

Mohandas Gandhi
(1869-1948)
Indian social activist,
philosopher,
humanitarian and
co-operative champion

STAND on any downtown street corner and spin 360 degrees.

Stereotypes litter our billboards, radios, television, magazines, movies and more. Many will be shocking and obvious. More disturbingly, a good number will be barely perceptible. All of them affect us in some way. However, how they affect us is up to *us*.

The more time we take to step back, and think critically about the images and messages that are being pushed on us, the less control they will have over us. We need to peek behind the curtain of the corporations and their marketing campaigns, and realize their true motivations. As author Peter N. Zarlenga writes: **“In our factory, we make lipstick. In our advertising, we sell hope.”** We need to ask ourselves, is lipstick really the key to a more fulfilling life? To a better society?

Find an example of a stereotype and answer the following questions:

What is the product/service being sold?

Who makes this product/offers this service?

What is the stereotype portrayed in this advertisement, and how is it portrayed?

Where did you find this advertisement (e.g., magazine, radio, internet, etc.), and why do you think that the company decided to advertise this product/service, in this place?

Do you think this advertisement is harmful or dangerous for society? Why?

LESSON 1

TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS

STEREOTYPE SHAKEDOWN

THIS first lesson tackles the topic of stereotypes in our society.

Through an interactive and revealing “first-impression” race, students will realize just how prominent stereotypes are, and will recognize how many businesses perpetuate these stereotypes through their advertising. The class will pull back the curtain to reveal the motivation behind these harmful practices, which will lead to them learning about a more positive, alternative model in the following lesson.

OPTIONAL MATERIALS

1. Any examples you'd like to show of stereotyping in advertising
2. *Century of the Self* documentary. Free at topdocumentaryfilms.com



Mahar
Professional stereotype – or is he?

All 4 Each

LESSON

1. Hand out the **Stereotype Shakedown** sheet (page 8) so that the cartoon characters are face down on the desk. Tell the students not to turn the page over until you say so.
2. Without giving any other hints or directions, inform them that when you say “go,” they will have two minutes to place all the words from the “word bank” on the lines below the character that they feel best fits the word (i.e., the word “athlete” could be placed under a character wearing shorts, running shoes and a head band).
3. Inform them that **every word must be placed on a line, and each word from the word bank can only be used once.**

4. Start the race! (The amount of time doesn't need to be two minutes – it's more important that everyone finishes.) However, the success of this lesson is dependant on the students feeling rushed and going with their first instincts. Don't be afraid to rush them by excitedly warning them about the time limits.

5. When time is up, tell the students to turn their page over.

6. Ask the class:

- a.** Initial thoughts?
- b.** Was this easy or hard? Why?
- c.** Did you feel uncomfortable at any point? Why do you think that was?

7. Have the students flip over their page, and give them two minutes to compare their list with those of their neighbours. Ask the class:

- a.** After comparing with others, were there any trends that you noticed? Why?
- b.** Who has some examples or stereotypes? (Prompts: "It could be something as simple as all tall people play basketball, or something as dangerous as "anyone born in a certain neighbourhood is a second-class citizen.")
- c.** For a fun way of getting the point across, read or hand out to the class a copy of the "actual" bios on page 9.

Teacher Prompts

- How do you think these stereotypes start? (Possible answers to consider: leaders/government, parents, celebrities, religion, businesses/companies, media sources – online/TV/movies/magazines/newspapers/music/advertisements.)
- Why do they start? Why would someone want to create, or perpetuate a stereotype?
- What is the benefit of having stereotypes? Who benefits from them?
- Why are they dangerous?
- What can we do about them?



Watch the documentary *Century of the Self* (see Optional Materials.) This film can also be very effective if viewed in sections throughout these lessons.

HOMEWORK

Hand out page 10 to be completed as homework. Students should be encouraged to bring in any visual examples they find to accompany their handout (e.g., print advertisements that perpetuate a stereotype).

“Do not call for black power, or green power. Call for brain power.”

– Barbara Jordan (The first African-American elected to the Texas Senate, civil rights movement leader, and winner of the Presidential Medal of Freedom)

YOUR mission is to place one word from each of the four categories in the Word Bank with the character it best matches. What does Mahar drive? Which style of music soothes Sophia’s soul? Each word can only be used once, and every word must be used. See if you can “crack” their personalities!

