe” episodes that share stories of hope for your class.