

Friends
come with
all types of



TOPIC: Disabilities and Stereotypes

Help your students explore and discuss how people with disabilities are depicted and stereotyped in literature, movies, TV, and our daily lives, using Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs as a launch platform.

GRADE: 5

TIME: 45 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Develop an understanding of how people with disabilities are depicted in stories
- Explore their own attitudes, values, experiences.
- Evaluate negative stereotypes perpetuated through literature/media.
- Understand how we can be influenced by stereotypes of fictional characters.

MATERIALS

- Book: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs or YouTube reading of the story:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5vauARw-JM>
- Writing journals or paper, pencils

ACTIVITY:

1. Ask students the following questions:
 - What does the word *attitude* mean?
 - Do you think people can have negative attitudes towards people who have disabilities? Why? Give some examples
 - Do you think sometimes people can be prejudiced?
 - Are people sometimes fearful of people who have disabilities? Why? (Ignorance, worry distrust)
 - Can people think a person's quality of life is diminished because of their disability? Why? Can you give an example?
 - Do you know what the word stereotype means? Give some examples. (An oversimplified generalization about a particular identity group)
 - Have you heard of achondroplasia? (Dwarfism) Let students share what they know or examples.
 - Tell them, "We are going to listen to the Grimm's fairy tale, Snow White and The Seven Dwarfs. This won the Caldecott Book Award in 1939 and became a famous Disney film. I want you to be thinking about how the dwarfs are being depicted as you are listening to the story."
2. Read story or show the [video on YouTube](#).
Ask the following questions:

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The Cromwell Center for Disabilities Awareness

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- How are the dwarfs being stereotyped? (Childlike, clumsy, speech impediment, gnome-like creatures, mentally delayed, unlearned, unclean, doing remedial work)
 - Does Snow White care for them as though they are children, despite being adults? Why?
 - Do you think they are portrayed as weaker than the other characters? Do you think the story values them as productive members of society? Why?
 - Does this accurately describe people who have dwarfism? Can they only live with others who have dwarfism like in the story?
 - Are there other words that can be used instead of dwarf? (Little people, midget) Which one are more respectful and positive?
 - How might someone with achondroplasia have difficulty accessing important sites in the community? (ATM machine, library shelves, sports teams, elevator buttons, etc.)
 - Do you think some stories depict characters that have disabilities as being needy, less than, lower functioning, and create negative stereotypes? How can that be changed?
 - What can people do in general to change negative attitudes towards people with disabilities?
 - After thinking about this story, has your attitude changed? Has it made you think differently about how a story can be hurtful to some people?
 - Can you think of any other fairy tales or stories that stereotype people with disabilities?
 - How does this influence young children?
3. Introduce a writing task using journals or paper, which can be done independently or students can work in small groups and create together. It doesn't have to be a long story and recreated verbatim.
- Ask, "How can you recreate the story so that the dwarfs are still dwarfs, but are seen as strong, vibrant, productive members of society who want to contribute and are competent people, not lazy, not "less than", not child-like."
 - Students share their re-creations and discuss responses.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE FROM THE CROMWELL CENTER

Dear Teacher or Guidance Counselor:

Your brief feedback on this or on any of our other lesson plans is very important. It will enable us to share results with our grant funders and help obtain future funding, and any suggestions for improvements will help us fine tune the activities to best meet your needs.

To provide this valuable feedback, please go to the form on the bottom of this page on our website: <http://cromwellcenter.org/teacher-resources/>.

Or, if you prefer, you can e-mail your comments to sgreenwood@cromwellcenter.org.

Thank you!