LESSON: RACIAL DIVERSITY IN THEATRE & FILM

This lesson plan and accompanying activity are designed to be taught after showing the jsk stories racial diversity presentation. Feel free to change, adjust, and customize these plans according to your classroom or circumstance. The lesson and activity go well together, but can be split into two days.

CONCEPT 1
REPRESENTATION IS IMPORTANT.

DISCUSS: IMAGINE IF ALL THE MOVIES AND PLAYS WERE DIRECTED, PLAYED, AND DESIGNED BY THE SAME PEOPLE. WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD HAPPEN? WHAT WOULD EACH FILM OR PLAY BE LIKE?

> We are surrounded by so many different cultures and races! Having them represented on the stage and screen, in creative teams, and in other art forms is important to promote more racial diversity.

> Having variety in our media is what makes the arts so fun! If everything was one genre, for example, that would get boring fast. The same goes for race and culture.

> Have you ever watched a show where the main character has the same hobby as you? Or similar interests? It makes you feel represented, right? The same goes for race! Seeing your race represented on the stage or screen gives you a sense of pride and appreciation. That's why it's important to have ALL races represented more in theatre and film.

CONCEPT 2
WE CAN BREAK HARMFUL HABITS.

DISCUSS: WHY DO YOU THINK IT'S GOOD TO STAND UP TO STEREOTYPES?

> Some habits we see in major films and plays are BIPOC performers being misrepresented in harmful stereotypes, having white people portray people of color, and not having more BIPOC directors and writers.

> As a director, designer, writer, or actor, we must be diligent in seeking opportunities in which everyone is represented appropriately. We can even seek out companies that promote more equal opportunities for BIPOC artists.

CONCEPT 3
USE THE ARTS AS A WAY TO PROMOTE REPRESENTATION.

DISCUSS: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE DIFFERENT RACES AND BACKGROUNDS REPRESENTED IN THE MEDIA?

> Having different races represented in all aspects of a production or film creates more inclusive environments.

> We can learn about different people and stories when we watch films or plays that accurately and appropriately highlight specific countries and cultures.

This can be done individually or in pairs depending on your classroom. When arriving at the computer lab, hand out a slip of paper to each student. These slips of paper have different theatre and film roles on them. Some examples are director, performer, screenwriter, dramaturg, costume designer, etc. Be sure to put in parentheses, "theatre" or "film", to be more specific. After handing the slips out, ask the students to do the following:

Materials needed:
> Access to computers (computer lab)
> Access to printer
> Notebook
> Slips of paper with roles

1. Each of you received a slip of paper with a specific role on it. These are roles that are in the theatre and film industry.

2. Your job will be to research an individual based on the role you received. Specifically, someone who is part of the BIPOC community. Use a notebook to write notes during your research.

3. Compile what you think is most important about the person. What productions were they a part of? What is their ethnicity? Have they won any awards? Be specific in your research.

4. On a word or google document, type a two paragraph biography about your person. Include a picture of your person as well.

After all the documents are printed head back to your classroom and have the students tape their spotlights across different walls of the room. Invite the students to walk around the room to read about each individual. If you want to make it feel like a makeshift museum, have jazzy or classical music playing in the background as the kids walk around! Finally, discuss with the students if they learned anything interesting after doing this activity. If you want to go the extra mile, post these documents on your public bulletin board and title your board, "Racial Diversity in Theatre & Film Spotlights."

JK Stories