



Lesson Plan: The Role of Tolerance in a Democratic Society

THE FILM

This lesson plan is designed to be used with the film **Beyond Hatred**, which tells the story of a brutal hate crime and the response of the victim's family and the French legal system. Classrooms can use this program to examine how prejudice and discrimination can negatively impact a democratic society.

Note: *Beyond Hatred* is in French with English subtitles. It verbally describes a violent crime in which a gay man was beaten and left for dead in a pond, where he then drowned. There is occasional profanity. Please preview before screening the entire film in a classroom setting or request the “broadcast version” of the film from the P.O.V. lending library.

P.O.V. documentaries can be recorded off-the-air and used for educational purposes for up to one year from the initial broadcast. In addition, P.O.V. offers a lending library of DVDs and VHS tapes that you can borrow any time during the school year — FOR FREE! Get started by joining our Community Network:

www.amdoc.org/outreach/events/

Please visit our Film Library at <http://www.amdoc.org/outreach/filmlibrary.php> to find other films suitable for classroom use or to make this film a part of your school's permanent collection.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Complete a Venn diagram while learning more about a classmate.
- Use viewing skills to understand a video clip.
- Read an article and note its key points in a Reading Guide.
- Discuss how prejudice and discrimination can negatively affect a democratic society.
- Identify ways that students at school can be more tolerant of those who are different from themselves.

GRADE LEVELS

9-12

SUBJECT AREAS

Civics, Geography, Current Events, World History

MATERIALS

- Method for showing the entire class an online video clip.
- Printed copies of a Venn diagram (Ex: http://www.technology.com/web_tools/graphic_org/venn_diagrams/), one for each student pair. Alternatively, students can draw diagrams on paper.
- Handout: [Reading Guide](#) (PDF file).

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED

One or two 50-minute class periods, depending on how much time is provided for discussion.

SUGGESTED CLIP

Clip 1: François Didn't Come Home (length 7:32)

The clip begins at 16:56 with a shot of the park where François was killed while his sister narrates what happened from her perspective. It ends at 24:20 when she says, “. . . their eldest son was dead.”

BACKGROUND

On the night of Sept. 13, 2002, in Léo Legrange Park in Rheims, France, three neo-Nazi skinheads, the youngest no more than 16, the oldest in his early 20s, beat and killed 29-year-old François Chenu. The three attackers, Michael Regnier, Fabien Lavenus and Franck Billette, were soon apprehended by the police. The three young men said they had gone into the park to attack “an Arab,” but instead focused on Chenu, targeting him because he was gay.

Regnier, Lavenus and Billette participated in a skinhead movement that supports racist and intolerant ideals. They believed that they were superior to groups such as homosexuals, Arabs, Jews, Communists, and others. When François was murdered for being gay, the Chenu family was devastated, but since has worked diligently to reject feelings of revenge and instead seek understanding. In a candlelight vigil honoring their son, the Chenu family asked each person to question the way he or she looked at others who might be different, so that as a society we can increase tolerance and decrease violence. They also wrote a letter to their son's killers that encouraged them to create a future for themselves without hatred and violence.

ACTIVITY

1. Divide the class into pairs. When possible, match up students who don't regularly interact with one another. Provide each pair with a Venn diagram handout, or show them how to draw their own diagrams.
2. Ask each student to identify three things that he or she has in common with his or her partner and note these in the area of the diagram where the circles intersect. Tell each student to list three things that he or she does not have in common with his or her partner and list those in the areas of the diagram that do not intersect. Have the members of the pairs take turns reporting their findings. Were any students surprised by what they learned about their partners? If so, what was surprising and why? Ask students how similarities and differences (talents, cultures, interests, viewpoints, etc.) strengthen the classroom environment.
3. Explain that knowing about and appreciating diversity within a community is an important democratic value. Democracies should ideally consider the needs of all of their citizens and give each member of the community the opportunity to participate and be heard. In practice, however, this ideal is not always realized. Prejudice against social groups can lead to discrimination and even violent acts against others.

4. Tell students that one such violent act happened in France in the city of Rheims when three young men who were active in a white supremacist movement targeted a man named François because he was gay. They beat him up and threw him in a pond, where he drowned. Then, show the class the suggested clip for this lesson and explain that the scene shown in the video is the park where François was beaten and killed, and the woman speaking is his sister, and she is telling of the painful experience of learning of his death.