WORD BANK

Mode of Transportation

- Public transportation
- Bright yellow SUV
- Hybrid car
- BMX bicycle

Favourite Music

- Hard rock
- Classical
- Relaxation/meditation albums
- R&B/hip hop

Favourite Food

- Lobster dinner
- Organic oatmeal
- Veggie burger
- Chocolate bar & energy drink

Home

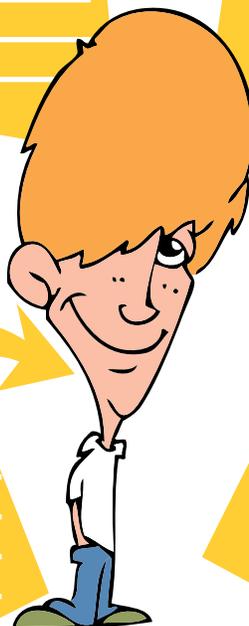
- Downtown highrise condo
- Farmhouse
- Suburban townhouse
- University dormhouse



MAHAR



JANELLE



DYLAN



SOPHIA

STEREOTYPE SHAKEDOWN

ACTUAL CHARACTER BIOS



For a fun way of getting the point across, read these “actual” bios to the class!



You’d never guess this by looking at him in this sharp and stylish, pin-striped suit, but entrepreneur **Mahar** is feeling pretty uncomfortable at the moment. The roar of rush hour and the millions of lights and people are starting to get to him. He’s not used to briefcases and big-city business, and these are definitely not his regular threads. No, Mahar would be much more comfortable back on his quiet and quaint **country farmhouse**, listening to the soft purr of his **hybrid car** or taking in the peaceful sounds of **the meditation CDs** he plays at the yoga studio he owns and operates. He had no choice but to brave the city today, however, for a meeting with a large company that is interested in buying his small but successful **organic oatmeal** business.



The woman in this wonderful headdress is **Janelle**. She’s just stepped out of the grocery store that sits 50 floors below her luxurious **high-rise condo**, right in the heart of the city. Living here is a perfect fit for Janelle, as she’s a five minute walk away from the financial district (where she works as a high-powered

stock broker) and is only steps away from her favourite restaurant, which serves the best **lobster** dinner in the city. However, every now and then, Janelle gets the urge to escape the hustle and bustle of the city. When this mood strikes, there are few things she loves more than blasting **AC/DC** with the windows down and aimlessly exploring country back-roads in her massive, **bright yellow SUV**.



Dear, sweet **Sophia**, a 75-year-old widow, is certainly no quiet tea-and-biscuit granny. When her loving husband passed away two years ago, Sophia (always up for an adventure), strolled right past the retirement home and started living with her granddaughter and her granddaughter’s roommates in their huge **university dorm house**. It couldn’t have worked out better. Sophia could live rent-free, and in return began helping maintain the house and became the resident cook. She also took up riding a **BMX bike**, (borrowing one of her “roommates” rides) to get to the grocery store. She also developed a sweet tooth (also thanks to her roommates) for **Crown chocolate bars**, **Wildcat energy drinks** and the silky-smooth sounds of **Jay-Z’s** rhymes.



Seventeen-year-old **Dylan** has every right to be smiling. He’s young, happy and healthy (thanks to his **vegetarian** diet), and has become wealthy by helping people in need from all around the world. How did he manage this? You see, Dylan is an amazing pianist – and still counts **classical** as his favourite type of music. That’s why he was so annoyed after hearing the terrible, cheesy soundtracks in all the educational videos that he’d watch in class. After hearing some exchange students play some of their amazing native tunes, Dylan had the brilliant idea to start a co-operative business enterprise where he would work with musicians in poorer countries to sell their music. They would send their music sheets to him and he would record the music, selling the licensing rights to school boards so that they could use the songs. Dylan sends much of the proceeds to the original musicians in these needy countries. Already, the co-operative songs have reached nearly a million downloads. The best part? Dylan has been able to do all this from the comfort of his **townhouse** bedroom (which is good, because he has no driver’s license and gets his best ideas while riding **public transit!**)