My Voice is Louder Than Hate: Pushing Back Against Hate

This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools:
http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework.

Overview

In this lesson, students explore the benefits and drawbacks of being "full citizens" online. They learn reasons why Canadian youth sometimes do not push back when they witness casual prejudice online and then use the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* tool to practice different ways of responding. Finally, students analyze memes as a medium and a way of responding to hate or other hurtful behaviour online and then use the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* tool to create a meme that they can use to push back against causal prejudice.

Although it can be delivered on its own, this lesson is designed as the second of a two-part lesson series which began with *My Voice is Louder Than Hate: Impact of Hate.* If you have already delivered that lesson, there are several sections below that you will only need to recap with your students.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- explore the issue of online hate
- understand that interactions through digital media can both do real harm and genuinely help others
- understand that digital tools allow them to be full citizens online
- analyze the media form of memes and what makes a good example of the form
- create a media product

Preparation and Materials

Review the *Teacher Guide* and *Teacher Training Workshop*.

Request and prepare to distribute student logins to the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* website.

Ensure that students are able to access the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* interactive resource either singly, in pairs or in groups

Prepare to project the following videos (or assign them as homework):

- *Digital Literacy 101: Interactions Through Digital Media Have a Real Impact*
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2mrvhMY4QA

- *Media Literacy 101: Each Medium Has a Unique Aesthetic Form* (optional)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d76X-uCy7No

Photocopy the worksheets *Pushback Practice* and *The Meme is the Message*

Photocopy the assignment sheet *Pushing Back With Memes*

Review the backgrounder *The Meme is the Message: Teacher's Version*

Procedure

Start by writing the following on the board and tell students it is a quote from a young person who participated in a study about prejudice online: "My dad always told me if you have an opportunity to help someone, you really should."

Ask students: do they agree with this? What responsibility do we have to make things better if we can?

Show students the video *Interactions Through Digital Media Have a Real Impact* (or, if you have already delivered the lesson *The Impact of Hate,* recap it.) Ask students to consider two of the features of digital media described in the video:

- "We can all be full citizens online."
- "We can contribute personally to making the world a better place."

Point out to students that the flipside of digital media having an impact is that they can also have a positive impact – making things better. That also gives them a responsibility to try to make things better if they can.

Prejudice

(Note: If you have already delivered the lesson *The Impact of Hate* you will only need to recap this section.)

Write the word "prejudice" on the board. Ask students to either say what they think it means or give examples of it. Don't comment on the examples for now, but lead students to a definition of prejudice something like: *prejudice is having a negative attitude towards someone because of some aspect of their identity, rather than who they are as an individual.*

Give the following examples and ask students if these fit the definition of prejudice:

- Someone who is not Black posts lyrics from a song that has a rude word for Black people.
- Someone who is not Asian posts a photo on a social network of themselves from a Hallowe'en party in a ninja costume, with their face made up to make them look Asian.
- Someone playing a computer game jokingly calls a team-mate a rude word for gay people to make fun of him after a bad game.

After students have discussed each example for a few minutes, point out that in each of those examples, either the prejudice wasn't aimed at a particular person who was there (as in the first two examples) or was not aimed at someone who was actually in the group the prejudice is aimed at (in the third example the player does not actually think their team-mate is gay, they are just using that as an insult.)

Ask students if they think that's different from more obvious examples of prejudice. After a few students have shared their opinions, point out that prejudice does harm even when it's not aimed at a specific person: using words related to people's identities as insults makes it seem like there's something wrong with that identity, and it makes people who are in that group feel unwelcome in the spaces where it happens. (For instance, using "gay" as an insult both makes it seem like there's something wrong with being gay and makes that space unwelcome to LGBTQ + people.)

Tell students to write down privately:

- Have they witnessed anything like this online?
- How many people do they think have witnessed it?
- Do they think it's important to do something when you witness it?
- How many people do they think do something about it when they witness it?

Now tell students:

- About half of young Canadians witness casual prejudice at least sometimes. Another third or so witness it "often" or "very often."
- Eight in ten say that it's important to do or say something when you witness it.
- Only around a quarter often do something about the casual prejudice when they witness it.

Pushing Back

Point out to students the discrepancy between the last two statistics. If it's important to do or say something about prejudice when you see it, why do just half actually do it?

After a few students have shared their opinions, tell them that the six most common reasons are:

- Fear of making things worse by doing something
- Not knowing what to do about it
- Seeing other people encouraging or joining in what's happening
- Not believing others will listen to you
- Not being sure if it is really prejudice
- Not being sure if the person really meant it

Ask if those match students' experience and if there are any other barriers to pushing back that they would add.

