



THE COLORS WE SHARE

Grades 9-12
Curriculum

Book by Angélica Dass
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Lesson O:
Teacher's Guide

Introduction

The Colors We Share:

“By depicting people from all over the world against a background that matches their skin tone, Angélica Dass shows us how wonderfully colorful humans really are, questioning the concept of race and the limited categories we use to describe each other. These ideas are simply too small for a world that contains so many beautiful colors and people. The book asks us to consider how we see ourselves and others, through both similarities and differences. Kids also discover how to mix their own skin color with paint. Through a playful and dynamic layout, *The Colors We Share* encourages looking, questioning, and thinking bigger—inviting us to think about race, and our common humanity, in a new way.” (*The Colors We Share*, Aperture, 2021)

What is the Humanae Project?

This curriculum is about exploring identities as individuals and as a class. All activities and lessons are inspired by the Humanae Project and based on Angélica Dass’s book, *The Colors We Share*.

The Humanae Project:

“Humanae is a photographic work in progress by artist Angélica Dass, an unusually direct reflection on the color of the skin, attempting to document humanity’s true colors rather than the untrue labels ‘white,’ ‘red,’ ‘black,’ and ‘yellow’ associated with race. It’s a project in constant evolution seeking to demonstrate that what defines the human being is its inescapable uniqueness and, therefore, its diversity. The background for each portrait is tinted with a color tone identical to a sample of 11 x 11 pixels taken from the nose of the subject and matched with the industrial palette Pantone®, which, in its neutrality, calls into question the contradictions and stereotypes related to the race issue.” —Angélica Dass, Humanae

Discuss Framing for this Curriculum

All the activities in this curriculum are a “**challenge by choice.**” This means that students can share personal information based on their individual comfort level. Conversations about these topics can be difficult for students, and it is important to acknowledge that everyone experiences different comfort levels when sharing personal details. Teachers are encouraged to adapt to the comfort levels of their own classroom. **Each student is encouraged to share only what they are comfortable sharing.**

Having Difficult and Courageous Conversations in the Classroom

Tips on how to navigate difficult conversations about identity in a classroom setting.

To facilitate any conversation with students that may bring some discomfort, it is important to rely on a foundation of trust and respect in your classroom. For students to feel comfortable sharing, learning, and growing, these conversations need to be conducted in a safe space. An excellent resource for building a safe space for students to have “courageous conversations” can be found in ISTE’s (International Society for Technology in Education) video **“Create a Safe Classroom for Courageous Conversations.”**

Safety can be created by setting the guidelines for classroom discussions. Many times, conversational norms fall apart when race is the topic of conversation. To deepen and sustain difficult conversations, the following Four Agreements have been established as norms:

Courageous Conversations (Singleton & Linton, 2006):

1. Stay Engaged: A personal commitment to remain in the dialogue
2. Speak Your Truth: A commitment to be honest and true about your feelings, thoughts, and opinions
3. Experience Discomfort: Address the realities of race and racism in an honest and forthright way
4. Expect and Accept Non-Closure: Recognize that conversations will not reach a solution in our racial understanding or interracial discourse

In addition to knowing your students and creating a safe space for them to have difficult conversations, it is also important to be aware of “the school community where you work” and the identities that are present in the community (Dawson Salas, 2004).

Approaching conversations and curricula surrounding social justice even in a “safe space” often brings up concerns for educators over being hired, being dismissed from their peers, or creating conflict with parents (Dawson Salas, 2004). Often, these fears and concerns “are very real for teachers who decide that curriculum needs to integrate a strong social justice focus, one that helps kids learn about multiple perspectives and develop critical thinking skills” (Dawson Salas, 2004).

Resources Used

- Dawson Salas, Kelley. “How to Teach Controversial Content and Not Get Fired.” *Rethinking Schools Online*, Rethinking Schools, 2004, <https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/the-new-teacher-book-how-to-teach-controversial-content-and-not-get-fired/>
- Singleton, E. Glenn, and Curtis Linton. *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2006.
- Shelby, Ming. “Create a Safe Classroom for Courageous Conversations.” Lecture, ISTE 2019 conference, June 25, 2019, Philadelphia. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB6INzLkTQY>.

Glossary of Terms

Here are all the vocabulary terms used throughout these lessons.

- **Bias:** A prejudice that is based on personal judgment and defines a person or a group as more superior or inferior than others.
- **Counter Narrative:** This narrative offers a lens and perspective through which to view society, members, groups, and ideas in society from members outside of the dominant culture or those with less power.
- **Culture:** A shared set of behaviors, interactions, and communication by members of an identified group. These shared patterns identify the members of a culture group while distinguishing them from the patterns of another group.
- **Discrimination:** The act of mistreating someone based upon characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation.
- **Dominant Narrative:** When history is told through the perspective of the culture whose members hold more power than others. This perspective shapes the way we think and act in society as well as toward each other. An example is the expectations of the masculine image, one of physical strength and power.
- **Ethnicity:** Cultural characteristics, such as language, interactions, and beliefs, that are shared across members of a group.
- **Gender:** How individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
- **Genetics:** The study of **heredity** in general and of **genes** in particular. Genetics forms one of the central pillars of **biology**.
- **Identity:** There are many identities that can describe a person and that distinguish the character or personality of an individual. Some socially constructed identities are race, gender, religion, nationality, ability, and socioeconomic status.
- **Intersectionality:** The interconnected, complex, cumulative social categorizations of humans that help us acknowledge differences among us. It also provides a lens through which we can observe the policies and practices of institutions that demonstrate overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination and privilege.
- **Media:** A variety of mass communication that reaches or influences people widely. Television, magazines, newspapers, the internet, and radio can shape and influence how we think of ourselves, others, and societal concepts.
- **Perspective:** A point of view and the capacity to view things with a particular attitude.
- **Race:** A social construct that is not universal but refers to physical differences or social qualities that groups and cultures consider socially significant and that stratify society.
- **Racism:** Racism reflects and enforces a pervasive view. It is the belief that different races possess distinct qualities that make them either superior or inferior to other races. Racism seeks to maintain dominance through a complex system of beliefs, behaviors, use of language, and policies.
- **Representation:** How all forms of media deal with and present gender, age, race, ethnicity, social issues, and events to an audience. In many cases, groups are underrepresented or dismissed while others are reinforced through media images. The image of success can present itself as the correct fashion, jewelry, figure types, and language.
- **Social Arrangements:** The way a society sets up structure among groups. Race, class, and gender are systems of power in a hierarchy of social arrangements. Many times, groups have been silenced and ignored as a result of these structures. Knowledge is formed by those in power, leaving BIPOC, poor people, and women outside the frame of vision.
- **Social Construction:** An idea that has been created and accepted by people in society and covers a general concept about individuals, groups, or concepts giving them meaning and value. Examples of this are the colors assigned to gender (pink is for girls and blue is for boys), the definitions of male (strong, divisive, dominant) and female (cooperative, kind, emotional), and the value of money that goes beyond just a piece of paper.
- **Stereotypes:** Widely held and often simplistic, prejudiced ideas or beliefs of individuals, groups, or society.

