

Stereotypes Worksheet

Warm-Up

1 **Read the following jokes. What is your opinion about jokes like this?**

Heaven is an American salary, a Chinese cook, an English house and a Japanese wife. Hell is defined as having a Chinese salary, an English cook, a Japanese house and an American wife.

Dundles, A and Pagter, C.R. 1991 *Never try to teach a pig to sing*, p. 232

Heaven is where the police are British, the cooks French, the mechanics German, the lovers Italian and it is all organised by the Swiss. Hell is where the chefs are British, the mechanics French, the lovers Swiss, the police German, and it is all organised by the Italians.

Parade magazine, 1 January 1989, p. 6

Vocabulary

2 **Find the words in the 'Tall, White, Young Male' text on page 2. Use the context to work out their parts of speech and match them with the definitions.**

Word	Part of speech	Definition
1 assume		
2 neutral		
3 perceive		
4 positive		
5 discriminate		
6 attribute		
7 characteristics		
8 gender		

Definitions:

- a a quality or feature of something or someone that is typical of them
- b good or useful
- c neither good nor bad
- d the fact of being male or female
- e to think something is true, although you do not have proof
- f to believe or say that someone or something has a particular quality
- g to treat a person or group differently from another in an unfair way
- h to understand or think of something or someone in a particular way

Stereotypes Worksheet

Tall, White, Young Male

People often come up to me and ask me if I play basketball. Even my PE teacher at school assumed I was a good player despite all evidence to the contrary, and put me on the school team. Most people regard stereotypes like this as being neutral, with no negative effects. I have to say that the rest of my school basketball team wouldn't agree with them.

But this is not the only stereotype people have about tall people. Researchers from the University of Sydney and Canberra's Australian National University have found that many people perceive tall people as being better at their jobs and that as a consequence, they earn more money than people of average height. If this is true, then I must be the exception that proves the rule.

Although the effect of this stereotyping can be positive for tall people, and I cannot deny that I do hope to benefit from this one day, the flip side is that shorter people are being unfairly discriminated against. And of course it doesn't stop there. People attribute other groups of people with characteristics based solely on the way they look. They may, for example, assess a person's ability to do their job based on their race, age or gender. Just as my height doesn't affect my ability to do my job, neither does the fact that I am white, young and male.

- 3 ***What do you think the phrases 'evidence to the contrary' and 'the exception that proves the rule' mean?***

Reading

- 4 ***Read the topic sentences below from the 'Stereotypes' text (on page 4). Match them to the pieces of information (on page 3) you would expect to find in the paragraphs they belong to.***

Topic sentences:

- 1 An awareness that we all have stereotypes is the first step to overcoming the problems associated with them.
- 2 If we react to a person based on our stereotype of them, this will create problems.
- 3 In pre-historic times, such skills were useful for our survival.
- 4 Stereotypes are generalisations about what we perceive as a particular group of people.
- 5 There is a simple explanation as to why we create stereotypes.
- 6 Unfortunately, we are not very good at forming useful stereotypes in our modern lives.

Stereotypes Worksheet

Information in the paragraph:

- a a definition of stereotypes
- b a disadvantage of stereotypes
- c a reason why we should not trust our stereotypes
- d a solution to stop our minds from making stereotypes
- e an advantage of stereotypes
- f an explanation of why we create stereotypes

5 ***Match the topic sentences to the paragraphs in the text.***

6 ***Find parts of the text which show that the writer agrees with these opinions.***

- 1 Most people have stereotypes about others.
- 2 Stereotypes are not always negative.
- 3 Stereotypes can be useful in helping us understand the world around us.
- 4 In pre-historic times, stereotypes were important for survival.
- 5 We keep our assumptions about people with a particular physical characteristic even if we meet people from that group who do not fit our stereotype.
- 6 Both positive and negative stereotypes can lead to problems and misunderstandings.
- 7 It is possible to change our stereotypes about people.

Closure

7 ***Do you agree with the opinions in activity 6? Why/Why not?***

8 ***Can you think of other ways that we can prevent the negative effects of stereotypes?***

Stereotypes Worksheet

Stereotypes

A _____ We consider people who share the same feature or characteristic as belonging to a group. We may classify people according to their gender, race or age. We may also categorise them based on their profession, interests, dress and even which football team they support. Once we have categorised people in this way, we assign certain characteristics to the members of that group. These may be positive, negative or neutral. They may or may not be different from characteristics that we believe we ourselves possess.

B _____ Categorising, classifying and generalising are skills which can prove useful in helping us perceive and understand our complex world. This is the way that our brains are wired. We can see this when we consider the way in which we identify objects. We categorise something as a pen, for example, by its appearance. We then attribute it with certain characteristics that we have come to associate with pens. We assume that we will not be able to erase anything we write with it, that the ink will not fade and that if we get the ink on our clothes or hands it will be difficult to wash off. Not all pens share these characteristics, but associations such as these are useful nevertheless.

C _____ When our ancestors saw someone running towards them they needed to be able to quickly decide if they were friend or foe. They based this initial assessment on appearance. If the person looked like them and dressed like them, they were probably from the same tribe. Their intentions were probably friendly. Those who did not share the same characteristics would be treated with caution if not aggression.

D _____ We assign the people around us to groups based on one characteristic and then assume they possess other characteristics that we, for whatever reason, associate with that group. These associations often come from things we hear from others rather than from our own experiences. Unfortunately, our brains test these stereotypes by looking for examples. We have a tendency to believe that one example proves that a generalisation is true. We may even ignore evidence to the contrary, believing these are exceptions which prove the rule.

E _____ Of course, negative stereotypes are much more damaging, lead to prejudice, discrimination and great injustices as well as causing untold offence. However, positive stereotypes can also cause problems. We may find ourselves in trouble if we rely on stereotypes and assume, for example, that old people are always wise, women are never aggressive, and all people with glasses are intelligent and hardworking.

F _____ It is important to recognise that they are a short cut that our brains create to simplify our complex world. They may be completely false and based on hearsay rather than fact. Even if they describe the majority of people in a group, they cannot always be true. Repeated exposure to members of a particular group will, by necessity, force us re-examine our stereotypes as they will not all share the characteristics of the group. Unfortunately, our stereotypes may prevent us from interacting with them. It often takes a conscious decision on our part to overcome this feeling of resistance.