Now tell students the things that most young people say would make them more likely to push back:

- If someone they know said that what happened really hurt their feelings
- If the website or app had clear rules about what was and wasn't acceptable
- If they thought that most of their friends agreed that it was wrong

Ask if those match students' experience and if there are any other things they think would make it easier to push back.

Highlight the last item and remind them that most people (80%) *do* think casual prejudice online is wrong and think you should do something about it. Explain that the reason we don't realize that is because online platforms are very vulnerable to the *majority illusion*, in which the loudest voices seem like the majority to us. A belief that's held by as few as one in ten members of a group can have a very big impact on what's seen as normal in that group, if it's not countered by other voices.

Point out that there is a positive side to that, too: it only takes a few voices in a group or community to change people's ideas of what the majority believes.

Pushback Practice

Distribute students' logins to the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* website and the *Pushback Practice* worksheet and have each student complete one scenario within the Story tool:

- It's All Geek to Me
- Portable Phones
- Just Add Prejudice
- Seeing Colour
- Emote Control

Encourage students to use, annotate and save or print the tip sheets while completing the worksheet.

When students have completed their worksheets, have them separate into pairs, and have them compare notes and decisions.

Next, group together all of the students by the scenario they completed and have them prepare to lead a discussion of their scenario.

After all of the scenarios have been discussed, ask the class:

- Did students agree with the explanation of why each scenario was a problem that needed to be addressed? Why or why not?
- What did the good strategies have in common?
- What did the bad strategies have in common?
- What did the successful strategies do to avoid making things worse?
- How did the successful strategies get around the question of whether something was really prejudice or if the person doing it really meant it?
- All of the scenarios were about people who knew one another. Would things be different if they were about interacting with people you didn't know?

Make sure students come away with the following point about what works when pushing back against hate:

- Ask questions rather than make statements (e.g., Why do you say that?)
- Appeal to the person's presumed belief in equality (e.g., I'm surprised to hear you say that, because I always thought of you as…)
- Describing how the prejudiced comment/joke makes you feel (e.g., It makes me uncomfortable to hear that).
- Using humour to defuse conflict

The Meme is the Message

Point out to students how humour was used in some of the scenarios in the form of *memes*. Ask students if they can define what a meme is based on those examples and provide some examples of similar memes. Establish a definition that includes the following key points:

- Some memes are just an image, or include unchanged original text, but most memes consist of images with text superimposed on top.
- Usually a meme-maker will take the image from some other source, such as a photo or a still from a TV show, movie, or video game, and then change the text
- While some people do make entirely new memes, it is much more common to take an image that has already been used as a meme (such as the cartoon character Fry frowning in the Just Add Prejudice scenario) and change the text

Distribute the worksheet *The Meme is the Message* and have students complete it either singly, in pairs or as a whole class.

Optional: If you think your students need a better grounding in the ways that different media communicate meaning, show the Media Literacy 101 video *Each Medium Has a Unique Aesthetic Form*.

Now take up the questions in the worksheet, and ask students:

- How do memes communicate meaning?
- Are some memes more fixed or flexible in their meanings than others?
- How can the same meme be used to send opposite messages?
- What kinds of messages are memes good at communicating? What kinds are they bad at communicating?
- What makes a meme effective?

Make sure students identify the following features of a successful meme:

- It has a simple and clear meaning
- It is funny (even if it is dark or ironic humour)
- The image and text are connected, but there is a contrast between them (for example, the "two buttons" meme works best if one of the buttons is the obvious right answer)
- Memes invite people to participate: coming up with a new spin on a meme becomes like a game you're taking part in

Assessment Task: Pushing Back with Memes

Distribute students' logins to the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* website and the assignment sheet *Pushing Back with Memes* and tell them that they are going to create a meme that could be used to respond to casual prejudice, similar to the ones in the *Just Add Prejudice* and *All Geek to Me* scenarios.

Once you have gone through the assignment sheet with students, have them use the Meme Maker tool on the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* website to create a meme (in class or at home) and complete the assignment sheet to show their thinking.

When students' memes are complete, they will be uploaded to the Sharing Gallery. (Only logged-in users can see these memes.)

Pushback Practice Worksheet

Complete one of the scenarios in the Story spoke of the My Voice is Louder Than Hate website. If you get an ending you're not happy with, try again.

