



Perspectives Grades 7-11

## The tip of the iceberg



### Learning Objectives

Understand the notion that 'not everything is always as it seems.'  
Sometimes we make assumptions before we fully understand things.  
Understand there are 'shades of grey' in how we understand the world.  
Discuss the notion of 'poverty' and connect it to the notion of 'shades of grey.'

### Materials

- Projector screen & « Pyramid Poetry » slideshow
- Internet access

### Time 2 hours

### Part one: Pyramid Poetry

#### Teacher Talk

We are going to be making 'poetry pyramids.'

Slide 1: write 1 word that come to mind

Slide 2: 2 words,

Slide 3: 3 words.

Go through the slideshow.

#### Note to teachers:

There is no set right or wrong, or conclusion, to this activity.  
It's meant to promote critical thinking and open up people's thinking about things.  
It is ok for students to leave with more questions than answers.

### Class Discussion

**What did you notice about this process?** (Each slide was not what it seemed to be; at first what we thought was going to be something turned out to be something else.)

**Connect** to the environment: we don't think about the impact of our actions.

**Connect** this activity to the idiom, 'tip of the iceberg.'

**Connect** to the idea of 'first impressions.'

**Connect** to people: when we know someone on the surface, you only know part of them; when you really get to know them you may have a different picture.

**What's the difference between 'surface knowledge' of someone or something, versus in-depth knowledge?**

**Can we connect this activity to real-life experiences? Give examples.**

**How does our 'surface knowledge' affect our impressions of:**

- people in other countries
- different cultures
- poverty?

**How does our perspective change when we know people/places/situations up close, versus from afar?**

## **Part two: Shades of grey**

### **Teacher talk**

We are going to learn the definition of 'dichotomous'. These are things that exist as one or the other.

Here are some examples:

- A light switch is either on or off
- A woman is either pregnant or not pregnant
- A successful soccer goal or an unsuccessful football goal

In the above examples there is no "a little bit" or "somewhat."

A light switch is either on or off. It cannot be a little bit on, or 80% on or mostly off.

A woman can be either pregnant or not pregnant. She can't be mostly pregnant.

A soccer goal can be successful or unsuccessful. It can't be 60% successful.

Now let's define 'continuous variables'.

These are situations with many different possibilities, not only two like in dichotomous variables.

Here are some examples:

- Light and heavy
- Short and tall
- Near and far

In each of these examples you can have degrees. Think of the first example, light and heavy. Have you ever carried something that was a little heavy or very light?

Now, look at the second example, short and tall. Have students line up in order of height in the class. What do you notice? There are a number of different heights.

### **Student work**

Present the students with a list of paired words.

They must **determine** if these pairs are either dichotomous or continuous.

- |                                       |                              |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ▪ Negative numbers - positive numbers | ▪ Excited - bored            |
| ▪ Good mood - bad mood                | ▪ In the air - on the ground |
| ▪ Day - night                         | ▪ Trust - mistrust           |
| ▪ Power on - power off                | ▪ Violent - peaceful         |
| ▪ Gun fired - gun not fired           | ▪ Respectful - rude          |
| ▪ Happy - sad                         | ▪ Married - single           |
| ▪ Hungry - not hungry                 | ▪ Shy - outgoing             |

- Full of energy - tired
- Honest - dishonest

Students **name** a few other cases of continuous variables.

## Teacher talk

We know that some things in life are like the light switch. They are either on or off.

We know there are many other things that exist as shades of grey. They are not either black or white, they are somewhere in the middle.

### **What happens when things that are really a grey scale are presented as a light switch?**

Think about the following statements:

- Canadians love to play hockey
- Muslims are against Americans
- People who are poor are unhappy
- India is an unsafe place to travel

## Class Discussion

**Are these statements really dichotomous? Explain why they are not.**

(Students should speak from their own perspectives-- "I know some Canadians who hate hockey" or "I know that 10 million people who live in America are Muslims, so that can't be true.")

## Teacher talk

These are situations we call "polarization."

This means taking a statement which is a grey scale and forcing it to act like a light switch.

## Class Discussion

**Can you think of any other situations in your own life where there has been a polarizing statement made when it should have been on a grey scale?**

## Part three- Poverty perspectives

### Class Discussion

Let's **define** poverty. Everyone take a silent one minute to write down their definition of 'poverty.'

**Brainstorm** some ways we define poverty on the board (there are no right or wrong answers).

### **What kinds of assumptions have we made here?**

(examples could be: no computer= poverty; eating less= poverty. However, does eating less mean you are suffering, or could it just be that you have a different experience? Can you be happy without material things like a computer or TV?)

### **Does poverty mean different things to different people?**

**Are there different ways to be poor?** (Can you have lots of material goods but be poor, for example if you have a fancy car but no friends? Can you have very few material goods but be rich?)

### **How does this discussion relate to the 'tip of the iceberg' idiom, and the first part of this lesson?**

**How does the idea of ‘shades of grey’ relate to the idea of ‘poverty?’**

**Show a slideshow** of James’ Mollison’s ‘Where Children Sleep.’

<http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/08/04/where-children-sleep/>

## **Class Discussion**

**What are our first impressions of these places where children sleep?**

**If we look deeply, are some of these places as bad as they look?**

(example: the kid in the Amazon may not have many things in his house but his backyard is the AMAZON. The Nepali girl’s place looks small but she has a TV.)

## **Teacher talk**

It’s all about the perspective!

**Explain** ‘perspective.’ (a way of regarding situations, facts, etc, and judging their relative importance).

## **Supplementary section**

### **Note for teachers:**

The final section of this discussion provides an opportunity to discuss the notions of ‘equality’ and ‘diversity’ in society. Here are some questions to help lead that discussion:

**What do the pictures in the slideshow make you think about ‘equality’?**

**What would the world be like if everyone was the same; if everyone slept in the same place? Are some societies like this?** (Yes & no; discuss some things that we see across societies ex. Coca Cola, blue jeans, Apple products. This is a good entry point for talking about conformity too)

**Does everything have to be equal or is it nice to have different points-of-view, experiences, perspectives?**

**Are there some things that every person should have?** (Human Rights such as water, opportunity for education... connect with charter which will be looked at in another activity; )

*‘Pyramid Poetry’ was adapted from a lesson designed by Nicholas Ng-a-Fook*

*‘Shades of Grey’ was adapted from the ‘EIP Process Curriculum’ by Patrick Kearns*