



Positive representation

Of people living with disabilities

In this resource, students will explore the importance of positive media representation for people living with disabilities.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand key terminology in relation to disabilities
- Understand the importance of achieving equality and equity through positive representation

LEARNING OUTCOMES

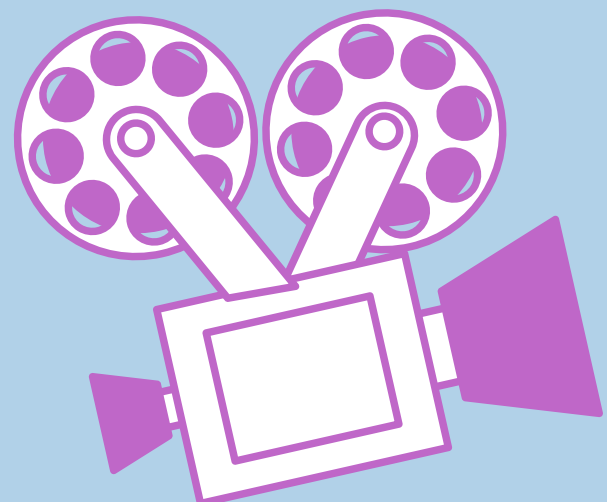
We will be learning to identify trends in media representation of those with visible disabilities; including harmful stereotypes and how positive and equal representation is more representative of the world we live in.

RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Pens
- Paper
- Internet access/ video streaming
- Blog post written by Elizabeth Wright

KEY WORDS

- Disablism
- Ableism
- Impairment
- Disabled
- Social model of disability
- Medical model of disability
- Non - disabled
- Accessibility
- Access barriers



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STARTER

Key word match up task. Cut out and match the words with definitions on the next two pages. You could follow this up with some discussion using these questions:

Disablism

Q – Disablism is a very real issue. What forms do you think disablism can take?

Ableism

Q – It can be difficult to separate the terms ableism and disablism. Ableism favours non-disabled people. How common do you think ableist attitudes are? Why?

Impairment

Q – There are many variations of impairment. It is the law that reasonable adjustments be made to support people with physical impairments. Do you know the name of this law?

Disabled

Q – What is your understanding of this term? Can it be considered an umbrella term?

Social model of disability

Q - This focuses on the idea that society is what disables people - how does society or the world around us contribute to this?

Medical model of disability

Q – What are the potential problems with this model? What do you think it might imply about people with disabilities?

Non-disabled

Q – This term has come to be widely accepted instead of the term 'able bodied'. Why do you think this change might have been made?

Accessibility

Q – Why is it important that buildings are inclusive and accessible spaces?

Access barriers

Q – Think of buildings and structures that you regularly access, are there any access barriers?



Positive media representation, term matching

DISABLISM

Discrimination or prejudice against disabled people.

ABLEISM

The idea that being non-disabled is 'normal' and therefore people with disabilities are not valued as highly in society.

IMPAIRMENT

The loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.

DISABLED

A physical or mental impairment that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.

**SOCIAL MODEL
OF DISABILITY**

The view that a person is disabled by barriers in society and not because of a physical impairment. Barriers may include: physical barriers that create accessibility problems, but they can also be caused by the opinions and assumptions that disabled people are unable to do specific things.

MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

The view that curing or managing a person's disability and making them appear less disabled is the priority. This model can reinforce the stereotype that people are unable to do certain things because of their impairment.

NON - DISABLED

A person who does not have a physical, invisible, or cognitive impairment or condition.

ACCESSIBILITY

The design of a building in terms of how accessible it is for physically disabled people.

ACCESS BARRIERS

A barrier that prevents physically disabled people from accessing something or using a facility that is readily available for non-disabled people.

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ACTIVITY 1

Using flip chart paper, write down some of the stereotypes you might expect to see for disabled characters in the media.

Why do these create problems? Discuss

Watch this video and discuss

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?edufilter=NULL&v=4ykXguKWqy4>

BuzzFeed
presents

**People Living With Disabilities
Discuss Characters With
Disabilities**

NOTE: Within this video the term 'inspiration porn' is used; this is a term coined by disability rights activist Stella Young and refers to the portrayal of people with disabilities as inspirational solely, or partly, on the basis of their disability. Elizabeth Wright refers to this as the 'inspiration trap' which is a more appropriate term for use in schools. You can revisit this concept in the next activity.

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ACTIVITY 2

Look at this series of images – are they positively or negatively representing people with disabilities? How do you know?



*Teacher guidance on next page

Learning points:

- To be able to identify when media representation is positive
- To recognise and understand that stereotypes are harmful

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ACTIVITY 2

Teacher guidance



Toy like me campaign - positive



Potentially negative when looked at in context – this is from an advert for the 2016 summer Paralympics in Rio called 'We're the Superhumans'. Athletes are inspiring for achieving their sporting success, but they are not inspirational (or superhuman) for achieving their sporting success purely because of their disability.

Revisit the term 'inspiration trap' and consider the relevance of this in connection with this particular advertising campaign.



Negative - played by a non-disabled character this sketch from Little Britain can in fact be considered incredibly offensive in its portrayal of a disabled character.



Positive – the newer Barbie also comes with a wheelchair ramp for accessibility.

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ACTIVITY 3

Disability representation school audit. Using the scale below, audit your own schools representation of people with disabilities. Split into two groups, one group focus on the school building (corridors, school displays etc) and the other the school curriculum (representation of disabled people in the curriculum). You may need to write some questions to ask teachers e.g. do you teach about any artists living with a disability?

PART 1 - SCALE AUDIT

- 0 No representation of disability.
- 1 There is some representation but it is largely **stereotypical**.
- 2 There is some **positive** representation of people living with disabilities, the representation is hard to find.
- 3 There is some positive representation of people living with disabilities in the school, but the representation is infrequent.
- 4 People living with disabilities are positively represented in the school frequently and consistently.
- 5 People living with disabilities are positively represented in the school at all times. With signage, imagery and school materials reflecting the diversity of the school community. The curriculum features people living with disabilities including artists, authors and historical figures.

Discuss: From the audit - what recommendations could you put in place?



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ACTIVITY 3

Using the boxes below, write up a recommendation detailing the score you have awarded the school from the audit, a comment on what the school is doing well and recommendations for the future. Deliver this sheet to your head teacher.

SCORE GIVEN (FROM THE AUDIT)

WHAT IS THE SCHOOL ALREADY DOING WELL?

WHAT CAN WE DO TOMORROW TO IMPROVE REPRESENTATION IN SCHOOL?

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WANT TO EXPLORE MORE?

Read this blog post:

Why We Desperately Need Positive Representation of Disability. Written by Elizabeth Wright: Paralympian, writer, speaker and activist.

www.dualfrequency.co.uk/blog/positive-representation-of-disability

Dissect the news

Dissect the news, magazines and visual media you come across.

What do you notice about the ways in which people with disabilities are represented?

Look at the language used in news stories about people with disabilities. How are they portrayed?

Do you notice any trends?

Don't assume that because people with disabilities are represented in a show or magazine, that it has consistent positive representation – how many are guilty of utilising stereotypes?