Links and Resources

Here are the resources used in creating this lesson and additional material to supplement student and teacher learning and further education.

- Dass, Angélica, “Humanae.” <https://angelicadass.com/photography/humanae/>.
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- Muhammad, Gholdy. *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*, p. 127. London: Scholastic, 2021.
- Fred Hutch Cancer Center. “Race, Racism, and Genetics.” <https://www.fredhutch.org/en/about/education-outreach/science-education-partnership/sep-curriculum/race-racism-genetics.html>.
- UNC-TV Science. “More Alike than Different: 5E Lesson: UNC-TV Science.” PBS LearningMedia, February 4, 2021. <https://tpt.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/more-alike-than-different/5e-lesson-plan-unc-tv-science/>.

Previous lessons and activities inspired by Angélica Dass’s Humanae Project

All resources were provided by Angélica Dass.

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- De Pedro Velasco, Elena, and Gael Zamora. “TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO COLOR CARNE. UNA EXPERIENCIA SOBRE ARTE E IDENTIDAD.” Facultad de Educación de Segovia de la Universidad de Valladolid. https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1chYPRRuXoQ6FhI_TqgfDLtx1QH7vLn-S.
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- Martinez Hanley, Lorraine, and Jamor Gaffney. *Discussion Guide for Teachers and Parents*. Placitas, NM: Journeys in Film, 2018. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NOPP3GcWnV2880iM3C-cdpC5j1lv7xQK/view>.
- Vázquez Ben, Lucía. “La Incorporación de la Teoría de la Evolución a la Educación Primaria: Posibilidades y Obstáculos.” Programa Interuniversitario de Doctorado en Equidad e Innovación en Educación, Universidade Da Coruña. https://padlet-uploads.storage.googleapis.com/846784172/40af36935fdea695fc532a83dcbde820/PresentaciA_n_de_Power_Point_SesiA_n_1_Humanae_REVISADA.pdf.



Lesson 1:
The Colors We Share

Introduction/Background

“You have your own special skin color, and it’s not just one color, but a combination, like a painter mixes with paints. From the three primary colors—blue, red, and yellow—along with black and white, you can create a universe of colors, including the color of everyone you know!”

—Angélica Dass, *The Colors We Share*

Every student in your class has a unique skin color, and each color can be created by mixing the same five colors of paint. Students will mix a custom paint color that matches their skin tone, exploring the shared colors behind the diversity of human appearances.

Using *The Colors We Share* as a reference, this lesson allows students to start a discussion about issues of **race**, **diversity**, **identity**, **ethnicity**, **discrimination**, and **bias**. The Humanae project asks us to question the assumptions we make about others based on the color of their skin.

Learning Goals

- Students will be able to identify aspects of the text they agreed with, questioned, or considered to be new information.
- Students will create a unique color that matches their unique skin tone.

Materials

Materials Provided for This Lesson

- Introduction video
- Humanae color-mixing reference sheet

Materials Needed for This Lesson

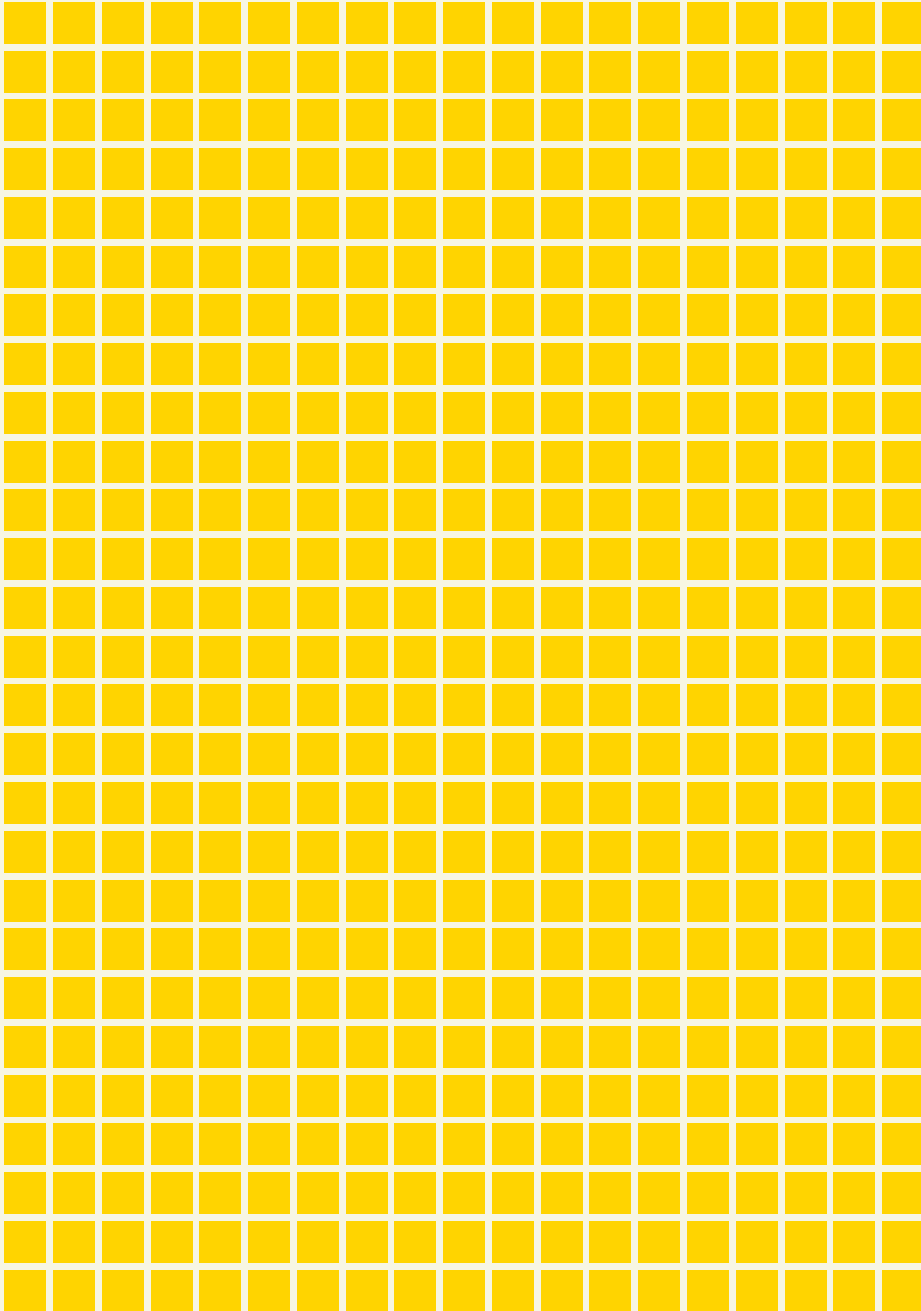
- Washable paint in the following colors:
 - Red
 - Blue
 - Yellow
 - Black
 - White
- Paintbrushes
- Canvases or painting paper
- Cups of water to wash brushes
- Paper towels
- Mirrors
- Journals or notebook paper

**We recommend putting the paint in squeeze bottles.*

Vocabulary

- **Race**
- **Diversity**
- **Identity**
- **Ethnicity**
- **Discrimination**
- **Bias**

Lesson



Lesson Content

- Introductory Video: **Family Colors**
- Reading of *The Colors We Share*
- Discussion
- Activity 1: Paint Mixing and Color Wall
- Activity 2: Preparing a Background for Lesson 3's Self-Portrait
- Closing
- Teacher Reflection

Introductory Video: Family Colors

Start this lesson by orienting students to the topic through the introduction video to *The Colors We Share* (provided with the curriculum). Play video in small increments. Start from the beginning of the video and pause the video when you get to 2:14. Ask the students, in pairs, to describe Angélica's family based on the information she shared. Play the rest of the video. Ask the students what they learned about family colors from Angélica and the colors of families globally. Call on a couple of partners to share what they discussed.

