

REPRESENTATION MATTERS!



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- Why does representation in the media matter to Black people?
- How can we develop the ability to critically question representations of race in the media we consume?



OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Read a text and determine the central idea.
- View images and video clips to assess the impact of representation (when people of color are represented and when they are not).
- Develop an argument for how to increase the presence and maintain positive images of people of color in the media.
- Examine and discuss the question: How does media (social and news) influence policy, human rights, and/or equity in our structures and systems?



LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



TIME NEEDED

75–90 minutes



MATERIALS

- Teacher Edition—Vocabulary Planning and Definitions
- Two in three Black Americans don't see themselves represented in movies and TV
- Representation Matters Argumentative Essay Planner



VOCABULARY

CONTENT

Representation
Media
Platforms (Media)
Background
Abilities

Gender Identity

“Mirrors and Windows”

ACADEMIC

Argument
Jigsaw

Discuss

Engage

Identify

PART 1

Introduction (15 min): Knowledge Building

- 1 Say: *For today's lesson, we will read, discuss, and argue for representation of different backgrounds and racial groups in the media. When I say the word representation, what comes to mind for you? (Allow students to give input on what representation means.) Representation is described as the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way or as being of a certain nature. When we think of representation, think about seeing yourself reflected in what you read, and/or watch on tv and other media platforms. Our media, like our books, should be like mirrors where we can see ourselves reflected as we are, and windows, where we can see others and get a peek inside of their worlds. Why is this important? Turn and talk with your neighbor for 2 minutes to discuss the importance of having what we read and watch, what we consume, be like mirrors and windows.*
- 2 Once you gather responses from students, record them on chart paper or on the smartboard so that they can refer to them.
- 3 Say: *Now we are going to watch a video and see how other teens throughout the country feel about representation in the media.*
- 4 Show Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv3W6C3JBLY>
- 5 Say: *For some students, portrayals of people of color, and people of varying abilities, religions, sexual orientations, and gender identities, in the media not only affects how others see them, but also how they see themselves. The success of movies like "Black Panther" and "Crazy Rich Asians," sent a message to producers in Hollywood that it's important for everyone to be represented, and that our stories (or variations of our stories) need to be told. There are times when we see one type of portrayal on screen and then run the risk of using that single story to define an entire group of people.*

PART 2

Content Analysis (40 min)

- 6** Students will engage in a jigsaw group activity where they will read sections of an article and focus on the following guiding questions:
- What is the central idea of this portion of the text?
 - Why does the author think this is important? What message are they trying to convey to the audience?
 - What is the author arguing?

Students will be given roles for their group work (timekeeper, recorder, presenter, clarifier/investigator) to ensure that all students are active participants in the task. When students have read their section of the text and come to a consensus about the responses to the guiding questions, they will present their findings to the entire class.

- 7** *Say: Before we begin reading our text for this lesson, I will read the entire text aloud so that we are able to get a sense of what message the author is trying to convey. Please follow along as I read the text, which is an article from USA Today. (Read the text aloud on the USA Today article handout as students read silently.) What ideas stand out to you about this text? (Allow students to answer.) Now please work in groups to participate in a jigsaw reading activity where you read sections of the text and focus on the following guided questions. (Read guiding questions from above)*

- 8** *Say: Remember the jigsaw activity we did in a prior lesson? We will engage in this activity again with this new reading material. As a reminder, in a jigsaw activity you are broken into learning groups where you become the expert for very specific information. In this instance, you will separate into 3 groups based on branches of government, then, later, as a group you will present that information to your classmates. Be sure to choose the following roles for your group: a recorder to capture notes, a presenter to speak on behalf of the group, and discussers to choose details that are important and pose questions to the group.*

- 9** *Say: When you are done reading and answering the guiding questions, I will invite each group to present their findings to the entire class. We will have different roles to play in our group, but we will all be responsible for reading and answering questions. The timekeeper will keep the pace of the group and remind everyone of how much time is left. The recorder will write down the responses discussed in the group. The presenter will present to the class when it's time for presentations, and the clarifier/investigator will support the group with additional questions or help everyone think through any tough spots we come across while reading.*

- 10** Students will have 20 minutes to read and answer guiding questions, and each group will be given 2 minutes to present. The total activity should take between 28–30 minutes.

