



THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY

Confront stereotypes to gain new perspectives



OBJECTIVES

- Students will examine how stereotypes affect how they communicate
- Students will discuss ways they can be open to listening more

MATERIALS

- AV to play [The Danger of a Single Story](#)
- Student writing supplies

TIME

- 45 min

LESSON INTRO

This TED talk from Nigerian author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns of the danger of only listening to a single perspective. Learning is a two-way exchange that requires sharing and listening.

LESSON STEP BY STEP

1. Post and read the essential question for this session: How do stereotypes influence how we react and communicate to people?
2. Ask students to do a 3-minute quick-write to answer this question.
3. Read this quote by the video's speaker to introduce the TED talk:
"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
4. Watch the following video: [TEDtalk - Danger of a Single Story](#) (18:30)
5. Engage in some or all of the following questions as a group, or as a personal journaling activity:
 - Share a time when you felt misunderstood or stereotyped.
 - How do you wish someone would have rather approached you?
 - What things can we do to make sure we don't get trapped into thinking and communicating from the perspective of a single story?
 - How can we make sure that we are hearing other voices?
 - Which new perspectives should we seek?
 - What attitudes do we need to take on so that we can listen and learn about others well?
 - What is our role in getting other stories?
 - "A single story robs people of their dignity." Why or why not is this true?



VARIATIONS

For further and higher level thought provoking ideas on recognizing our own biases and stereotypes, watch the [TED talk by diversity advocate Vernā Myers](#). She looks closely at some of the subconscious attitudes we hold toward out-groups. She makes a plea to all people: Acknowledge your biases. Then move toward, not away from, the groups that make you uncomfortable.

REFLECTION & WRAP UP

1. Re-look at the essential question for this session: *How do stereotypes influence how we react and communicate to people?*

Ask students to pull out their initial quick-write response to the essential question.

Finish with a last 3-minute quick write: *Based on the video and discussion, what other thoughts do you have to add to your initial response?*

NOTES

- **Source:** [TED.com "Danger"](#) and [TED.com "Walk"](#)
- **Educational Standards:** CASEL: Self Awareness, CASEL: Social Awareness, P21: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, P21: Communication and Collaboration, P21: Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, CCRS:SL1 Have Diverse Conversations, CCRS:SL3 Evaluate Perspective and Evidence