

LESSON PLAN

Prejudice and Body Image

This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian schools: <https://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.



LEVEL: Grade 3 to 7

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Adapted from the Teacher's Resource Kit: A Teacher's Lesson Plan Kit for the Prevention of Eating Disorders. National Eating Disorder Information Centre, © 1989.

Overview

This lesson lets students take a good look at our society's pressures to conform to standards of beauty – particularly to be thin – and the related prejudice against being “overweight.” Through class discussion and activities, students begin to recognize how the media pressure us to achieve certain looks how media images may lead to prejudice against those who don't conform to their standards of attractiveness, and the ideal body is different around the world and has changed over time.

Outcomes

Students demonstrate:

- an awareness of the media's role in dictating standards of attractiveness to society.
- an understanding of how media images can affect their own feelings towards their own bodies and towards
- others.
- an understanding of how unattainable these standards can be for much of the population.

Materials & Preparation

- Review the teaching backgrounder *Some Myths About Obesity*
- Prepare to project the video [Media Have Social and Political Implications](#)
- Prepare to project the presentations *Ideal Bodies Across History*
- Optional: Prior to class, have students bring in magazines or bring some in yourself (thrift shops are a good source of old magazines, as are people's paper bins on recycle day) that feature photos of celebrities, models, actors, social media influencers, YouTubers or video game characters
- Have arts and crafts supplies on hand

The Lesson

DISCUSSION

Begin the class by showing the video *Media Literacy 101: Media Have Social and Political Implications*. (If you prefer, you can assign it as homework the day before.)

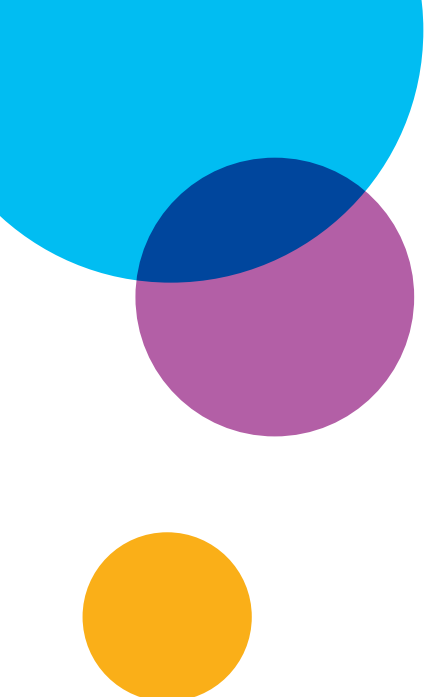
After the video, ask students to give some examples of media that they watch, read or play (for example social media such as Instagram or TikTok, video sites such as Netflix or YouTube, TV, magazines, video games, etc.) Once they have provided some examples, ask:

- Are some body shapes shown more often than others in these media?
- Are some rarely or never seen at all?
- Are some shown more positively or negatively? (For instance, do we sometimes see characters changing or trying to change from one body shape to another? Are characters praised or rewarded for having a certain body shape?)
- Do these media sometimes use special tools to make people seem like they have a different body shape? How are people's bodies most often changed with these tools?

IDEAL BODIES ACROSS HISTORY

Now ask students whether people have always had the same ideas about what the "ideal" body shape is. After a few students have shared their opinions, project the slideshow *Ideal Bodies Across History* and go through it with the students.

When you have finished the slideshow, ask students whether they were surprised that ideal body shapes have changed so much over time. Point out that there are billions of people living on the Earth, each one unique in their colour, size, features and personality. Each one of us has traits that make us unique. Some of us are small, some of us are big; some are fair, some are dark; some are girls, some are boys. Tell students to look around at their classmates – look at all the differences between just the people in this one room! There's no single "right" body shape, and comparing our bodies to other people's (either celebrities or people we know) will only make us unhappy.



Point out to students that if you met a celebrity in real life, they probably wouldn't look anything like their media image. This is because the images of people that we see in the media are carefully constructed – photographs are touched up to make them look more attractive, filters are used to alter the shape of their physique or face, or they are filmed using lots of make-up and special lighting. They even have special software that can alter a picture of someone and give them longer legs, or even make them thinner. But despite these unrealistic alterations, many of us are influenced by these images, both in our feelings towards others and in our feelings about ourselves.

Explain to students that when we see the same type of people each time we check our social media timelines or see an advertisement on a YouTube video or when we are told in advertisements that it is better to look like one type of person than another, it can make us dissatisfied with the way that we look – with our body image.