Reading of *The Colors We Share*

After students watch the introduction video as a class, have students read *The Colors We Share* (on their own, by reading the book to them, or in pairs). While going through the book, encourage students to spend time with it, noticing the images that accompany the text.

Independent Processing of the Text

Ask students to create four quadrants on a paper. Then, ask the students to keep a list of information they agree with (+), information that is new to them (!), information they have questions about (?), or information they disagree with in the book (-).

Whole-Group Discussion of the Text

After students have spent time with the text individually, invite them to share their thoughts by asking what about the book stood out to them. Then, transition to a whole-group discussion regarding the differences between **race** and **ethnicity**. Provide definitions and examples of each word. You can give examples from their own family regarding race and ethnicity and then ask students to describe their families. Students can share information they wrote in the various quadrants with either the whole class or a small group/partner.

After students share what they wrote in the quadrants, ask the class the following questions:

- What do you believe Angélica Dass is trying to convey through the Humanae photographs?
- What message does this project express?
- How can this message be seen in your own life?
- What surprises you about this book?
- What questions do you have?
- What do the photographs tell us about the people in the photos?
- What is something we do not know about the people in the photos?

To transition to the first activity, Paint Mixing, remind students of what they read in the book. Turn to the first page and read it aloud to the students. Invite students to share their thoughts on how people are referred to as “black,” “white,” or “brown,” but the descriptions fail to acknowledge that human skin tones are an infinite range of colors.



Activity 1: Paint Mixing and Color Wall

Ensure that all students have access to paint in the following five colors: white, black, red, yellow, and blue. Following the paint-mixing instructions below, challenge your students to mix these colors until they achieve a color that matches their skin tone. Provide printouts of the attached "Color Reference Sheet" to assist in the mixing process.

Paint-Mixing Instructions:

- Play the MIXING COLORS video to help guide students on creating their correct skin tone
- Mix yellow and blue to make green
- Add in red to create brown
- Add black and white to begin matching to your skin tone
- Use a mirror to compare your paint sample to yourself
- Add in more yellow and red to see if you can get even closer to your skin tone

When the students are satisfied with the color that they have produced, encourage them to name their color (e.g. "coffee with a splash of cream"). Instruct students to put a sample of their paint on a piece of paper, and have them label it with their original color's name. You can now create a color wall using these "unique-to-this-class-of-students" color quadrants.



Activity 2: Preparing a Background for Lesson 3's Self-Portrait

In Lesson 3 (Self-Reflection) of this curriculum, your students will be drawing a self-portrait in the style of the Humanae photographs. After they have mixed paint to match their skin color during today's lesson, have them use that to fully cover a canvas or piece of painting paper. This will save time during the Lesson 3 activity, as the students will not need to remix their unique color.

Closing:

Ask students to submit a written reflection on what they took away from the lesson today. Suggested prompts:

- What did you learn from this class session?
- What questions do you have about the content?
- Was it easier or more difficult than you expected to mix the colors? Why or why not?

Teacher Reflection:

Review the students' written reflections.

- What interested your students?
- How was their thinking challenged?
- Were there statements that surprised you during the discussion? If so, what were they, and why do you think you were surprised?



Lesson 2: Context

Introduction/Background

“Even though it seems like we’re talking about color, we’re really talking about how we see each other, and what we believe about others based on the color of their skin. To know a person’s story, you need to get to know them.”

—Angélica Dass, *The Colors We Share*

The **context** in which we see someone, whether in person or in a photograph, influences the assumptions we make about them. For example: Are they wearing fancy clothing and jewelry? What sort of buildings and cars do we see in the background? Are they depicted having a career/job? The portraits in the *Humanae* project remove this context. This is an intentional choice by the photographer to inspire individuals to see each other for who they are without any additional dress or equipment and to observe what everyone has in common rather than focusing on differences.

Popular media, including magazines, television shows, and social media, presents images of people in a variety of contexts. In this lesson, students will explore and reflect on the messages conveyed by photographs. This is an opportunity to discuss **social arrangements**, **dominant narrative**, and our perceptions of others. Through this **collage** activity, students will be empowered to remix existing media to create a portrait of themselves.

Learning Goals

- Students will be able to explore and identify messages that are conveyed through multimedia.
- Students will be able to describe how layered messages can impact how individuals are defined.

