

Unconscious Bias

SINGLE LESSON – Teacher Facilitation Guide

English, Humanities, Grades 9-12



ACTIVE LEARNING
FOCUS

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What is unconscious bias and how does it affect you?

LEARNING GOALS

Students will be able to:

- Define and identify unconscious bias.
- Reflect on their own biases and assess how bias affects their lives.

LESSON PLAN OVERVIEW

This lesson is meant to be facilitated with a group. It introduces students to the basic idea of unconscious bias and then invites students to apply these ideas to themselves. This unit can be adjusted to go more deeply into the topic and/or be more specific and relevant to the students in the class. The unit can also be shortened (by having students complete Activities 1 and 2 only) if you just want to introduce students to the term.

HOW TO PREPARE

1. Make a copy of the [Unconscious Bias Slide Deck](#).
2. Preview the activities, including all resources.
3. Take note of any changes you would like to make and edit as needed to accommodate your students' needs. Consider which activities lend themselves best to teacher facilitation, group **collaboration**, and/or independent practice and edit the slide deck as needed.
4. Review the learning artifact options and make a plan for which choices you will offer.
5. Make a list of must-dos before students begin this unit.
6. The facilitation notes that follow offer suggestions for how to best implement each activity in the slide deck, with active learning in mind.

LEARNING ARTIFACT OPTIONS

1. Written answers to reflection questions
2. Participation in a group discussion in response to reflection questions
3. A visual representation of their answers to the reflection questions

ACTIVITIES

JUMP TO

[Activity 1: Make an Educated Guess \(Slides 2–4\)](#)

- [Slide 2](#)
- [Slide 3](#)
- [Slide 4](#)

[Activity 2: Unconscious Bias \(Slide 5\)](#)

- [Slide 5](#)

[Activity 3: Project Implicit \(Slides 6–7\)](#)

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[Activity 4: Moving Forward \(Slide 8\)](#)

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LESSON FRAMEWORK

ACTIVITY 1: MAKE AN EDUCATED GUESS (SLIDES 2–4)

Learning Goal: Define unconscious bias.

Slide 2

Activity 1: Make an Educated Guess 🔍

What is unconscious bias?

With your group, look up the definitions of the following words:

- unconscious
- implicit
- bias

Write down each definition in your journal.

2

It is okay if students are off the mark here. The important thing is that they investigate the separate definitions and attempt to make sense of them.

Students can use [this dictionary website](#) to investigate definitions.

Slide 3

Activity 1: Make an Educated Guess 🔍

Now, combine those definitions and write a definition for **unconscious bias**.

Include an example with your definition. Be ready to share!

3



ACTIVE LEARNING


Structure this activity as a group discussion, with students collaborating as pairs or in small groups to create a definition. Consider creating a shared Google document in which students enter their definitions and then workshop the definitions as a class to come up with one main definition.

Slide 4

Activity 1: Make an Educated Guess

How does this picture of an iceberg relate to unconscious bias?

(Use your definition to help figure this out!)



SAY: *Look at the picture of the iceberg. Did you know that an iceberg remains largely unseen beneath the surface of the water? You wouldn't even realize most of it is there.*

Just as in the case of an iceberg, much of what happens in our minds is beneath the surface: hidden, unseen, or unrealized. Our minds work in ways that we don't even know! In particular, we all have biases that we don't realize.

ACTIVITY 2: UNCONSCIOUS BIAS (SLIDE 5)

Learning Goal: Define unconscious bias and examine its effect on how we treat others and how others treat us.

Slide 5

Activity 2: Unconscious Bias

As we watch the videos, write down a definition and two examples of unconscious bias in your journal.

See how close this new definition is to the definition you came up with in the last activity!

1. [Understanding Unconscious \(Implicit\) Bias](#)
2. [Peanut Butter, Jelly, and Racism](#)

Group Discussion

What are some examples of unconscious bias that you have experienced or observed in the lives of those around you?

Students should see how well their guesses match up with the actual definition of unconscious bias and then investigate and consider how unconscious bias affects how they treat others and how others treat them. Let students know that unconscious bias can also be referred to as implicit or hidden bias.



ACTIVE LEARNING

Students could **collaborate** with a partner or small group to brainstorm examples of unconscious biases. Let them know that these examples don't have to be directly related to them. They could note something they saw happen to someone else or something they saw in the media. Students could also do their own media research to find examples.



