Identity, Hair and Seeing Myself

ADL®

Compelling Question: Why is it important to see aspects of one's identity reflected in media, including games, apps, TV, movies and toys?

Grade Level		Time	Standards/Competencies	
K-2	**3**	45 Minutes	**Common Core Anchor:** Reading: R1, R2 Writing: W2 Speaking & Listening: SL1, SL2 Language: L4, L5	**SEL:** Self-Awareness Social Awareness Relationship Skills Responsible Decision-Making
MS	HS			

Web Related Connections

Lessons
Dolls Are Us
Diverse Books Matter
Emojis and Me
Hair Identity and Bias
Mo'Ne Davis and Gender Stereotypes
Who Am I? Identity Poems

Other Resources
Early Childhood FAQs about Diversity and Bias
Help Students Make Sense of News Stories about Bias and Injustice
Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism
Safe and Inclusive Schools for All
Why We Need Diverse Books

LESSON OVERVIEW

In April 2021, seven-year-old Morgan Bugg of Tennessee was using an educational gaming app called Freckle, which is used by more than 900,000 teachers in the U.S. This app gives students a chance to win coins while completing math and reading activities. Freckle has an online store where you can buy items for your avatar. Morgan wanted to buy a hairstyle for her avatar, but she noticed that they didn't have any hairstyles for Black girls, like an Afro or braids. She and her teacher decided to take action. They wrote to the Freckle company and as a result, Freckle added more hairstyle options as well as other inclusive aspects of identity.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to explore and understand more about identity, the importance of representation and reflect on how Morgan made a difference for herself and others by using her voice to challenge bias.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

○ Students will learn about a young person who made a difference regarding identity and representation.

○ Students will understand what identity is and consider the different aspects of identity.

○ Students will identify the aspects of their own identity that are important to them.

MATERIALS & PREPARATION

○ "A Tennessee first grader's effort to help make an educational app more inclusive" Twitter video (CBS News, https://twitter.com/CBSThisMorning/status/1390639806808530945?s=20)

○ "This 7-year-old persuaded an educational app to include 'Black-girl hair' like hers" (*The Washington Post,* May 5, 2021, www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2021/05/05/freckle-app-black-girl-hair/), for teacher to read

○ My Identity (one copy for each student, and prepare in advance your own "My Identity" handout to model for students)

○ Drawing materials (crayons, markers or colored pencils)

Key Words

advocate	honored
amplify	identity
app	leadership
appearance	options
automated	overlooked
avatar	prejudice
bravery	representation
breakout room	wheelchair
feedback	
frustration	
hairstyles	
head-covering	

PROCEDURES

▶ **Video Viewing**

1. Play the video, A Tennessee first grader's effort to help make an educational app more inclusive.

2. Engage students in a brief discussion by asking the following questions:

   - What happened?

   - How do you think Morgan felt when she couldn't find "Black-girl hair" in the app? Why do you think she felt that way?

   - How did Morgan change the world?

3. Explain that during this lesson, we are going to learn more about Morgan and talk about what she did.

📖 **Reading Activity**

1. Read aloud the article about Morgan Bugg, "This 7-year-old persuaded an educational app to include 'Black-girl hair' like hers." You can read the whole article, with some explanation while you are reading, or just read key parts of the story (i.e., a few paragraphs). Make sure to include the following points.

   - Morgan Bugg, a seven-year-old living in Brentwood, Tennessee, was using an educational gaming app called Freckle, which is used by more than 900,000 teachers across the country. This app gives students a chance to win coins while completing math and reading activities. It has an online store (the "Piggy Store") where you can buy items for your avatar.

   - Morgan went to the online store to buy a hairstyle for her avatar but noticed that they didn't have any hairstyles for Black girls like an Afro, right curls or braids.

   - Morgan didn't see a hairstyle that was similar to hers and said, "There was no Black-girl hair. I felt super sad."

   - Morgan's teacher noticed how Morgan was feeling and asked her, "How can we make it better?"

   - Morgan suggested asking Freckle to add more hairstyle options. Together they wrote to Freckle, including a picture Morgan drew with several hairstyles to go along with the letter. Morgan said, "maybe they didn't know what Black-girl hair looks like."

   - Two weeks later, they received a response from Freckle. It said, "Our product team recently added more hairstyles to the Piggy Store based directly on your feedback!"

   - In addition to adding more hairstyle options, Freckle also added wig options, a wheelchair, head-coverings, and the ability for students to select skin colors and hair colors for their characters."