Materials

Materials Provided for This Lesson

- Introduction video

Materials Needed for This Lesson

- Magazines, newspapers, and other print imagery
- Scissors
- Glue

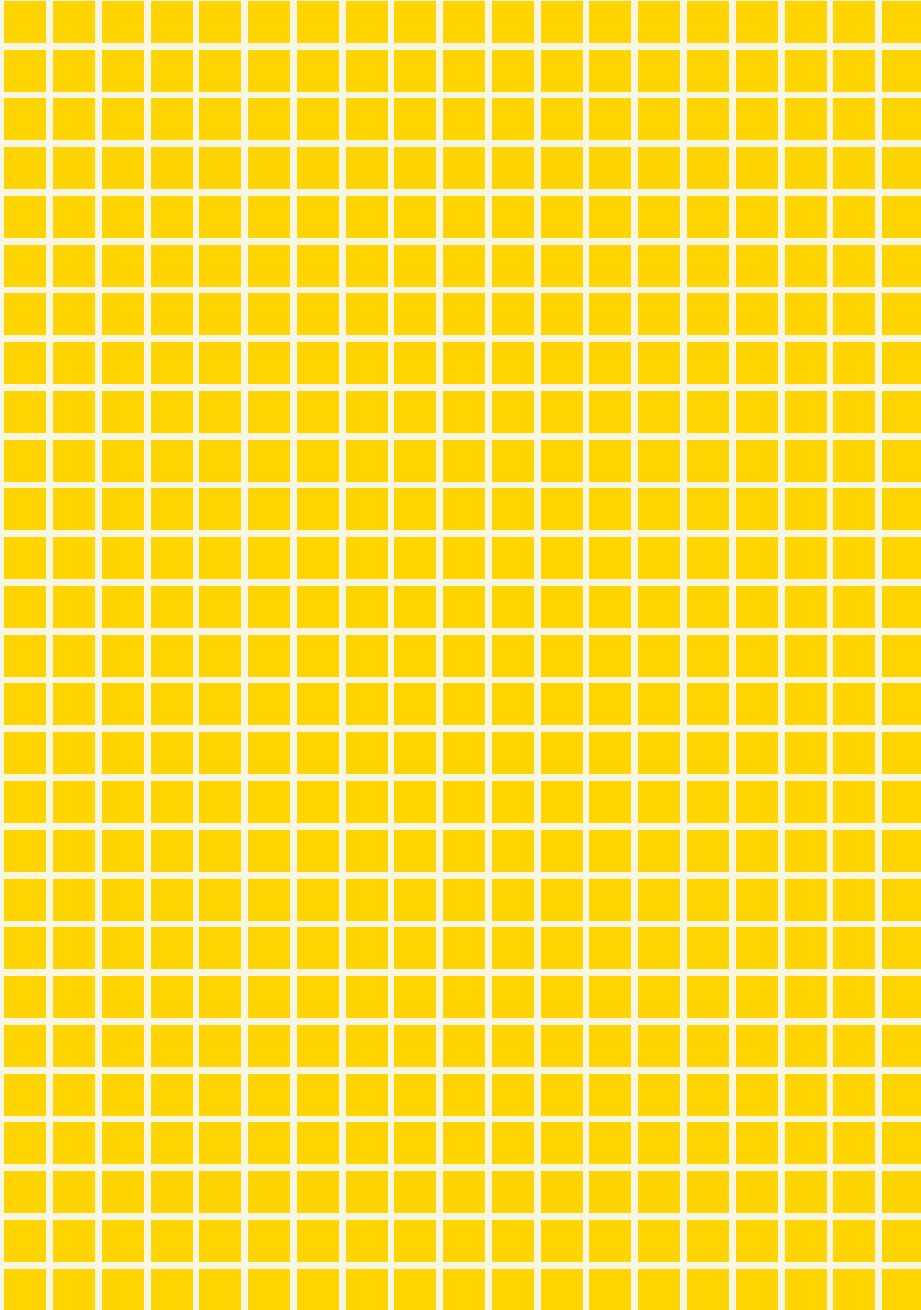
Alternately, this project can be done using the internet and digital-art software, and the following materials:

- Journals or notebook paper
- Shared document listing hyperlinks for the different media sites used as sources

Vocabulary

- **Social Arrangements**
- **Dominant Narrative**
- **Collage**
- **Context**

Lesson



Lesson Content

- Introduction Video: **A Human Snapshot**
- Group Discussion
- Activity 1: Exploring Media Depictions
- Activity 2: Remix Collage
- Closing
- Teacher Reflection

Note to Teachers

This activity—like all activities in this curriculum—is a “challenge by choice.” This means that students can share personal information based on their individual comfort level. Conversations about these topics can be difficult, and it is important to acknowledge that everyone experiences different comfort levels when sharing personal details. However, teachers are encouraged to adapt the comfort levels for their own classroom. Students are encouraged to share only the information they are comfortable discussing with their peers.

Introductory Video: A Human Snapshot

Start this lesson by orienting students to the topic through the introduction video to *The Colors We Share* (provided with the curriculum). Play the video from the beginning and stop at 2:35. Ask the students to turn to a partner and discuss why Angélica believes it is important to consider the complete narrative and “not just a single shot.” Call on a couple of groups to share their thoughts with the whole class. Play the rest of the video.

Activity 1: Exploring Media Depictions

Note: This activity can be done either with online imagery (through websites and social media) or by passing out print media (such as magazines or newspapers). Choose the method that will work best for your students. If you decide to use online resources, plan to provide the students with hyperlinks for easy access.

After viewing the entire video, challenge your students to examine representations of people in popular media, keeping in mind the role **context** plays in media. In pairs, students should discuss the assumptions they find themselves making about the people depicted in the various images.

Students should ask each other the following questions:

- What messages are being conveyed through this imagery?
- How does the idea of **dominant narrative** play a role in these images?
- How do you connect to these images? What do they say about you?
- What would you change, add, or modify in these media portrayals?
- Compare portraits in different types of media outlets (give examples of media being used, e.g., newspaper, social media, websites). Does the style and use of context vary from one media outlet to another? Why might this be?

What are some patterns or trends in the media?

Once the students have had time to complete this activity in pairs, ask them to share some of their thoughts with the full group.

Activity 2: Remix Collage

Note: This activity can be done using digital imagery and art software or using print media (such as magazines and newspapers) with scissors and glue. Art allows us to convey messages that might be hard to put into words. After reviewing and discussing the portraits in the previous activity, your students probably have opinions about the messages these images convey.

Using the artistic technique of **collage**, ask your students to use the images they evaluated to create their own self-portrait. Show the students the examples below. Explain that these examples feature a combination of images and words. Ask the students to design their own self-portrait collage.



Closing:

Ask students to submit a written reflection on their takeaways from the lesson today.

Suggested prompts:

- What did you notice about the trends in the media?
- What surprised you in the images?
- What happens when context is added? Give specific examples.
- What happens when context is taken away (like in *The Colors We Share*)?
- In *The Colors We Share*, why was it important to take the context away?
- How did removing context impact how we perceived the subjects in the photos?

Teacher Reflection:

Review the students' written reflections.

- What interested your students?
- How was their thinking challenged?
- How did the idea of context influence how your class perceived a photo?
- How can you use this information when uncomfortable issues arise in class?



**Lesson 3:
Self-Reflection**

Introduction/Background

“You may have heard skin color described as ‘black,’ ‘white,’ ‘red,’ or ‘yellow.’ But have you ever met a person who is actually one of these colors? Of course you haven’t! No one’s skin is really one of those colors—not a single person in the entire world, including you. Humans are much more colorful!”

—Angélica Dass, *The Colors We Share*

Telling our stories is one of the most powerful ways to get to know ourselves and each other. **Self-reflection** becomes a way to see ourselves more fully. We look in the mirror to see our outward appearance daily, yet we do not look inward very often, and tend to be unfamiliar with our **inner self**. The goal of self-reflection is to know both our inner form and our outer self, accepting who we are at this time.

Through this process of self-reflection and **introspection**, we learn much about who we are, our beliefs, our values, our **worldview**, and who has defined us. We observe how we have been shaped by our experiences, our affiliations, and our families. We also get clarity on how we have been inaccurately defined and represented in various contexts.

In *The Colors We Share*, when we self-reflect, we learn the value of all our stories, how we can grow, and what we all have in common.

Note to the Teacher

The activity of self-reflection provides a window into who we are to the outside world and into our inner worlds. The exercise in this lesson, to create the collage of our internal and external selves, asks us to take a snapshot in time of who we are and what we want our next steps to be. We ask ourselves on a deeper level: “Who am I on the outside, and who am I on the inside?” We explore the parts of ourselves that may limit others’ view of us, cause conflict, and at times help us contemplate our path forward.

It is important to take the time to learn each other’s stories and avoid judging people based solely on appearances. Perhaps your students have had experiences in which other people made assumptions about them based on how they look. This lesson explores identity by having students reflect on how *they* see themselves and how they feel that *others* perceive them.