- What makes a body healthy? (*Balanced diet, exercise, lots of sleep etc.*)
- Do you have to be thin to be healthy? (*No. While being extremely thin or heavy can stress your body, so long as you are active you have to be much heavier than what our culture considers “fat” or “overweight” before there are any health effects.*)
- How might wanting to look like the people we see in the media be a negative thing? (*People who desperately want to be thin may develop eating disorders, exercise obsessively, or turn to smoking or drugs as a way to control appetite. They may develop low self esteem and become depressed if they can't change the way they look.*)
- Can students think of examples of media works that do a good job of including different body shapes, or showing that many different body shapes can be healthy and attractive? (For instance, a romantic comedy or teen show where the leads are not thin or muscular, or a video game that lets you choose many different body shapes for your avatar.) How common are those compared to those that only show a small range of body shapes as being desirable?



ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY: PEOPLE OF EARTH

Give students the following instructions:

Pretend that you are an alien travelling through space. One day you come across a deserted space station from earth. In the space station you find all sorts of media (those astronauts got pretty bored just floating through space!). As you've never seen a human before, this is very exciting – so you put together a report on humans based on the that you've found.

Place students in small groups and have them go through different media that contain images (photos, drawings or other representations) of people. (You can bring in media such as newspapers and magazines, ask students to bring them in, use the sample images in this lesson plan or assign this activity as homework and ask students to find images in different media. If you choose the latter option, tell them they can use www.take-a-screenshot.org to take screenshots on a variety of devices.

Tell students to use the images they have collected to create a collage of what a “typical” earthling looks like based on what you've found. (Students might like to create a composite man and a composite woman using bits and pieces of the people they've found in various ads and photos—these can be physical cut outs of printed photos, or drawings, or cut and copied on a computer from online examples.) As well as physically describing earthlings, what would our aliens say about people based on the media examples (*i.e. humans are always smiling and happy, humans live on beaches, humans wear cool clothes, etc.*)? Have students present their reports and collages to the class.

PREJUDICE AND BODY IMAGE

Some Myths About Obesity

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These five widely shared and inaccurate stereotypes about obesity, seen below, perpetuate the prejudice against fat people:

MYTH: Obesity is primarily caused by a lack of physical activity or dietary habits

Truth: Lack of physical activity and a poor diet are seen as symptoms of obesity and not the main causes. A few of the main causes have been pointed out as: insufficient sleep, psychological stress, and medications. Insufficient sleep has been shown to impede weight loss and addressing sleep for weight management has been endorsed by the Canadian Obesity Network.

MYTH: Obese individuals are less active than their normal-weight counterparts

Truth: Recent data from the Canadian Health Measures Survey indicated that only 7% of Canadian children and youth and 15% of Canadian adults meet physical activity guidelines. The overall message is that every Canadian could benefit from more exercise, and that normal weight and obese individuals take almost the same amount of steps in a day.

MYTH: Diets work in the long term

Truth: Approximately two-thirds of people who lose weight will gain it back within a year and almost all of them will gain it back in 5 years. Also unhealthy weight controlling methods such as fasting, laxatives and meal skipping pose a risk to mental and physical health.

MYTH: Everyone can lose weight with enough willpower

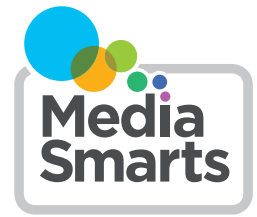
Truth: Obesity is not a choice and weight-loss success is different for every person based on how many calories they burn during exercise.

MYTH: Weight loss does not have significant adverse effects

Truth: Losing weight can do harm to your body. Even moderate weight loss can increase appetite, reduce how much energy you expend, and cause low blood sugar. It can also have a negative impact on metabolism and hormone production.

Source: Chaput, J et al. (2014) Widespread misconceptions about obesity. Official Publication of the College of Family Physicians of Canada. 60(11). 973-975.

PREJUDICE AND BODY IMAGE



People of Earth Assignment

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For this assignment, you are going to pretend that you are an alien travelling through space. One day you come across a deserted space station from Earth. In the space station you find all sorts of media (those astronauts got pretty bored just floating through space!) As you've never seen a human before, this is very exciting – so you put together a report on humans based on the media that you've found.

To create your report, find images (photos, drawings or other representations) of people from any media: newspapers, magazines, videos, comics, video games, etc. (If you need help taking screenshots, visit www.take-a-screenshot.org to find out how to take screenshots on a variety of devices.)

