



Stereotypes and Intersectionality with Three Artworks

a 30-minute classroom activity

Grades 9 – 12

By Dawn Nelson, Forest Grove High School, and
Ilsa Bruer, Benson High School

Lesson Overview: Students explore identity, stereotypes, and intersectionality through three artworks.

Suggested Posters:

- Joseph Hirsch, *Banquet*, 1945, lithograph on beige wove paper, 2015.21.1
- Joe Feddersen, *Flat Screen, Wolf, Guy, and Magpie*, 2012, fused glass, 2012.93.1-4
- Felipe Dirksen, *Portrait of Infanta María Ana de Austria*, 1630, oil on canvas, 2017.59.1

Materials:

- one set of descriptor cards (Descriptor cards will have one of each descriptor so that students must make a choice about where they belong).
- one set of identity cards (Identity cards will have three of each identity descriptors so that they may use any of the descriptors more than once, if they choose).
- a way to view the Hirsch, Dirksen, and Feddersen posters physically or electronically.
- an electronic device to take and view a photo.

Pre teaching:

Dealing with stereotypes and identity can be difficult for some students. I would suggest that before this lesson...

- students have a familiarity with terms such as “stereotype,” and “intersectionality,” as well as the vocabulary on the descriptor and identity cards.
- there has been some community building and discussion of identity safety with students.
- students have read about or studied something that you can use to contextualize this discussion and make connections with.

Pre planning:

You may want to think about...

- intentional grouping. Students can work individually, but this kind of discussion tends to be more fruitful if students work in pairs and then share with another pair.
- adding AVID strategies such as structured note taking and/or structured talk to insure accountability.
- adding in sentence starters or frames for ELL students.



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Process:

Step 1: *Hand out the descriptor cards. Ask students to categorize the words. Note - Depending on its place in your curriculum and your students, you can ask students to categorize the words without any further direction. This will likely cause them to organically reveal our cultural stereotypes. Otherwise, a “safer” method is to ask students to categorize the words using our cultural stereotypes as the basis of the grouping. I think this is less powerful than letting it happen organically, but it does allow students who haven’t done a lot of introspection to disassociate themselves from the stereotyping.

*You may want to have students brainstorm some descriptors before you hand out the cards. What words do they predict will go along with “male,” “female,” “Native American,” “African American,” and “European American”?

Step 2: When the grouping is done, students share their groupings with another pair. Discuss: How is your grouping different from the other pair’s grouping? What was the thinking behind it? What kind of stereotypes are revealed in these groupings?

Step 3: When that discussion comes to a close, students take a picture of their groupings to compare later.

Step 4: Students go back to their original pairs. Give students access, electronic or physical, to the the Hirsch, the Dirksen, and the Feddersen pieces. They should now regroup the descriptors based on what they see in the pieces.

Step 5: When they have regrouped, they should share with another pair and discuss: How do these groupings compare to your previous groupings that you did before you saw the art? What is different? What is the same?

Step 6: Students go back to their pairs. Give students the set of identity descriptors. For each piece they should add the identity descriptors that are seemingly dealt with.

Step 7: When that is done, share with another pair. Discuss: What did the pairs do differently? What was the thinking behind it? How does the intersection of identities explain some of the differences between your first set of groupings (without the art) and your second set of groupings (with the art)? How does looking at intersectionality allow the artists to defy some of our common stereotypes? For example, what aspect(s) of her identity allow the women in the Dirksen piece to be classified as powerful?



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Possible culminating activities:

Considering the cards with descriptors and identities, have students create something visual (collage, drawing, painting, photograph, photo-collage, sculpture, etc) that is representative of the intersection of contemporary stereotypes we see, hear and experience today. Students could make it personal, based on their own lives, or they could create something more general that they are aware of.

Have students compose a response that discusses how we see the stereotypes, of the older pieces (Hirsch and Dirksen) transcending time and place. Contrast with something that has a more contemporary twist like the Feddersen.

Descriptor cards

Civilized	Traditional	Harmonious	Powerful	Serene
Wealthy	Working Class	Adaptable	Ruthless	Inclusionary
Humorous	Sociable	Rigid	Progressive	Conservative
Male	Female	African American	European American	Native American