To set up the two activities, remind the students of the discussions from the previous lessons. In Lesson 1, they explored the shared elements of skin tone and celebrated their own unique color. Lesson 2 challenged them to look at

how context, or lack thereof, in portraiture can change the assumptions they make about a subject.

For this lesson, students will need to participate in a brief self-reflection on their own identity. They can do this by looking at themselves and exploring who they see themselves as versus how they think others perceive them.

Learning Goals

- Students will complete a portrait of themselves.
- Students will define and demonstrate the concept of self-reflection and introspection.

Materials

Materials Provided for This Lesson

- Introduction video
- Self-reflection worksheet

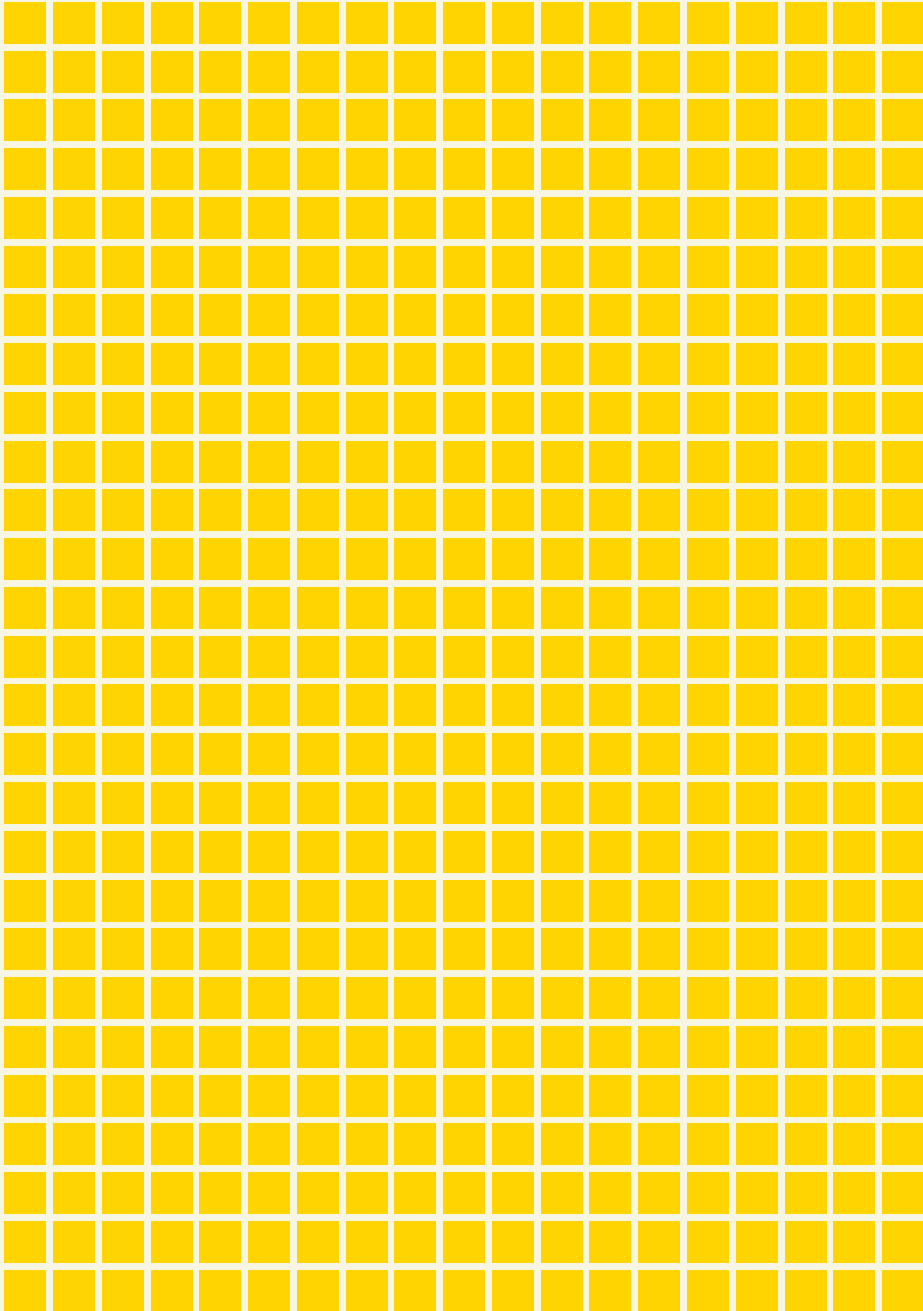
Materials Needed for This Lesson

- Paper
- Art and writing supplies

Vocabulary

- **Self-Reflection**
- **Inner Self**
- **Introspection**
- **Worldview**

Lesson



Lesson Content

- Introduction Video: **Our Multiple Identities**
- Discussion
- Activity 1: Self-Reflection
- Activity 2: Self-Portrait
- Closing
- Teacher Reflection

Introductory Video: Our Multiple Identities

Start this lesson by orienting students to the topic through the introduction video to *The Colors We Share* (provided with the curriculum).



Discussion

In *The Colors We Share*, pages 19 and 20 show how multiple people can share the same Pantone color. Turn to the page and read it aloud to the class. Share that these people could all be labeled or self-identify as a different race. As the book discusses, our skin color is not who we are. Rather, each of us is unique with our own personal stories and talents.

In this picture, the four individuals all share the same skin tone but could be labeled as different “races.”

Activity 1: Self-Reflection

Ask your students to look at themselves individually and reflect on the questions below (also provided on the self-reflection worksheet):

- What comes to mind when you think about who you are?
- What factors have shaped your identity? Which people have shaped your life?
- What is meant by a worldview? Please give examples from your life. What/who has shaped your worldview?
- Describe a moment when your identity felt important to you.
- How does your identity impact how others view you? How does it impact how you view yourself?
- When or where did you learn about your identity(s)? How so?
- How have your identities developed or changed throughout your life?
- How do you expect your identities to change in the future?

Note: It is not necessary for students to share their results from this activity. Rather, this is a private reflection of one’s own self. Before the students answer these questions, remind them that this is an exercise about who they are, not their appearance.

Activity 2: Self-Portrait

Note: The teacher may want to model drawing a self-portrait before asking students to complete this activity.

Students will complete this activity in two parts.

In Lesson 1, they prepared the canvas for their self-portrait using the color representing the skin tone as the background. In this lesson, students will be asked to complete their canvas by drawing a self-portrait based on what they have seen in the book.

The teacher will hand out a mirror to each student and ask them to draw a self-portrait over this background. One suggested way to do this is to use their pencil to sketch the portrait, and then go over it in pen or marker.



Closing:

Ask students to submit a written reflection on their takeaways from the lesson. Suggested prompts:

- What did you learn from this class session? What were you surprised to learn about yourself?
- What questions do you have about the content?
- How will this lesson change how you look at others?
- How did this lesson change how you view your own identity?
- Were there parts of your identity that you reflected on that surprised you?
- Were there parts of others' identities shared that surprised you? If so, why do you think that is?
- What parts of this lesson were easy? What parts were difficult?
- How will learning about each other bring about change?