PART 3

Writing (30 min)

- 11** Students will write an argumentative/persuasive paragraph answering the following questions:
- Why does representation matter in the media or literature that we consume? Why is this important for all people in society?
 - Students will make an argument for representation ensuring that their paragraph does the following:
 - Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
 - Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text. (video and jigsaw article)
 - Use words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
 - Establish and maintain a formal style.
 - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.
- 12** Students will have 25 minutes to write their argumentative/persuasive paragraphs. If students need a scaffold for their paragraph, they can use the argumentative essay planner handout to help guide them in crafting their argument.

PART 4

Share/Closing (5 min)

- 13** Choose work from 2–3 students to use as exemplars and share with the class. Allow the class to give those students feedback on their work. Students should offer 1 praising comment and 1 suggested addition for the students to think about. An example would be: I like the way you introduced the paragraph with a fact about representation. (praise) I think you can add what you personally feel about representation. (addition)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Extension/additional context: Danger of a Single Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg>



Teacher Edition: Vocabulary Definitions

This document is meant to serve to build teacher knowledge and capacity. Please use the following document to know and understand the vocabulary for this lesson. Review and define these terms before teaching your lesson to help better understand and frame the content. There is also space to add any context necessary for your students.

Word	Definition	Teacher Notes/Context
CONTENT VOCABULARY		
Representation		
Media		
Platforms (media)		
Backgrounds		
Abilities		
Gender Identity		
"Mirrors and Windows"		
ACADEMIC VOCABULARY		
Argument		
Jigsaw		
Discuss		
Engage		
Identify		



Two in three Black Americans don't see themselves represented in movies and TV, study says

Bryan Alexander

USA TODAY

September 17, 2020

This text was modified for educational purposes

I.

A new study looking at the power of the media in America demonstrates the need for diverse stories and storytellers in Hollywood.

The #RepresentationMatters report, released Thursday by the National Research Group, showed that 2 in 3 Black Americans say they don't see themselves or their culture represented in movies or television, with 86% of Black Americans wanting to see more of these representative stories on screens.

The study found that 91% of the Americans surveyed believe that media has the power to influence society. Further broken down, 75%, or 3 in 4 of all people surveyed (and 87% of Black Americans surveyed), believe the way Black Americans are portrayed in the media influences perceptions of them in the real world.

II.

Eighty-three percent of Black Americans (and 66% of the total surveyed) believe that the media perpetuates negative stereotypes of Black people.

The study suggests strong demand for diverse stories with characters that break racial stereotypes (called for by 92% of Black Americans and 82% of the total surveyed).

"The high level of consumer interest in diverse stories and voices surfaced very strongly in this research," said Cindi Smith, vice president of diversity, equity, and inclusion practice for the National Research Group, in a statement with the report.

Smith said she hopes the report will "inspire creators and marketers to get behind stories that offer a fresh point of view and bring to light more multifaceted identities."

III.

The nationally representative survey consisted of 1,388 Americans ages 18-54 who describe themselves as frequently engaging with TV, movies, social media, or video games. Eight expert interviews with media and cultural theorists and industry leaders informed the research.

The new report showed that Hollywood can get representation right. The best examples of inclusion in entertainment include the big screen "Black Panther" along with TV's "Black-ish" and "Black Lightning." A majority of those surveyed pointed out that the key to success was realistic Black characters as the focus of the story.

IV.

Four in 5 Black Americans (2 out of 3 total surveyed) said it's obvious when characters of color and their stories aren't written by people of color.

The study showed that 1 in 3 of those surveyed believe there have been improvements in the last 10 years, with 7 in 10 stating that the entertainment industry needs to improve its representation.

The report concludes: "The entire media ecosystem needs to step up its representation game."



Representation Matters Argumentative Essay Planner

Please use the following graphic organizer to help plan your writing for your argumentative/persuasive essay.

INTRODUCTION	
<p><i>The reader learns about your claim. Write a hook (something that makes the reader interested in your writing, claim, or thesis) to begin.</i></p>	
BODY PARAGRAPH #1	
<p><i>Thesis/Claim #1:</i></p>	
<p><i>Reason #1:</i></p>	<p><i>Reason #2:</i></p>
<p><i>Evidence (facts or data to support reason)</i></p>	<p><i>Evidence (facts or data to support reason)</i></p>
<p><i>Explanation (you can use transition word/phrase here)</i></p>	<p><i>Explanation (you can use transition word/phrase here)</i></p>



Argumentative Essay Planner

BODY PARAGRAPH #2 Here is where you prove your argument by bringing in arguments against what you have to say.

Counter argument (if available)

Contradiction (prove it wrong)

Evidence (to further prove it wrong)

CONCLUSION

Thesis/Claim Restated

Something to consider/advice to the reader