Circle the name of your scenario:

- It's All Geek to Me
- Portable Phones
- Just Add Prejudice
- Seeing Colour
- Emote Control

Answer the following questions on lined paper:

1) What was the problem in this scenario? (Click on "What's the problem?" if you're not sure.)

2) What barrier to pushing back do you think it was aimed at overcoming?

   - Afraid of making things worse
   - Not being sure if it is really prejudice
   - Not believing others will listen to you
   - Not being sure if the person really meant it
   - Other people seem to agree with what's happening

3) Are there other things that you think often make people not want to push back against prejudice online?

4) How well does this scenario match your experience with hate or casual prejudice online?

5) How did the successful responses keep the situation from getting worse?

6) How did the successful responses get around the question of whether something was really prejudice or if the person doing it really meant it?

7) How well would these responses work if you were in a situation where you didn't know the people you were communicating with? Why or why not? How might you adapt them to work better in that situation?

The Meme is the Message Worksheet
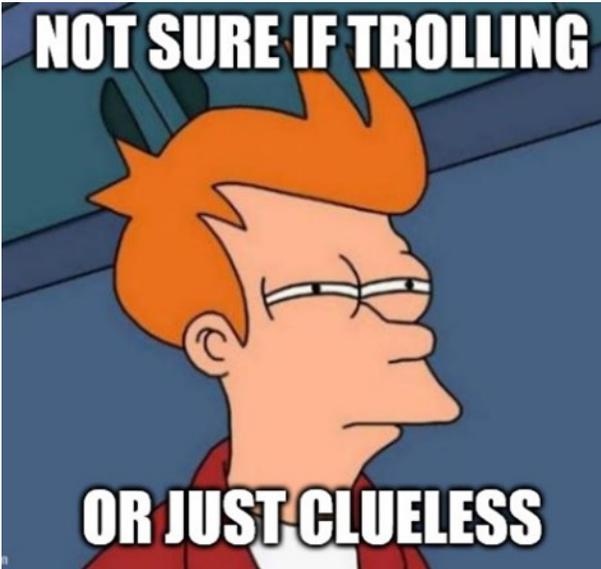
Meme: Fry frowning

What is this meme generally used to say? What is this specific version being used to say?

How familiar do you have to be with this meme or the original image for it to have an impact?

How much can the meaning of this meme be changed by changing the text?

Meme: Fake Geek Girl

What is this meme generally used to say? What is this specific version being used to say?

How familiar do you have to be with this meme or the original image for it to have an impact?

How much can the meaning of this meme be changed by changing the text?

Meme: Two buttons

What is this meme generally used to say? What is this specific version being used to say?

How familiar do you have to be with this meme or the original image for it to have an impact?

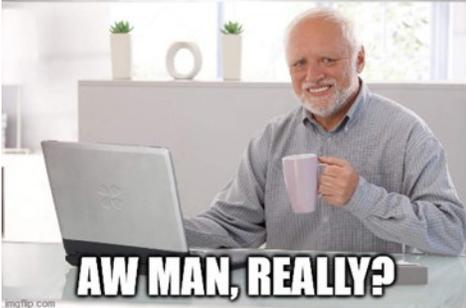How much can the meaning of this meme be changed by changing the text?

Meme: Hide the pain

What is this meme generally used to say? What is this specific version being used to say?

How familiar do you have to be with this meme or the original image for it to have an impact?

How much can the meaning of this meme be changed by changing the text?

The Meme is the Message Worksheet (Teacher's Version)

Meme: Fry frowning

What is this meme generally used to say? What is this specific version being used to say?

This meme is generally used to show either real or pretend confusion. This specific example is being used to show that the person being replied to is either intentionally "trolling" or doesn't realize that what they've said could be hurtful. Because it's not clear if the confusion is sincere or not, it gives the person a way to de-escalate what they said without losing face.

How familiar do you have to be with this meme for it to have an impact?

Not very familiar. Even if you don't know the meme the meaning is clear from Fry's expression.

How much can the meaning of this meme be changed by changing the text?

The specific meaning can be changed a lot but it always communicates a sense of either real or feigned confusion.

Meme: Fake Geek Girl

What is this meme generally used to say? What is this specific version being used to say?

That girls pretend to be "geeks" (interested in science fiction, gaming, etc.) but are not actually knowledgeable about them.

How familiar do you have to be with this meme for it to have an impact?

You don't have to be familiar with the meme itself, but you need to know something about the content (that Luke Skywalker was in Star Wars, not Star Trek).

How much can the meaning of this meme be changed by changing the text?