   - In 2020, a nine-year-old Virginia girl named Bellen Woodard wondered why the "skin colored" crayon had to mean "peach" which meant it excluded Black and other people of color like her. As a result, she started a "More Than Peach Project" which includes crayons which various skin tones and complexions across the world. To learn more, see the article below.

2. Engage students in a class discussion by asking some or all the following questions:

   - What happened and why?

   - Why do you think Morgan felt sad when they didn't have a hairstyle that matched hers?

   - Have you ever felt the way Morgan felt, not only about hairstyles but about another part of your identity? How so?

   - Why is it important to see yourself in games, apps and other forms of media (TV, movies, books, etc.)?

   - Why did someone at Freckle say that Morgan showed "bravery and leadership?" What does it mean to be brave? What does it mean to be a leader?

   - How do you think Morgan felt when she got the response from Freckle?

- How did Morgan's actions make a difference, for herself and others?

What is Identity?

1. Ask students: *Why was Morgan upset that her hairstyle wasn't an option on Freckle?* Explain that Morgan's afro, her "Black girl hairstyle," is particular to her identity as a Black person.

2. Ask: *What is identity?* Elicit/explain the definition of **identity** as follows:

   Identity: The qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different from others.

3. Share certain aspects of your identity, something like, "I am a Latinx woman, in her 40's, with light brown skin and curly hair." What aspects of my identity did I name? Elicit that you named race, age, gender, and some aspects of my appearance.

4. Ask students: *What are other parts of your identity?* Make a list on the board/smart board which might include some or all the following:

   - Appearance
   - Race
   - Gender
   - Religion
   - Family Structure
   - Neighborhood/Community
   - Age
   - Ability and Disability
   - Hobbies, Interests
   - Likes and Dislikes
   - Opinions

Drawing Activity

1. Ask students: *What parts of your identity are important to you right now?* Remind students about your own identity and the identity categories you brainstormed above. Have students turn and talk with someone sitting near them and share 2–4 aspects of their identity that are important to them.

2. Distribute a copy of the "My Identity" handout to each student. Have students write and/or draw in each of the boxes an important aspect of their identity. They can also include a few additional words about why that part of their identity is important to them.

   Note: In advance, prepare your own "My Identity" handout and share with students in preparation for them creating their own.

3. When students have completed their handouts, display the "My Identity" handouts around the room and invite students to move around the room gallery style to see all of the "My Identity" handouts of their classmates.

   Note: If some students don't want to share or have included parts of their identity they want to remain private, provide that option for students.

4. After viewing each other's "My Identity" handout, engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:

   - How did you select the parts of your identity to include?
   - Was it easy or difficult to decide on four parts of your identity? Please explain.
   - As you looked at each other's "My Identity" handouts, what did you notice? What did you wonder?

- If Morgan did this worksheet, what do you think she would include? What about Bellen?
- What did you learn by doing this?

Writing Activity: Write Your Own Letter about Exclusion or Unfairness

1. If time permits, engage students in a discussion about how Morgan made a difference by telling the company how the app hairstyles did not represent her. Ask some or all the following questions:

   - Have you ever felt similarly to how Morgan felt—that she did not see herself in an app?
   - How do you (or would you) feel if you watched movies, tv shows, played games, or played with toys and you didn't see yourself reflected?
   - What are some examples of media where you see parts of your identity represented?
   - What apps, TV shows, etc. would you like to see include more representation?

2. With students, explore and identify other ways in which they have experienced unfairness, prejudice or being excluded.

3. Engage students in a process to write a letter to a company that expresses their thoughts and feelings and what they think should happen to resolve the situation. For younger students, you can have them draw a picture, the way that Morgan did. Engage students in the writing and conferencing process to bring their letters to completion and send them out.

Closing

Invite students to respond aloud (or in writing or a caption to a drawing) to the following two questions:

- Morgan is using her voice for change by _____.
- I can use my voice for change by _____.

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- "7-Year-Old Morgan Bugg Convinces Educational App To Offer Representation For Black Girls' Hair" (AfroTech, May 5, 2021)
- "9-Year-Old Girl Creates 'More Than Peach' Art Kits That Offer Different 'Skin-Color' Crayons"(*People,* February 25, 2020)
- "A Brief History of Black Hair, Politics, and Discrimination" (*Teen Vogue,* August, 9, 2019)
- "Why Diversity in Children's Media is So Important" (Psychology in Action, March 5, 2020)

Common Core Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Writing
W2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
Speaking and Listening
SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
SL2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
Language
L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
L5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CASEL's SEL Competencies

COMPETENCIES
Self-Awareness: The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.
Social Awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
Relationship Skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.
Responsible Decision-Making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.

My Identity