

The Sneetches

Purpose: Identify ways in which communities define membership, and consider how membership in a particular group can influence how people view those outside the group.

ADVISOR NOTES:

1. Borrow *The Sneetches*

You can borrow *The Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss from your local library if your school does not have copies. You can also find print and animated versions of the story online.

APPROXIMATE TIME:
30 minutes

MATERIALS:
The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss
(see Advisor Notes)

 **HANDOUT**
The Sneetches Discussion
Questions

2. Prepare for the Barometer

Before advisory, familiarize yourself with the **Barometer** teaching strategy, which is available at facinghistory.org/advisory-media. Hang two signs at opposite ends of the room that say "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree."

3. Substitute "Eye of the Beholder" for *The Sneetches*

If you do not have access to *The Sneetches*, the reading "Eye of the Beholder" in Activity 40: What Is "Normal"? also introduces the theme of membership and belonging through an exploration of how people learn what is considered "normal" and "beautiful" in society.

PROCEDURE:

1. Start with a Quick Barometer Warm-Up

- In a quick activity based on the Barometer teaching strategy, ask your advisees to think about the following statement and then take a stand along a continuum between "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" signs: *It is natural for human beings to form groups that include some and exclude others.*
- Provide an opportunity for advisees to explain their choices before returning to their seats.

2. Read *The Sneetches*

The story of the star-bellied Sneetches provides an opportunity for advisees to talk about how communities can break down when members are told they do not belong or when they are deemed inferior. You can read the book out loud or share the task of reading with your advisees. If you have access to a document camera, you can display the pictures while you are reading the story.

- Pass out the handout ***The Sneetches Discussion Questions*** and **read aloud** *The Sneetches*, stopping at page 8 before Sylvester McMonkey McBean enters the scene (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about the Read Aloud teaching strategy).
- Ask your advisees to turn and talk with a partner to discuss questions 1–6 on their handouts.
- Then finish reading the story. Divide your advisory into small groups of three or four so they can discuss what the story can teach them about membership and belonging. You can have groups discuss questions 7–12 on their handouts or assign each group one or two questions to focus on and then share their ideas with the advisory, perhaps facilitating a short discussion with the whole group.

3. Draw Connections between *The Sneetches* and Your School Community

- Ask advisees to reflect on the story in a journal entry that responds to the following question. Let them know that they will be sharing their responses.

What is an example of a lesson from *The Sneetches* that you think could help strengthen your school community? What makes you say that?

- Debrief the responses in small groups or a circle discussion. Challenge your advisees to consider *how* they might apply the lessons to their school community. Use the following question to prompt students' thinking:

What small, concrete steps can you take as individuals and as a group to help strengthen your school community?



The Sneetches Discussion Questions

Directions: Discuss the following questions about *The Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss. As you discuss the questions, think about what lessons Dr. Seuss might have wanted his readers to consider.

After reading pages 1–8:

1. How is membership in the “in” group defined by the Sneetches?
2. What benefits come with membership in the “in” group? What are the costs of being excluded from membership?
3. What are the different ways that Sneetches learn the rules of membership in the different groups in their community?
4. Why do you think the star-bellied Sneetches decide to remove their stars?
5. How do the rules of “in” and “out” group membership change? Why do they change?
6. What do you think will happen next?

After reading the whole story:

7. What are three ideas that this story reveals about group membership and belonging in a community?
8. How do the Sneetches get ideas about what is “normal” in their society?
9. How do their ideas about what is “normal” impact their identities, how they perceive themselves, and how they perceive others?
10. The media can depict teenagers as forming cliques. Compare the way the Sneetches treat each other to the way teenagers treat each other. What is the same? What is different?
11. Which do you respect more, the Sneetches at the beginning of the story or the Sneetches at the end? What makes you say that?
12. Often, stories are written to express a moral or teach a lesson. What is the moral of this story?