Not very much. In the scenario it is reversed, but it can't be changed very much from being about "geeky" girls.

Meme: Two buttons

What is this meme generally used to say? What is this specific version being used to say?

This meme is generally used to say that something should be an easy decision. In this case, the decision is between being offensive and being funny, suggesting that saying something that's offensive when trying to be funny keeps it from being funny.

How familiar do you have to be with this meme for it to have an impact?

It's more effective if you've seen other examples of the meme because it's not necessarily clear right away that the image is ironic (that the person in the second panel shouldn't be having trouble making the decision.)

How much can the meaning of this meme be changed by changing the text?

It can be used about any two choices that seem obvious. It can also be used un-ironically to suggest that something really is a difficult choice, or that something that ought to be an easy choice isn't for you.

Meme: Hide the pain

What is this meme generally used to say? What is this specific version being used to say?

This meme is generally used to show disappointment, or that something you weren't expecting to be painful turned out to be. In this case it's used to show that you are hurt or disappointed by something a friend posted.

How familiar do you have to be with this meme or the original image for it to have an impact?

It has some impact if you don't know the meme, but it has more if you do because part of the humour comes from repeating the image.

How much can the meaning of this meme be changed by changing the text?

It can be made to be about almost anything that is painful or disappointing.

Assignment Sheet: Pushing Back with Memes

For this assignment, you will think of an example of prejudice online not covered in the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* scenarios, then use the Meme Maker tool to make a meme to reply.

Think about the memes you analyzed in the *Meme is the Message* worksheet and our discussion in class.

You will be marked on the meme itself and the evidence of thinking shown in the answers to these questions *(answer on separate paper):*

1. Describe a situation where you might witness casual prejudice or other kinds of hurtful behaviour online.
(This can be an actual situation you have been in, a situation described in one of the videos in the Experiences tool, or an imagined situation.)

2. Log into the *My Voice is Louder Than Hate* tool. Go to the *Sharing* section and then choose *Meme Maker.*

3. Now choose a meme template using the Meme Maker and answer these questions:

   Meme name:

   What is this meme generally used to say?

   How familiar do you have to be with this meme or the original image for it to have an impact?

   How much can the meaning of this meme be changed by changing the text?

4. Use the Meme Maker to create a meme with that template which you could use to reply to the situation you described in the first question. Start by choosing a meme template. Give it a title (this won't appear on the image.) Then add either text to the top half of the meme, the bottom half, or both. Click Save to finalize it. Then you can download the meme as a PNG file and, if you want, submit it to the Sharing Gallery, and include it with this assignment sheet.

5. Explain how this meme would be used to reply to the situation.
   (What does your specific use of this meme generally say? Why would it be effective in this situation?)

Assessment Task Rubric

	Learning Expectations	*Achievement*
Use Skills and competencies that fall under "use" range from basic technical know-how – using computer programs such as word processors, web browsers, email and other communication tools – to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources such as search engines and online databases and emerging technologies such as cloud computing.	*Ethics and Empathy* use digital media to promote ethical and responsible behaviour *Community Engagement:* exhibit leadership as a digital citizen use digital media to be part of a community *Making and Remixing:* communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats participate in society through online engagement in democratic actions (e.g. lobbying, petitions, parliament)	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)
Understand "Understand" includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behaviour and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us. "Understand" also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.	*Ethics and Empathy:* show understanding of the concepts of ethical behaviour and online ethics understand the dynamics of online hate material and how it affects all of the people involved *Community Engagement:* understand how meaning is produced through multimedia (text, images, audio, video) and how culture is produced through the Internet and social media in particular *Making and Remixing:* understand the different purposes and contexts of digital image editing understand how meaning is produced through multimedia (text, images, audio, video) show an understanding of the forms and techniques of memes: the situation being addressed was clear the analysis of the meme was thoughtful and accurate explanation of the thinking behind the meme is clear and complete	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)

	Learning Expectations	*Achievement*
Engage "Engage" is the ability to make and use digital and other media to express yourself and participate in online and offline communities. The ability to engage using digital media ensures that Canadians are active contributors to digital society.	*Ethics and Empathy:* create a digital work that effectively counters online prejudice *Making and Remixing:* produce original works or solve problems remix different existing digital content into something new effectively apply the forms and techniques of the medium and genre: meme format is well-chosen for the purpose text makes effective use of meme format meaning of the meme is clear and effective	Insufficient (R) Beginning (1) Developing (2) Competent (3) Confident (4)