



CLASSROOM VIDEO • VIEWING GUIDE

UNDERSTANDING WE AND THEY

Overview

In this classroom video, English language arts teacher Jonathan Dee teaches a lesson on the concept of “we” and “they,” using the Facing History lesson Identity and Labels. Students consider the *Doonesbury* cartoon “Street Calculus” and then turn

their analysis inward, examining what calculations they make as they encounter others and how others might make assessments about them. Concepts of membership, belonging, and stereotypes are addressed throughout the lesson.

Questions to Consider

1. Why does the teacher use the cartoon to open this discussion, rather than have students immediately explore their own affinity groups?
2. Mr. Dee taught this lesson just after his students finished reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. How might this lesson enhance students’ ability to engage with literature?

3. At **3:19**, Mr. Dee notes that one student describes the process of creating mental lists about others as being “about feeling safe.” What do you think this student means? How might you have responded to the student?
 4. At **6:40**, Mr. Dee says, “If I had more time, I could have addressed some of the things that kids brought up” when discussing labels, assumptions, and stereotypes. Trying to “fit it all in” in a class period is often a challenge; how might you address students’ comments such as those if time grew short?
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Featured

Jonathan Dee

Teacher

8th Grade

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Framingham, MA

Video Goals

- **Explore** some of the ways we use labels to identify each other and consider the ways that those labels affect how others think about us.
- **Witness** how to implement the Identity and Labels lesson plan.
- **Observe** students grappling with the power of labels and stereotypes and the stakes of “we” and “they” divisions.

Lesson Resources

- [Unit: My Part of the Story: Exploring Identity in the United States](#)
- [Lesson Plan: Identity and Labels](#)
- [Cartoon: “Street Calculus”](#)