

The Danger of a Single Story

This activity challenges us to question our assumptions about 'other' people and to listen to multiple voices in order to understand the world about us better. It is suitable for ages 12+.

Aims

- To reflect on how we see the world from our own 'cultural lenses'.
- To develop skills in listening, understanding, analysing and evaluating talks.

What you need

- Worksheet per pupil (see next page) and access to the TED Talk ['Danger of a Single Story'](#) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

What to do

Ask pupils to think about their own identity and what informs it using one or more of the following activities.

Identity flowers

Draw a flower and on each petal ask pupils to write one thing that makes up part of their identity: eg nationality, gender, religion, hobbies etc. Ask some of them to share their ideas.

Bag of things

Ask pupils to bring in a collection of objects to share with the class which represents different aspects of their identity.

Cultural lens

Draw a pair of glasses on the whiteboard/flipchart paper and ask your pupils to do the same. Individually, they should write, or draw, on the lenses of their glasses the key experiences, people and moments which have shaped their lives. In pairs, share three key things they have put on their glasses.

Discuss that there are many different dimensions which define who we are. How would it feel if they could only select one thing? Would they feel represented?

Do you think we are conscious of the different layers in our identity? How does it affect us and the way we see things?

TED Talk

Share the following quote from the Danger of a Single Story TED Talk.

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

Discuss the quote. What single stories could people tell about them? Does it matter? What effect could this have?

Watch 'Danger of a Single Story' by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and complete the TED Talks worksheet.

Reflection and evaluation

Debrief, discussing key ideas and spoken language techniques.

Take it further

The TED Talks worksheet can be used to explore talks on other global issues. Other useful talks are ['Refugee to Model' by Halima Aden](#) and ['Tough Truths about Plastic Pollution' by Dianna Cohen](#)

Ted Talk Worksheet
– see next page

Ted Talk



Title _____

Speaker _____ **Topic** _____

1. Give a brief biography of the speaker.

2. Why did you choose this topic?

3. Explain the purpose of the talk (was it to inform? Persuade? Entertain? Motivate?).

4. Write down the key points the speaker makes – try to get at least 4.

**5. TED Talk speakers are generally known to be effective public speakers.
What are some mannerisms or things you notice about this speaker that makes
him/her a good (or not so good) public speaker?**

**6. Highlight at least three techniques the speaker uses to persuade you or motivate you
in some way and explain why they are effective. Why do they persuade/motivate you?**

7. What are two things you learned from this talk? How can you apply this to your life?

8. If you could ask this speaker one question about their talk or topic what would it be?