

TWO TRUTHS AND A STEREOTYPE

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define the word stereotype in their own words and give an example
- Identify the difference between a fact about a person and an assumption made about a group they belong to
- Recognize that stereotypes can cause harm even when they are not intended to be mean
- Practice questioning assumptions before acting on them
- Understand that every person's identity is made up of many things — and that no single characteristic defines who someone is

No Materials Needed

- The educator reads three statements about a fictional student. Two are true. One is a stereotype — an assumption someone might make based on how that student looks, where they're from, or what group they belong to. Students vote on which statement doesn't belong, and the debrief does the rest.
- It takes 20-30 minutes, requires no prep materials, and works equally well as a whole-class activity or in small groups. Most importantly, it makes the concept of a stereotype feel concrete, a little surprising, and completely age-appropriate, which will help the lesson stick.

Facilitator Note

- Before you begin, tell students: "We're going to play a game you already know, Two Truths and a Lie. But in this version, the 'lie' is always a stereotype, an assumption someone might make about a person without actually knowing them. Your job is to figure out which statement is the assumption, not the truth."
- After each reveal, pause for the discussion question before moving to the next profile. The discussion is where the learning happens.

TWO TRUTHS ROUND ONE

"This is Maya. Maya was born in South Korea and moved to the United States when she was four years old. She speaks both Korean and English at home. Her favorite subject is art, and she wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up."

- Statement A: Maya speaks two languages.
- Statement B: Maya is probably the best student in math class.
- Statement C: Maya wants to work with animals someday.

The stereotype: Statement B — the assumption that Asian students are naturally good at math.

Reveal and discuss: "Where do you think that idea comes from? Is it fair to assume something about someone's abilities based on where they or their family are from?"

TWO TRUTHS ROUND TWO

"This is Darius. Darius lives with his grandmother, who taught him how to cook. He is really into building things and spends his free time making models out of cardboard and tape. His favorite book is a graphic novel about a kid who becomes an engineer."

- Statement A: Darius probably gets into trouble a lot at school.
- Statement B: Darius enjoys building and making things with his hands.
- Statement C: Darius learned to cook from his grandmother.

The stereotype: Statement A — the assumption that Black boys are troublemakers.

Reveal and discuss: "Why might someone assume that about Darius before even meeting him? How do you think it would feel to walk into a room and have someone already think that about you?"

TWO TRUTHS ROUND THREE

"This is Lucia. Lucia's family moved here from Mexico two years ago. She is learning English and is already able to read chapter books in both English and Spanish. She loves soccer, plays on a travel team on weekends, and her favorite food is her mom's tamales."

- Statement A: Lucia can read in two languages.
- Statement B: Lucia plays on a soccer team on weekends.
- Statement C: Lucia probably doesn't understand what's happening in class very much.

The stereotype: Statement C — the assumption that students who are learning English don't understand what's going on around them.

Reveal and discuss: "Has anyone ever acted like you didn't understand something when you actually did? What's the difference between learning a new language and not being smart?"

TWO TRUTHS ROUND FOUR

"This is Jordan. Jordan has dyslexia, which means reading takes more effort and looks a little different for them than it does for some other students. Jordan gets extra time on tests. Jordan is also the funniest person in their friend group and can memorize the lyrics to almost any song after hearing it twice."

- Statement A: Jordan gets extra time on tests.
- Statement B: Jordan probably isn't very smart.
- Statement C: Jordan is really good at memorizing song lyrics.
-

The stereotype: Statement B — the assumption that needing extra support means a student isn't capable or intelligent.

Reveal and discuss: "Why do you think some people assume that needing extra help means someone isn't smart? What are some things you're great at that have nothing to do with reading or test scores?"

TWO TRUTHS ROUND FIVE

"This is Amir. Amir's family is Muslim and he fasts during Ramadan, which means he doesn't eat or drink during school hours for about a month each year. He is really into basketball and wants to play in the NBA. His best friend has been his neighbor since they were babies."

- Statement A: Amir fasts during the school day for part of the year.
- Statement B: Amir has a best friend he has known since he was very young.
- Statement C: Amir's religion probably means he doesn't like to have fun or joke around.
-

The stereotype: Statement C — the assumption that being visibly religious, or belonging to a religion that is often misunderstood, means someone is serious or different in a way that makes them hard to relate to.

Reveal and discuss: "Where do ideas like this come from? What's one thing you wish people knew about you before they made up their mind about who you are?"

TWO TRUTHS ROUND SIX

"This is Emma. Emma has loved building and fixing things since she was little and her favorite gift she ever received was a toolbox from her dad. She is the only girl in her school's after-school robotics club and just helped her team win a regional competition. She also takes ballet on Saturdays because she loves both."

- Statement A: Emma is the only girl in her robotics club.
- Statement B: Emma probably isn't as good at robotics as the boys on her team.
- Statement C: Emma does ballet on Saturdays.

•

The stereotype: Statement B — the assumption that girls aren't as naturally skilled as boys in science, technology, and engineering.

Reveal and discuss: "Why do you think some people might assume that? Has anyone ever told you — or made you feel — that something wasn't 'for you' because of your gender? How did that feel?"

TWO TRUTHS ROUND SEVEN

"This is Tyler. Tyler has been taking dance lessons since he was five years old and performs in shows twice a year. He is also on his school's wrestling team. His favorite class is English and he keeps a journal at home where he writes short stories about superheroes he makes up himself."

- Statement A: Tyler probably gets teased and doesn't really fit in with other boys.
- Statement B: Tyler performs in dance shows twice a year.
- Statement C: Tyler writes his own superhero stories at home.

The stereotype: Statement A — the assumption that boys who dance are socially awkward or don't belong with other boys.

Reveal and discuss: "Why do you think some people assume that boys who dance must not fit in? What does this stereotype say about what we think boys are supposed to like or be good at? Can you think of any famous male athletes or performers who dance?"

TWO TRUTHS ROUND EIGHT

"This is Connor. Connor's family doesn't have a lot of money and he receives free lunch at school. He takes care of his younger sister every day after school while his mom is at work. His teachers say he is one of the most creative students they have ever had, and he just won his school's writing competition."

- Statement A: Connor takes care of his younger sister after school.
- Statement B: Connor probably doesn't work as hard in school as kids from wealthier families.
- Statement C: Connor recently won a writing competition at his school.

The stereotype: Statement B — the assumption that students from lower-income families are less motivated or less academically capable than their wealthier peers.

Reveal and discuss: "Where do you think this idea comes from? What does Connor's story tell us about what we can and can't know about someone just by looking at their circumstances? Has anyone ever surprised you by being completely different from what you expected?"