Teacher Reflection:

Review the students' written reflections.

- What interested your students?
- How was their thinking challenged?
- What went well in this lesson? What could be changed, added, or deleted?
- Were you surprised by any of the students' answers?
- How can you celebrate these different aspects of your students' identities as your class continues?



**Lesson 4:
Celebrating Similarities
and Differences**

Introduction/Background

“Your story is unique, but do you know how similar you are to others too? Even with our differences, humans are 99.9% biologically identical! Only in that last, tiny 0.1% do you find skin, hair, and eye color. Grouping people by skin color is not scientific at all.”

—Angélica Dass, *The Colors We Share*

Through the ages, **skin color** has been a primary factor by which people have been classified. Differences and similarities were seen as contentious concepts when skin was used as criteria for **diversity**. Skin color was the major trait to which other physical, behavioral, and cultural characteristics were linked and became discriminatory.

Today we know that variations in skin color are adaptive traits that correlate closely with geography, UV radiation, and other evolutionary developments. Human skin color has no discrete value. We are all a mixture. The value and perception of the color of human skin has also been assigned through a **social construct**—how society defines people—and the meaning of race, which is then rendered as true.

Using *The Colors We Share*, we learn that humans are more similar than different at a deeper level. We are asked to question the **assumptions** that were made many years ago by a few and that have lasted and imprinted our view of people and race. Through this lesson's exercise, we begin to see how race has been socially constructed, and we have the opportunity to create and develop new ideas about the color of our skin.

Learning Goals

- Students will be able to define diversity and its impact on how we see and work with others.
- Students will be able to list the assumptions regarding differences and similarities we all have with each other.

Materials

Materials Provided for This Lesson

- Introductory video

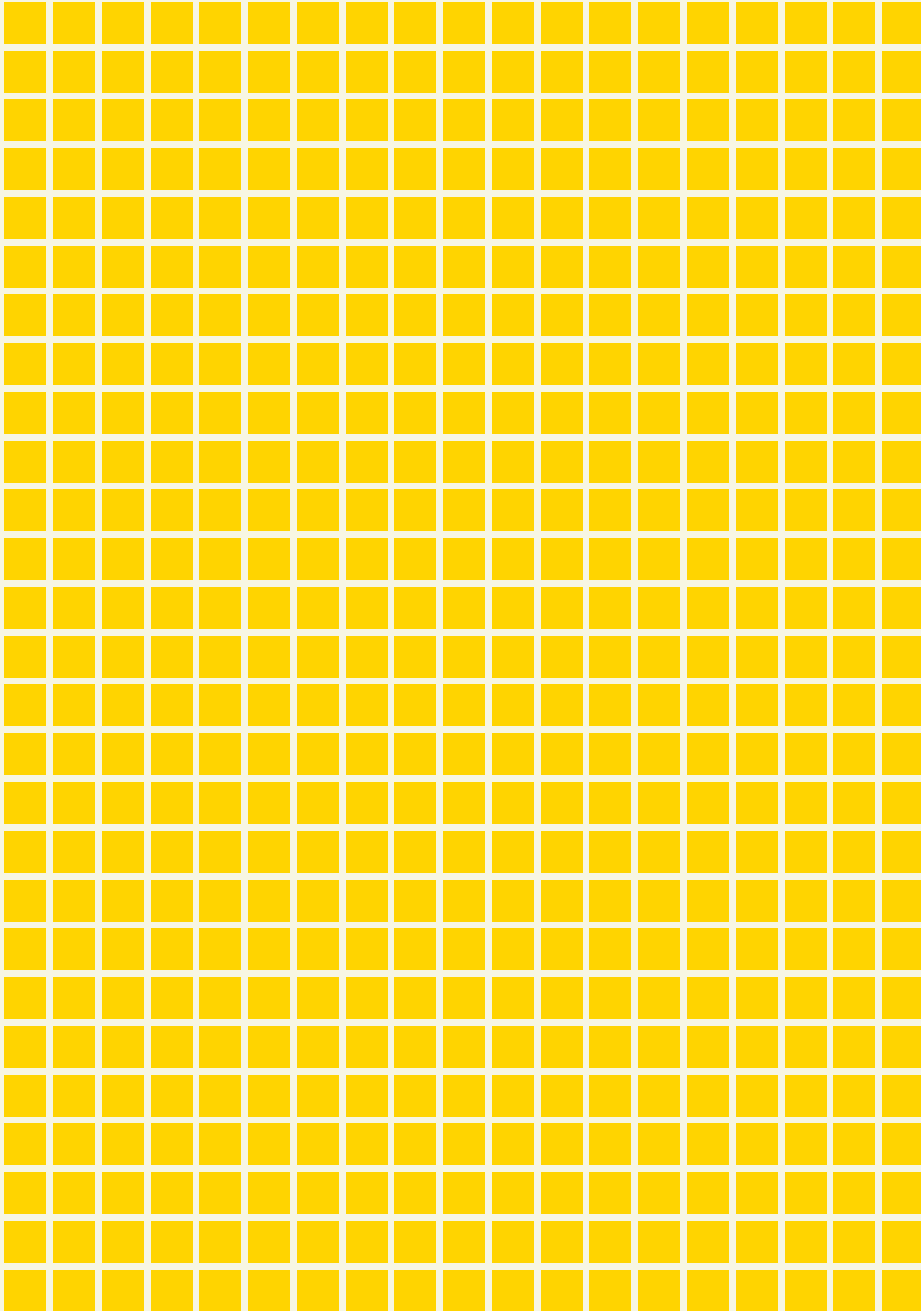
Materials Needed for This Lesson

- Images from *The Colors We Share*
- Magazines/multimedia resources
- Scissors
- Tape/glue
- Journals or notebook paper

Vocabulary

- **Skin Color**
- **Diversity**
- **Social Construct**
- **Assumptions**

Lesson



Lesson Content

- Introductory Video: **Celebrating Similarities and Differences**
- Discussion
- Activity 1: Similarities
- Activity 2: Differences
- Closing
- Teacher Reflection

Introductory Video: Celebrating Similarities and Differences

Start this lesson by orienting students to the topic through the introduction video to *The Colors We Share* (provided with the curriculum).

Discussion

Begin the lesson by highlighting page 15 of *The Colors We Share*: “Even with our differences, humans are 99.9% biologically identical! Only in that last, tiny 0.1% do you find skin, hair, and eye color. Grouping people by skin color is not scientific at all.” Ask students to reflect on this quote and share their thoughts in a brief written reflection.

Once the students finish writing, use the following prompts to guide a full-group discussion:

- How many similarities can you find between your neighbor and yourself? What are those similarities?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Did you find any traits that are similar between more than two people?
- If this 0.1% is the part of humans that is genetically different, why can we still find so many similarities within that small percentage?



