

Holiday Stereotyping Activity

What can Santa teach us about stereotypes? In this lesson, students will explore the way clothing can impact our perceptions of one another. (December 2004) by Jeff Sapp

“Who you are is more important than what you wear.”

— KENNETH COLE, DESIGNER

OBJECTIVE

Students will come to see that they hold stereotypes based solely on how someone dresses.



TIME & MATERIALS

- One class session to answer questions and discuss.
- Handouts (pages 2-4 of this Activity PDF)



STEP ONE: Split your class in half, with half facing one side of the room and the other half facing the opposite side. Give the first half the Santa cap image and the second half the turban image.

STEP TWO: Ask the following questions out loud and have students write answers on their handout.

- What kind of emotions instantly come to you when you see this picture?
- Where do you think you learned about this individual?
- Who taught you about this individual?
- What did they teach you?
- How has the media (TV, movies, books, stories) shaped your image of this individual?
- How long have you known about this individual?
- Have you ever personally seen this individual?
- Have you ever seen someone dressed like this individual?
- Have you ever personally known someone who looks like this individual?

STEP THREE: After students have quickly jotted down answers to your questions, ask them again of the whole group and write students' responses on the board.

To help you do this and to help differentiate the two groups' responses, have a volunteer from each side of the room come up to help you record answers on the board. Thus, one side will be all Santa hat responses and the other side will be all turban responses.

Be prepared for students to be confused at the bizarrely differing responses to the image they believe all students are sharing.

STEP FOUR: Distribute the fourth page of the Activity to students, which shows both Santa and the man in the turban. Ask the following lead questions and allow for discussion:

- What is different in the two images?
- Looking at our responses we've recorded on the board, what is similar or different about them? Why?
- Does it matter that most of you have had some experience with Santa during your lifetime? Why or why not?
- Would your responses to the image of the turban change if you knew someone personally for many years that wore one?
- What do you think we can learn from what we've done here?

STEP FIVE: What are other groups of people we judge based solely on what they might be wearing?

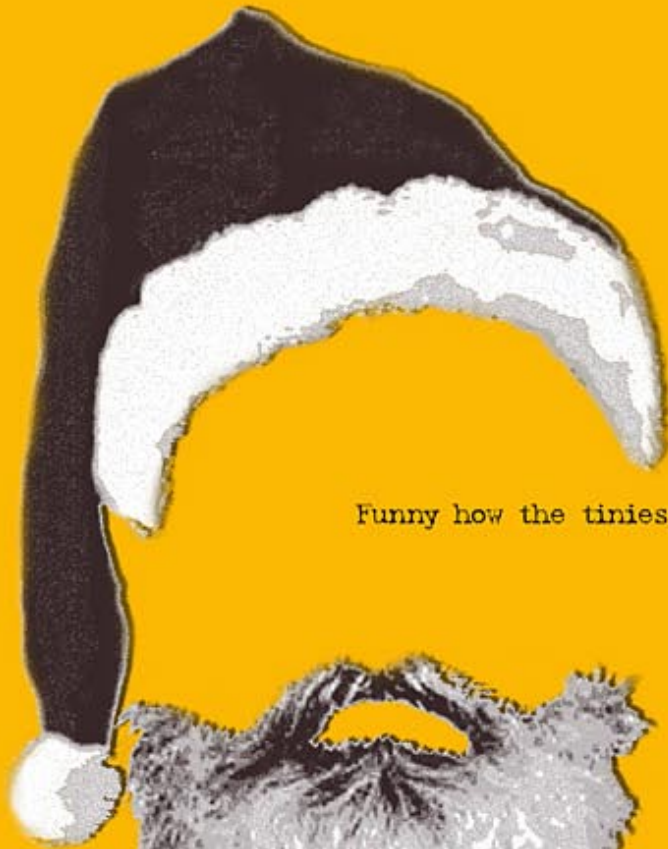
STEP SIX: Read to your class about Cynthia Duxbury www.tolerance.org/news/article_tol.jsp?id=915, the artist who designed the images used in this activity.

Jeff Sapp is the curriculum specialist/writer for Teaching Tolerance.









Funny how the tiniest thing can make people feel different about you.

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