DIFFERENTIATE

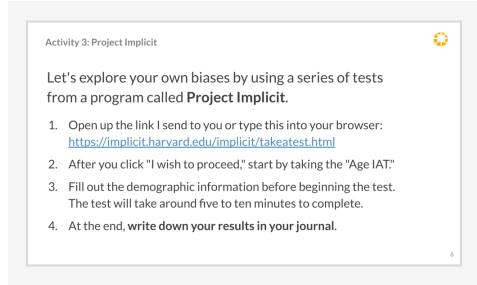
Additional Resources for Student Choice:

- [Implicit Bias: How It Affects Us and How We Push Through](#) (16:12) is a great video to watch as a group. In it, Melanie Funchess discusses how to recognize assumptions (that we all make!) and work toward a common understanding.
- [The Roots of Implicit Bias](#) from the New York Times discusses how even well-meaning people frequently harbor hidden prejudices against members of other racial groups. Students could read and discuss this article with a partner or small group.
- [Four Ways You Might Be Displaying Hidden Bias in Everyday Life](#) from CNN could also be read and discussed as a class.

ACTIVITY 3: PROJECT IMPLICIT (SLIDES 6-7)

Learning Goal: Explore your own unconscious biases.

Slide 6



Activity 3: Project Implicit

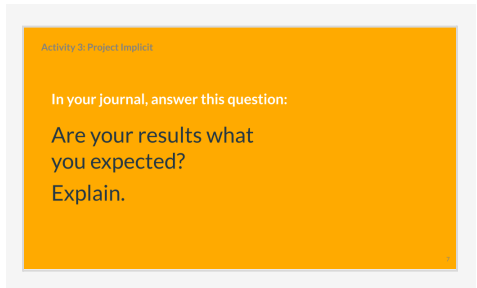
Let's explore your own biases by using a series of tests from a program called **Project Implicit**.

1. Open up the link I send to you or type this into your browser: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
2. After you click "I wish to proceed," start by taking the "Age IAT."
3. Fill out the demographic information before beginning the test. The test will take around five to ten minutes to complete.
4. At the end, write down your results in your journal.

Project Implicit is a nonprofit organization that aims to educate the public about hidden biases.

If you preview this website and think students may have trouble navigating it, consider walking students through the general information about the IAT as a class before they begin. That part of the website offers important information about how and why the tests are set up the way they are. You may also want to walk students through the demographic information so they don't get lost.

Slide 7



Activity 3: Project Implicit

In your journal, answer this question:

Are your results what you expected?
Explain.

Check in with students here and discuss the results of the tests with them; many students may have strong feelings about the accuracy of the test or the test's implications.



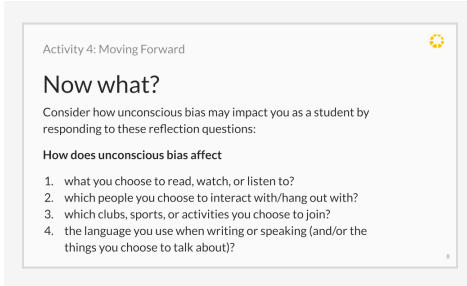
ACTIVE LEARNING

If time allows and students are interested in doing more, they can follow the same steps to take the test labeled "Skin-tone IAT" or the one labeled "Gender-Career IAT." If the class is receptive and responsive, facilitate a class discussion on their feelings about their results, or have them share with a partner or small group.

ACTIVITY 4: MOVING FORWARD (SLIDE 8)

Learning Goal: Reflect on how bias affects your life.

Slide 8



Activity 4: Moving Forward

Now what?

Consider how unconscious bias may impact you as a student by responding to these reflection questions:

How does unconscious bias affect

1. what you choose to read, watch, or listen to?
2. which people you choose to interact with/hang out with?
3. which clubs, sports, or activities you choose to join?
4. the language you use when writing or speaking (and/or the things you choose to talk about)?

These questions may be a challenge for students. If you need to scale this activity back, you can ask students about their likes and dislikes and whether they think unconscious bias is affecting their preferences. This final activity can be tailored or changed entirely to fit the needs of the student or the class. Options include but are not limited to the following:

DIFFERENTIATE

- Students complete written responses to the reflection questions.
- Students participate in a group discussion in response to the reflection questions.
- Students create a visual that represents their answers to the reflection questions (for example, a labeled drawing/graphic, a short video, or a draft of a social media post).

Get more resources like this at www.opportunityeducation.org/resources