Freckle Collage



Brown Eyes Collage



Curly Hair Collage

Activity 1: Similarities

Note: Students will need access to imagery of people. This can be from The Colors We Share, multimedia photos, magazines, or similar materials. Through this activity, encourage the students to see the similarities, especially in appearance, shared by people from around the world.

Explain to the students that many of our attributes are determined by our genetics and that in this activity they will be reconsidering how we choose to group people. As an example, we could sort by curly hair. Using the pictures provided from *The Colors We Share*, find multiple images of people with curly hair. Tell the students that rather than using skin color to sort the pictures, they should each try picking a different trait and then sort the pictures into a group that shares that trait. (See examples below for freckles, curly hair, and brown eyes.)

Allow the students to repeat this exercise a few times. See how many ways these pictures can be sorted to highlight their similarities. Ask them to identify a trait of themselves that they see in one of the images. As students are working, prompt them to discuss their findings with neighbors, small groups, or the whole class. When students have completed their collage, encourage them to share it in either pairs or a small group. Provide the following prompts for students to discuss:

- How many different traits could you find?
- What traits and images did you pick out?
- Are there similarities or differences in your images?
- Was it easy or hard to find pictures for your selected trait? Why do you think this is?
- Were you surprised at how many people, including those with different skin tones, shared the same traits?
- Why do you think skin color is such a common way of categorizing people?

If there is time, ask for pairs or small groups to share one or more of their responses to the prompts.

Activity 2: Differences

Note: While the above activity allowed us to explore the many similarities that humans have, we can also celebrate our many differences. It turns out that many of the differences we have can also be traced to our genetics and attributes we have inherited from our ancestors.

Genetics research companies collect and analyze DNA samples from around the world. By comparing these samples among millions of people, their scientists are able to show that some surprising traits can be linked to our DNA.

For example, the following can be predicted based on a DNA sample:

- Whether you are more, or less, likely than most humans to have an aversion to cilantro
- Whether you are likely to prefer sweet or salty foods
- Whether you are more, or less, likely than other humans to be bitten by mosquitos
- **Whether you are likely to prefer chocolate, strawberry, or vanilla ice cream**

To begin this activity, take a poll of your class and ask if they prefer chocolate, strawberry, vanilla, or other ice-cream flavors. Once you have a list of the flavors and the number of students who selected their favorite type of ice cream, ask them why they prefer the specific ice-cream flavor. Do they think that there could be a genetic component? As scientists, how would they test that?

You can then share that scientists at 23andMe spoke to over 800,000 of their research participants and asked them, “Which of the following ice-cream flavors do you like best?” The answer choices were vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, or “other flavors or no ice cream.”

They then compared the answers to the genetic markers of the participants, including ones related to people’s sense of smell. As taste and smell are very intertwined, similar genetics with respect to the sense of smell may lead to similar flavor preferences. While ice-cream flavor preference cannot be predicted entirely by genetics, there does seem to be a correlation.

You can read more about the ice-cream flavor preference study here:

- <https://blog.23andme.com/23andme-research/genes-scream-for-ice-cream/>

Closing:

Ask students to review the written reflections that they started at the beginning of this activity. Tell the students to add to any of their previous answers, write down learned material from these activities and discussions, or write down any remaining questions that they still have. Time permitting, invite students to share how their answers changed throughout the lesson. This may be something new they learned, additional questions they now have, or how they felt going through the lesson.

Teacher Reflection:

Review the students’ written reflections and any additional comments or questions left by students.

- What are any noticeable opinion trends in the students’ comments?
- What kind of understanding was developed by the discussions?
- What questions do many students still seem to have?



**Lesson 5:
Exhibition/Conversation**

Introduction/Background

“We all have something different to offer.
And so our differences do not need to divide us!
Together we can question old ideas and think bigger.”
—Angélica Dass, *The Colors We Share*

The Humanae photography project has toured the world. Angélica Dass has **curated exhibitions** of this work in settings large and small, indoor and outdoor, urban and rural. Depending on the choices made in each exhibition (How many pictures should be shown? Which pictures? How should they be arranged? etc.), the audience interactions with the content changes. Art exhibitions can be a powerful way to start conversations about difficult topics. The Humanae exhibition has led to many communities discussing **race**, **identity**, and how we treat each other. We can see and hear each other for our differences and our similarities. We can design who we are and who we want to become.

Note to the Teacher

In this culminating lesson, the students are encouraged to reflect more deeply on what they learned through the discussions and activities in the previous lessons. Now it is their turn to curate an exhibition! This could be for their classmates, their school, or their community. They can use examples from the previous lessons or create new ones. (This will depend on your time and resource constraints.) Depending on the chosen scope of your exhibition, this lesson could take multiple days.

Questions you may want to ask yourself before introducing the lesson are:

- How will the exhibition prompt new and more courageous conversations regarding the color of our skin, the colors we share, and the Humanae project?
- What messages do you wish to convey to start a new and broader conversation about the social construct of race that can be deconstructed through art?

Learning Goals

- Students will summarize the main points of all the previous lessons.
- Students will be able to create an exhibition.

Materials

Materials Provided for This Lesson

- Introductory video
- Link to the Humanae website (with imagery of Humanae exhibitions from around the world)
- Slideshow of Humanae-related exhibitions created by teachers and students around the world