5. Explain that François's family members were devastated when they found out about his death and that François had been targeted specifically because he was gay. As part of their healing process, however, they have tried to let go of their anger and have instead focused on encouraging a more tolerant society so that hate crimes will be less prevalent.

6. Ask each student pair to read the perspective of an expert featured on the P.O.V. website for the film **Beyond Hatred**. (Some readings may need to be assigned to multiple pairs.) As they read, students should complete the Reading Guide for this lesson.

7. Allow time for student pairs to report their findings from each reading. Discuss how prejudice and discrimination can negatively affect a democratic society.

8. Finally, have students share their ideas on how they can be more tolerant of those at school who are different from themselves.

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

Students can be assessed based on:

- Participation in class and partner discussions.
- Completion of the Venn diagram activity.
- Notes and ideas provided in the Reading Guide.

EXTENSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

- Debate the question "Do tough sentences reduce crime?" Tell students the length of the prison sentences given to the three men who killed François Chenu. (See Background section.) Ask students if they think the punishments fit the crime. Why or why not? Divide the class into teams and allow time for each group to research the question and develop arguments before holding the debate.
- Explore the process of healing after a traumatic event, using the Chenu family as a case study. Read the words from the family shared at a candlelight ceremony honoring François, as well as a letter that the Chenu parents sent to their son's killers. (Note: At the very end of the film the parents are shown reading this letter aloud.) What is the focus of their comments? What reactions do students have to their words? Discuss how the family's approach might affect their healing process after the loss of their son. Then, research and identify strategies for healing after traumatic experiences, such as those in the article "Coping and Surviving Violent and Traumatic Events" (<http://www.crisiscounseling.org/TraumaLoss/CopingWithTrauma.htm>) by psychologist Michael G. Conner.

- Address the issue of bullying at your school. Begin by reading the *It's My Life* article "Bullies" (<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/friends/bullies/>). Discuss the different types of bullying described in the article and whether such behaviors happen at your school. How does bullying relate to prejudice, discrimination and racism? Then, talk about some of the article's recommended strategies for coping with and preventing bullying. How do these strategies compare to those from the expert readings that students examined in the main lesson activity? Create a plan for implementing some of these measures and create posters that encourage appropriate behavior and a more tolerant environment at your school.
- Delve more deeply into historic and/or modern-day conflicts that have arisen from diversity and racism. Research topics might include urban gangs, cases of genocide, the U.S. civil war, the American civil rights movement or the internment of Japanese-Americans in camps during World War II. Have students summarize the conflicts they researched and explain how differences among people triggered these events. Discuss how these conflicts might have been addressed peacefully and in ways geared to promoting the common good.
- Reduce prejudice and improve group relations at your school by organizing a "Mix It Up Lunch," where students sit in the cafeteria with people outside of their usual social circles and get to know them better. The Southern Poverty Law Center provides a guide and promotional materials (http://www.tolerance.org/teach/mix_it_up/index.jsp) for such an event as part of its Teaching Tolerance initiative.

RESOURCES

Democracy and Diversity (PDF file)

<http://education.washington.edu/cme/DemDiv.pdf>

This report from The Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington presents a set of principles, concepts and guidelines that educators can use in citizen education programs to help students balance diversity and unity as they become stronger citizens in a global context.

FRONTLINE: A Class Divided

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/view.html>

Watch a daring lesson that a teacher gives on discrimination and then discover the impact that the lesson has had on the lives of the students over time.

What Can Teenagers Do About Prejudice?

<http://www.prejudiceinstitute.org/teenagersFS.html>

This action sheet from The Prejudice Institute provides suggestions for what young people can do to fight prejudice.

STANDARDS

These standards are drawn from "Content Knowledge," a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>.

Behavioral Studies

Standard 1: Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior.

Civics

Standard 11: Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society.

Geography

Standard 10: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Language Arts

Standard 7: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts.

Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

Working with Others

Standard 1: Contributes to the overall effort of a group.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in secondary education and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive's Director of Education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs, the PBS TeacherSource website (now PBS Teachers) and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and Northern Virginia.