



LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 9 to 12
About the Author: Individuality vs. Conformity is part of a three-lesson unit created by Robert Peregoodoff.

Individuality vs. Conformity

Overview

Individuality vs. Conformity is part of a three-lesson unit designed to introduce students to the concept of popular culture and the role that it plays in their lives. In this lesson, students examine the pressures that exist to conform to popular culture and its effect on their lives.

Learning Outcomes

Students demonstrate:

- an understanding of the prevalence of popular culture in their daily lives
- an awareness of the pressures within popular culture to conform to its ideals
- an appreciation of the argumentative essay as a means of expressing an opinion

Preparation and Materials

In a class discussion, have the students identify fads or trends that are popular within their own school. Topics should ideally be those that are somewhat controversial within the school and may include:

- body piercing
 - skateboarding
 - tattooing
 - smoking
 - clothing (i.e. skimpy clothing for girls, bandana's for boys that may be prohibited because of gang-related connotations.)
- Once several topics have been suggested, divide your students into small groups.
 - Assign each group one of the topics for discussion.
 - Explain to your students that they have twenty minutes to discuss answers to the following questions. Remind students that each group member is responsible for recording the group's discussion.



Students are to respond as follows:

- With respect to your assigned topic, why do (or don't) you conform or participate in this activity?
 1. Are you pressured to participate in this activity? If your answer is yes, how are you pressured? Where does the pressure come from?
 2. Do you feel that popular culture emphasizes individuality, or does it ask you to conform?
 3. Does popular culture lead trends or follow them?
- Using their assigned topics and group discussion notes, students are to write a brief argumentative essay on individuality and conformity in popular culture.

Activities

Class Activity

In this activity students discuss how they would launch an online campaign for a group that is promoting tolerance.

- As a class, have students brainstorm and record the various strategies and tools they would use to get their message out and attract members and supporters.
- Have a student record this initial plan on paper while you discuss it as a class. Once you've developed something students feel confident with, move on to the jigsaw activity.

Activity One

Have students trace the origins of current fads or trends in popular culture.

Activity Two

- Debate a controversial fad or trend in popular culture. (Note: the chosen topic should be relevant to the lives of your students.)

Activity Three

- Have students decide which current trend is the most controversial.
- Through a show of hands, see how many of your students are in favor of this activity and how many are opposed.
- Divide your class in half on the basis of those who support and those who oppose this trend (if these groups are lop-sided, ask some students to play 'devil's advocate' and join the other side).
- give each side ten minutes to form their debate
- Remind students to select an individual to present the opening statement, and a second student to present the closing statement

Evaluation

- Group or individual student projects from selected activities.