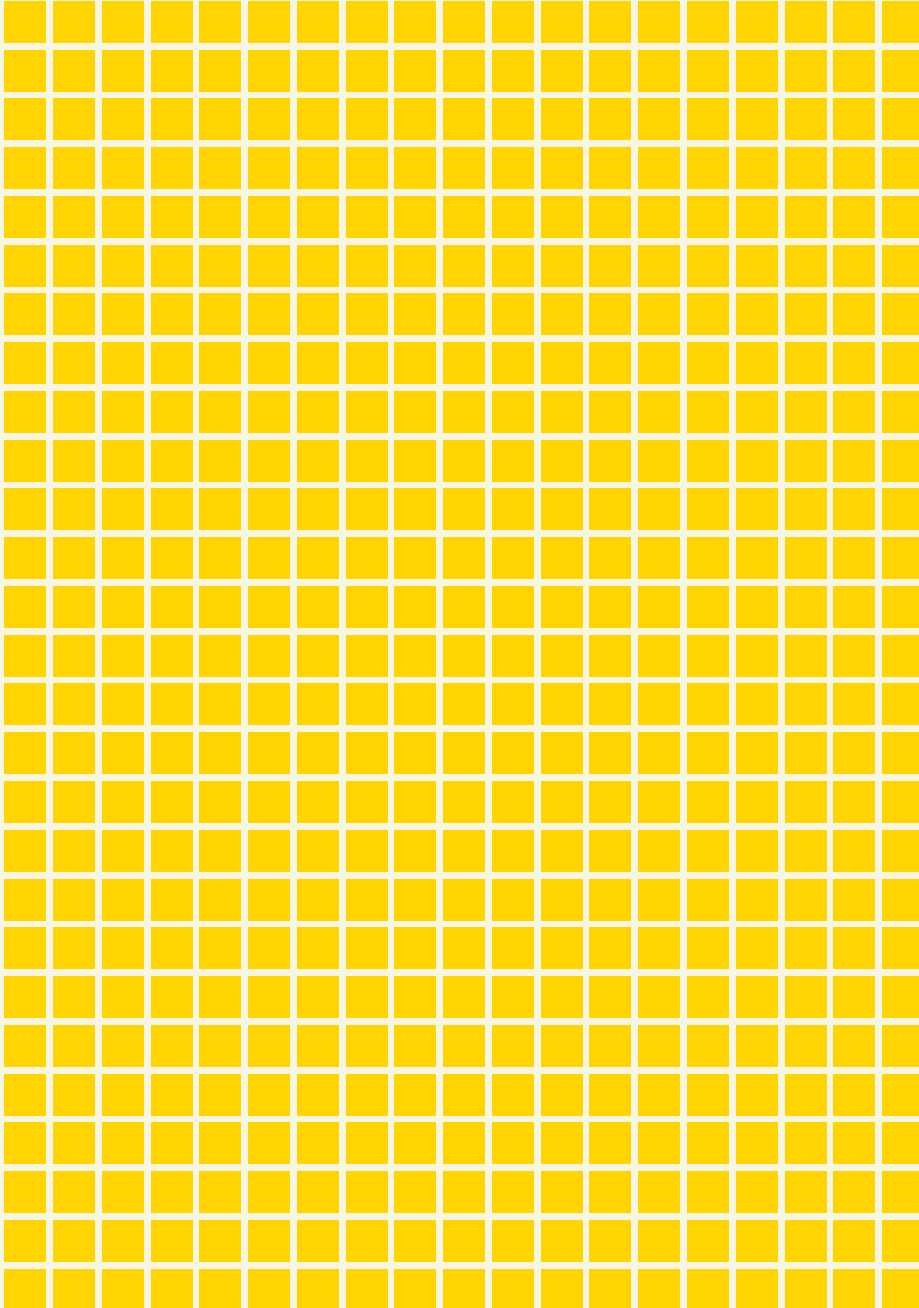
Materials Needed for This Lesson

- Any prior work done throughout this curriculum can be included in this lesson as an exhibition piece. Students are also welcome to include any other artwork or photography.

Vocabulary

- **Curated Exhibitions**
- **Race**
- **Identity**

Lesson



Lesson Content

- Introduction Video: **The Power of Art: Looking Differently at Ourselves and Others**
- Discussion and Class Reflection
- Discussion of Exhibit Design
- Viewing of Previous Humanae and Humanae-Inspired Exhibitions
- Activity: Designing Your Own Exhibition
- Teacher Reflection

Introductory Video: The Power of Art: Looking Differently at Ourselves and Others

Start this lesson by orienting students to the topic through the introduction video to *The Colors We Share* (provided with the curriculum).

Discussion

Discussion and Class Reflection

Share with the entire class that they have completed a series of lessons based on the book *The Colors We Share*. Ask the students what they would highlight in the activities they completed. In pairs, have the students share their thoughts on the following prompts:

- Has your thinking about your own identity changed at all through the course of these lessons? If so, how?
- What have you learned about others in your class throughout the course of these lessons that you may not have known before?

Discussion of Exhibit Design

Next, facilitate a full-group discussion about any exhibitions your students have seen. Questions for whole-group discussion:

- Have you ever been to a museum (art, science, history, children's, etc.)? If so, what did you notice there?
- Can you tell us about any exhibitions that really got your attention or presented information in a really interesting way? How did it do that?

As you share the Humanae-inspired exhibits with students, ask them to turn to a partner and share what stood out to them from the images and if there were specific aspects they would be interested in replicating.

Viewing of Previous Humanae and Humanae-Inspired Exhibitions



Viewing of Previous Humanae and Humanae-Inspired Exhibitions (continued)



Activity: Designing Your Own Exhibition

Note: There is no one “correct” way to create an exhibition! Just as every human has their own story, every exhibition is also unique.

Tell the students that the class will get to design their own exhibit. Form small groups and ask the students to answer the following questions in their group:

- What is your theme for this exhibition?
- Who is your audience?
- What courageous conversations do you want to inspire in your audience?
- Where can you hold your exhibition?
- What materials do you want to use for your exhibition?
- How will the exhibition allow us to see ourselves differently and to think more broadly and deeply about the colors we share?

Once the groups have answered the question, have them share their ideas with the whole class. Have the students select one idea or modify the ideas to begin to identify the type of exhibit you will create as a class. Create a timeline of when the exhibit will occur, what it will feature, and how long it will take to display the artwork. Gather the identified pieces and follow the timeline to create an exhibit that other classes can view and visit.

Teacher Reflection:

At the end of the curriculum, list the highlights of the week by reviewing the students' work in each lesson. As you review their work, ask yourself the following questions:

- What did the students highlight in their work?
- What needs to be emphasized, changed, added, or deleted the next time?
- What was the exhibition like? What different directions would you give the next time?

Angélica Dass (born in Rio de Janeiro, 1979) is a Brazilian artist of African, European, and Native American descent who lives in Spain. She is the author of *The Colors We Share* (Aperture, 2021) and creator of the internationally acclaimed Humanae Project, a collection of over 4,500 portraits from around the world that reveal the diverse beauty of human colors. The initiative has traveled to more than thirty countries across six continents—from the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, to the pages of *National Geographic*—to promote dialogue that challenges how we think about skin color and racial identity. Dass’s 2016 TED Talk exceeds two million views online.

AnnMarie Thomas is a professor in the School of Engineering and the Opus College of Business at the University of St. Thomas. She is the founder and director of the Playful Learning Lab, which explores ways to encourage children, of all ages, to embrace playful learning. Dr. Thomas earned PhD and MS degrees in mechanical engineering from Caltech, and an SB in ocean engineering (with a minor in music) from MIT. Additionally, she completed a professional certificate in sustainable design from the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Thomas’s teaching covers topics such as engineering graphics and design, machine design, dynamics (with Circus Lab), toy design, product design for an aging population, technology prototyping (for business majors), environmental sustainability/innovation, and brain machine interface.

Kathlene Holmes Campbell, Ph.D., is the Chief Executive Officer for the National Center for Teacher Residencies (NCTR). Dr. Campbell’s multifaceted experience as a classroom teacher, community college and state college professor, university instructor and supervisor, university dean, and non-profit consultant have shaped all of her strategic and scholarly pursuits. She holds a B.A. in Elementary Education and M.Ed. in Early Childhood Intervention and Family Studies from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from The University of Texas at Austin.

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Eleni Roulis was a professor of Education, and the chair of the Departments of Teacher Education and Curriculum and Instruction, at the University of St. Thomas. Prior to her career in higher education, Dr. Roulis spent over a decade as a teacher in New York City Schools. She earned her Bachelor of Arts at St. John University, her Master of Arts from New York University and her doctorate from the University of Minnesota.

We dedicate this curriculum to Dr. Roulis who passed away in 2022.



Photo: Kathlene Campbell, Anjélica Dass, AnnMarie Thomas, and Eleni Roulis on the set of filming the videos that accompany this curriculum. January 2021.

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