

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

The **amaze**-ing Impact of Media

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Suggested Grade Levels: 8-9

Time Needed: 50 minutes

Description of Lesson

In this lesson, students will watch two different videos from AMAZE.org, taking note of the emotions displayed by the characters and how the videos make them feel personally. They will then work in small groups to analyze positive and negative media messages around sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the class, students should be able to

- Recognize and identify their thoughts, feelings and perspectives and those of others
- Differentiate between gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation
- Analyze external influences that have an impact on one's attitudes about gender, sexual orientation and gender identity

Materials Needed

- "Love Is Love: Free to Be Me" video from AMAZE.org: <https://youtu.be/cXtsiWoMsxs>
- "My Friend Is Transgender" video from AMAZE.org: <https://youtu.be/9DO7wSU1tCA>
- Dry erase board or flip chart paper and a marker
- AMAZE Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions PowerPoint slide
- Media Messages Worksheet [1 per student]

Preparation

Test your audio and video to ensure that you do not have any technical problems during your lesson.

Procedure

1. Introduce the lesson by explaining that the class will be discussing sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and thinking about how external factors like the media have an impact on the way people feel about these things. Explain that, like all topics, this one requires us to make sure we are following the class ground rules—especially the rules regarding respect and self-care. *[2 minutes]*

Tell students that you will start by showing a video from a resource that can be found on a YouTube channel called AMAZE Org. Ask students to take note of the different emotions that the characters in the video express and how the video makes them feel personally.
2. Begin by showing the class the video “Love Is Love: Free to Be Me” from AMAZE.org. *[2 minutes]*
3. Briefly check in with students by asking the following questions and record their responses on a dry erase board or flip chart paper: *[3 minutes]*
 - a. What emotions did you notice in the characters in this video? What made them feel that way?
 - b. How did this video make you feel? Why?
4. Explain that the class will now watch another video from AMAZE. Encourage students to continue to note the emotions they notice in the characters in the video as well as how the video makes them feel personally. *[1 minute]*
5. Show the video “My Friend Is Transgender” from AMAZE.org. *[5 minutes]*
6. Briefly check in with students by asking the following questions and record their responses on the same dry erase board or flip chart paper as you did in step 3: *[3 minutes]*
 - a. What emotions did you notice in the characters in this video? What made them feel that way?
 - b. How did this video make you feel? Why?
7. Explain that there are many external influences that have an impact on how people think or feel about gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. Remind students that the focus of the first video was sexual orientation. Define sexual orientation as a term that describes the gender or genders of the people a person is attracted to physically and romantically. Explain that everyone has a sexual orientation. Ask students if they can recall any of the sexual orientations that were mentioned in the first video. *[2 minutes]*
8. Next, explain that the second video was about gender identity. Define gender identity as a person’s internal sense of being a boy or girl. Also explain that some people may not identify as a boy or girl, but may identify as nonbinary or gender-fluid. Share with students that some people may identify as transgender. This means that a person’s gender identity does not match the sex they were *[1 minute]*

assigned at birth. Recall for students the fact that Cassie went to the mall to buy clothes for Glenda and explain that the way a person expresses their masculinity, femininity or unique sense of gender to the world is their gender expression.

[Facilitator Note: You may want to use the example of Glenda dressing in typically male clothes as a form of male gender expression, but when Glenda dresses in the clothes purchased for her by Cassie, her gender expression was what we might typically expect for girls.]

9. Summarize this section by revealing the PowerPoint slide and asking for a volunteer to read each of the three definitions. Follow up by asking if students have any questions about these terms: *[3 minutes]*
 - a. Sexual orientation describes the gender or genders of the people a person is physically and romantically attracted to. People may use words like “gay,” “bisexual,” “heterosexual” or “asexual” to describe their sexual orientation.
 - b. Gender identity describes a person’s internal sense of being a boy or girl. Some people may not identify as a boy or girl and may have a unique sense of their gender.
 - c. Gender expression describes a person’s way of expressing a range of genders, including masculinity and femininity.
10. Now, review the list of emotions that students identified in the videos and their own emotional experiences watching the videos. Call attention to the range of emotions that exist. Explain that videos, television shows and movies are just some of the external factors that influence how a person may think or feel about a particular topic. *[1 minute]*
11. In a large group brainstorm, ask students to think about other external influences that may have an impact on how a person thinks or feels about a topic. *[2 minutes]*

[Facilitator Note: In addition to people like family, friends, mentors, etc., be sure the list includes media outlets like television, movies, music, books, magazines, billboards, etc.]
12. Once you have a good list of external influences, explain that students will now divide into small groups and think about some of the messages they have seen in the media about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. Ask students to bring a pen or pencil with them as they move into their small groups. *[1 minutes]*
13. Using a dividing technique, move students into small groups. Ideally each group should have no more than four people. *[2 minute]*
14. Distribute the Media Messages Worksheet and explain that students should work as a group to complete the handout. Let students know that they will have about eight minutes to work on the handout. *[8 minutes]*
15. After eight minutes have passed, ask students to return to their seats. *[2 minutes]*

16. Once students have returned to their seats, ask for a volunteer to provide each of the following: *[5 minutes]*

- a. An example of sexual orientation in the media that might be helpful
- b. An example of sexual orientation in the media that might be harmful
- c. An example of gender identity or gender expression in the media that might be helpful
- d. An example of gender identity or gender expression in the media that might be harmful

17. Process the activity by asking the following questions: *[6 minutes]*

- a. What surprised you about the messages you heard about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression in the media?
- b. What impact do you think these messages have on how people feel about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression?
- c. What steps can you take to ensure that the messages you send about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression have a positive impact on other people?

18. Summarize the lesson by highlighting some of the ways students can personally have a positive impact on messages around sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and thank them for their respectful participation in the lesson. *[1 minutes]*

Optional Homework Assignment: Ask students to watch one of their favorite television shows and write down any helpful or harmful messages that are presented about sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Students should also write down how those messages made them feel.

MEDIA MESSAGES WORKSHEET

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Think about the different forms of media that you consume every day—television shows, movies, radio, billboards, magazines and social media. Think about some of the messages you've seen around sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression. For example, maybe you've seen a television show that has a positive representation of a family with same-sex parents (sexual orientation) or a movie where someone is made fun of because they wear something that is not typically masculine or feminine (gender expression).

Describe a media message you've seen related to sexual orientation. _____

What form of media was it? (television show, movie, radio, etc.) _____

Was a helpful or harmful message being sent about sexual orientation? _____

How did this message make you feel? _____

How do you think that message made other people feel? _____

Describe a media message you've seen related to gender identity. _____

What form of media was it? (television show, movie, radio, etc.) _____

Was a helpful or harmful message being sent about gender identity? _____

How did this message make you feel? _____

How do you think that message made other people feel? _____

Describe a media message you've seen related to gender expression. _____

What form of media was it? (television show, movie, radio, etc.) _____

Was a helpful or harmful message being sent about gender expression? _____

How did this message make you feel? _____

How do you think that message made other people feel? _____

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY DEFINITIONS

Sexual orientation describes the gender or genders of the people a person is physically and romantically attracted to. People may use words like "gay," "bisexual," "heterosexual" or "asexual" to describe their sexual orientation.

Gender identity describes a person's internal sense of being a boy or girl. Some people may not identify as a boy or girl and may have a unique sense of their gender.

Gender expression describes a person's way of expressing a range of genders, including masculinity and femininity.

