

# Minnesota Writing Project

## --- Demonstration Lesson ---

**Title:** Reading & Writing the Self: Social Worlds and Multicultural Literature

**Grade appropriate:**  
Adaptable

**Approximate Length of time to complete lesson/unit:**  
one component of semester-long study of various texts

**Learning objectives and significance of lesson:**

Students examine their own identities as texts as a starting place for investigation of the ways in which social worlds connect, conflict, and regulate choices available. The same principle can also be applied to characters who come from worlds that may be distant to students.

**Brief summary/outline:**

**(Is this lesson an intro? middle? end? All or part of a unit? Does it scaffold a certain learning?)**

The lesson is one component of a multicultural curriculum that aims to move beyond merely exposing multicultural texts to students toward helping students recognize the inherent systemic tensions in any identity.

Social Worlds—they are entire worlds, each with its own set of rules or common practices (often unwritten) of behavior, dress, etc. that are accepted or expected.

1. Introduction to Social Worlds through Film: (many films clips would work)

Observation & Discussion—

Based on what you see, what social groups might this person be part of? What roles does s/he probably play?

What kinds of things did you use to make your assumptions about the person? How do you know a person is part of a particular group of people? What cues led you to these assumptions.

Which role seems most important at this point in time for the character? How do you know? What do you know about the rules of this particular world?

2. Identifying Reasons Why Social Worlds Shift / Conflict

30 second Improv 1: student & teacher –Why I don't have my assignment done.

Guess the situation. How did you know this? What were the cues that let you know the situation?

30 second improv 2: student / student –Why I don't have my assignment done.

Guess the situation. What were the cues that let you know the situation? How were the students in this role play different from the student in the first role play? Why were these students behaving differently? What might happen if these two students remained and we brought back the teacher character? Why?

3. Investigating Our Own Social Worlds: (works best to model for students first)

A. Brainstorm a list of the major categories or roles that make up who you are. Which groups are you part of either by choice or obligation

- B. For each of your social worlds, list the accepted or expected rules or practices.
- C. Create a symbol that you think represents each of your social worlds.
- D. Using the symbols you created, map your social worlds in relation to each other as you see them right now in your life. Are two worlds very similar/close together? Is there a world that conflicts with the others? Where does it fit?
- E. Reflection—Why did you map out your worlds in the ways that you did? Are there components of certain social worlds that you don't agree with? (Are there expectations or parts that bug you?) What happens when you (or others) participate in two or more social worlds that have conflicting components? What happens when someone breaks one of the important rules of the worlds? Might others disagree with your interpretation of these social worlds? If so, with what?

**Related Resources:**

Beach, Richard, Amanda Haertling Thein & Daryl Parks. *High School Students' Competing Social Worlds: Negotiating Identities and Allegiances in Response to Multicultural Literature*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2008.

Grant, Carl A. & Christine E. Sleeter. "The Literature on Multicultural Education: Review and Analysis." *Educational Review* 37.2 (1985): 97-118.

Vinz, Ruth. *Becoming (Other)wise: Enhancing Critical Reading Perspectives*. Portland, Maine: Calendar Islands Publishers, 2000.

**Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:**

- ◆ What are the social worlds of my characters? What are my perceptions of these, and how can I learn more about them? What are the tensions between these social worlds? What could I do to research this world? How would this character behave if s/he were placed in a different text's world?
- ◆ Identify differences of perceptions of social worlds and stereotypes: What factors influence outsiders' views of my social world? How do I (or how does the character) respond to outsiders' perceptions of this social world? What are the response options available?
- ◆ Use with Critical Lenses (lit. theory): What are the implicit assumptions/messages in a text (easy to use with advertisements)?
- ◆ Perspective-taking activities: Write in the voice of..., Explore the inner thoughts of...
- ◆ Ethnography/Auto-ethnography: multi-genre writing including observation, interview, artifact collection and interpretation

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