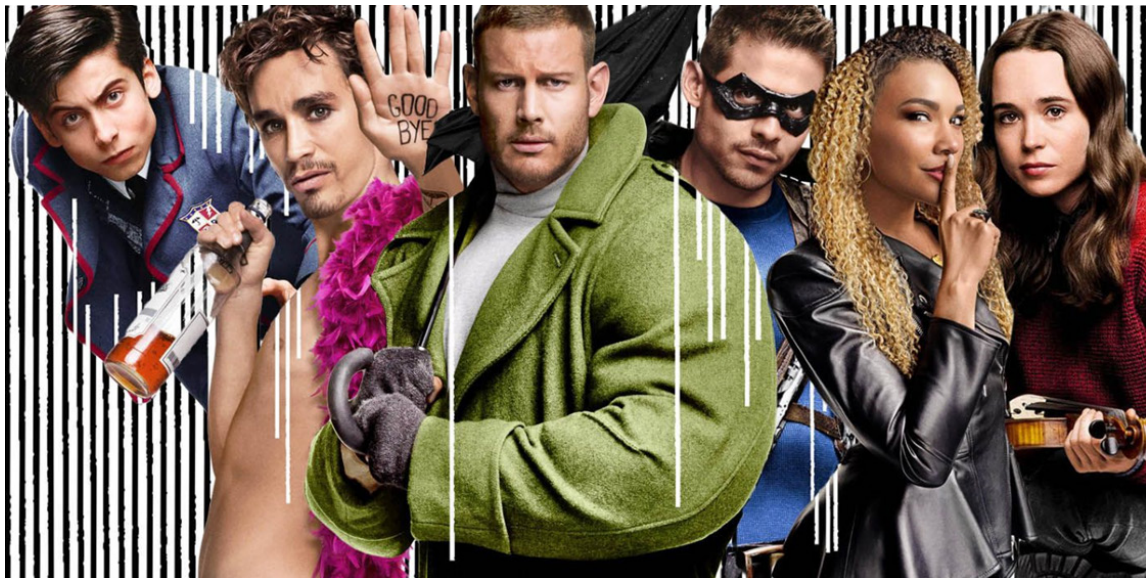
Next, use these images to create a collage of what “typical” male and female Earthlings look like according to media. Besides what they look like, what would does media say about how people behave based on the media examples?

When you have finished your collage, write a paragraph explaining how it communicates these media's portrayal of humans.

PREJUDICE AND BODY IMAGE

CATEGORY	LEARNING EXPECTATIONS	ACHIEVEMENT
ACCESS	<i>Finding and Verifying</i> access digital tools and media to meet your needs <i>Media Representation</i> take positive steps towards taking conscious control of media experiences	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)
USE	<i>Making and Remixing</i> create media works that communicate your learning remix a media work make effective and creative use of media tools	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)
UNDERSTAND	<i>Reading Media</i> decode media texts and recognize elements of medium and genre identify the choices made by media makers and analyze the implications of those choices <i>Media Representation</i> identify frequent gender, racial and other stereotypes in media and analyze their origins and impact understand how media, including those produced by one's peers and oneself, influence our views of reality and our identity <i>Media Health</i> understand how media representations can influence self-perception and identity, including relating to gender, race and ability <i>Community Engagement</i> evaluate the social and political implications of a media work	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)
ENGAGE	<i>Media Representation</i> explore personal connections to the social and media implications of a media work ask critical questions about what is and is not included in a media work and the implications of those choices <i>Community Engagement</i> respond to the social and political implications of media work(s)	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)

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4d

kylemassey Super star
4d 1,386 likes Reply
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existentialcrisisboy Ain't nobody fresher
4d 926 likes Reply
View replies (32)

Liked by mariapizzuto and 4,241,818 others
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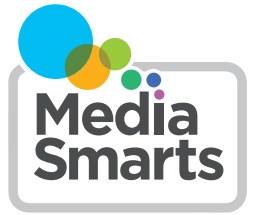
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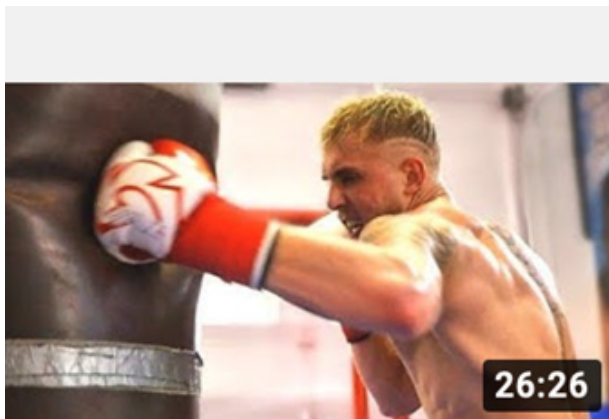
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