

Big Enough

Premiere Date: June 28, 2005

Lesson Plan

Identity, Stereotypes and Diversity

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OVERVIEW

Big Enough is an hour-long documentary that re-introduces viewers to five short statured individuals filmmaker Jan Krawitz met in her 1982 film *Little People*. Through interviews done in 1982 and interviews done some 20 years later viewers are given an opportunity to see into the world of a little person. The film exposes people to issues of accessibility and to a strong, diverse community of individuals who struggle with being different from the average sized person but who also face the same challenges we all do in transitioning from our teenage years and early twenties into the world of adulthood.

This lesson provides students with an opportunity to explore and discuss issues of identity, stereotypes and diversity in our society/culture. Students will examine the impact intolerance has on groups in our society by hearing from people of small stature in the film and by examining their own self-identities and how they may have been influenced by society and external definitions.

You can purchase copies of **Big Enough** for educational use from [Fanlight](#) or borrow a DVD from the [POV Lending Library](#). Get started by joining our [Community Network](#).

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Students will gain awareness and knowledge about dwarfism
- Students will consider the role language and words play in a person's self-esteem and identity
- Students will consider the role language and words play in a community/society
- Students will use personal experiences to relate to people different from themselves
- Students will become sensitized to the needs of people whose physical appearance and abilities may differ from their own
- Students will be encouraged to form their own ideas and concepts about identity issues and language.

GRADE LEVEL: 6-8

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED: 4-5 Class Periods

SUBJECT AREAS: [English](#), [Multiculturalism](#)

MATERIALS

- VHS/DVD of **Big Enough**, VCR/DVD player & monitor
- Internet access for student research
- Black board, white board or large paper
- Chalk and/or Markers

SUGGESTED VIDEO CLIPS

[Clip 1: Identity and Stereotypes](#) (length: 01:48)

This clip from **Big Enough** shows some of the history of representation of dwarves, and explains how they are identified.

[Clip 2: Interview with Jan Krawitz](#) (length: 01:14)

Big Enough filmmaker Jan Krawitz talks about her goals for making the film, including an exploration of "otherness" and what the future might be for dwarfs in terms of genetic testing and the genetic mutations that result in dwarfism.

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INTRODUCTORY LESSON

Step 1:

Explain to your students that in this lesson they will explore issues surrounding identity (specifically self-identity). They will watch a film about the identity issues faced by little people, both personally and as a community.

Break your class into small groups of 3 or 4 students. Write the terms below on a blackboard or large paper and have each of the groups describe or define them. After they have worked on the posted list ask the groups to develop a list of terms that they might use to identify themselves individually and then one that they might use to identify themselves as a group. For example: I am tall. I am short. I have brown hair. I am Indian. I am Spanish. I have blue eyes. We have 2 boys in our group and 1 girl. We have two tall people in our group and two short people. Two of us have curly hair and two of us have straight hair. I have pierced ears.

Suggested terms to define:

- Identity
- Stereotypes
- Little person
- Short statured
- Average sized
- Tolerance
- Acceptance
- Bias
- Dwarf
- Midget
- Disable

After the groups have completed their list have them share their lists with the whole class. Using the group definitions create classroom definitions for the terms above, make sure to add any new terms or descriptions the students created.

Step 2:

As a class begin viewing the film **Big Enough**. Instruct the students to pay careful attention to how individuals in the film define themselves. Ask the students to listen for ways people in the film discuss how other people's opinions and assumptions affect their self-esteem, sense of community and identity. While viewing the film ask students to take notes about identity, self-esteem, difference, and stereotypes.

Suggested pause points:

While watching the film pause at Karla being interviewed on the porch (01:06):

"The first symposium I went to, I was about 11 years old, I guess. And I looked at my mom, and I said, 'Mom, I'm not like that am I? Do I really look like that?' I couldn't believe it. Because I'd always look in the mirror and I'd see that I was shorter and that my limbs were short, but when I really looked closely at them, I couldn't believe it. I was kind of confused. I thought, 'How come I never realized it?'" Ask your students to answer her question. Why had she never realized she was a little person?

Pause again after Karla says (01:08):

"If I don't like someone, I try to imagine them short (laughs). You know, if we could trade places just for a day. If they could be in my shoes for a day.. A dwarf isn't just a dwarf. A person has a particular condition. It's not the dwarf and the average size people, one against the other. I really have a strong effect on people. Most people don't let me forget that I'm little. Their attitudes sometimes are so wrong. It digs deep. It's harmful to me. I don't feel well by the end of the day because I'm just trying to keep my head up when other people want me to keep it down."

Ask your class: How is Karla's self-identity and self-esteem affected by the views of other people? Have they ever had a similar experience where they felt that people made assumptions about who they were just because of the way they looked?

Pause again after Len states (01:10):

"Isn't that the way the other groups felt, too? They originally felt there was something wrong with them. Blacks used skin lighteners and hair straighteners. It's the same kind of thing. That they felt there was something wrong, and yet now there's that concept of black pride. Now they didn't biologically change, but their attitude changed. And that's what began happening with me. If it changed for them, why shouldn't it change for me? My coming out process was going from being ashamed of being a dwarf and not talking much about it to becoming proud to be a dwarf and that's all I talked about. You know I had DWARF POWER embroidered on my denim jacket. Just totally got into it."

Ask your students how they feel about Len's views on Dwarf Power. Do they also see the similarities to other communities?

Pause when Ron says (01:14):

"Finally when I got to the point where I was feeling confident in myself and feeling okay about myself and finally able to say, 'I really like being a little person. I like the uniqueness, I like the attention.'"

Ask your students what helps them to feel confident with themselves. Have them share experiences that helped them be more comfortable with themselves and their unique traits.

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FOCUS EXERCISE

Now that you and your students have viewed **Big Enough** and you have discussed self-identity and stereotyping, have the students create poems, short stories, or a spoken word piece about identity. They can respond to parts of the film or they can create a piece that represents their identity issues or identity issues they have seen other people experience. Post the questions below on a black board or large paper along with the classroom definitions you created in "Step 1" to help the students create their work.

- What words or images do you think of when you hear the word "disabled"? "Dwarf"? "Little person"?
- People of short stature are often identified exclusively by their height. Are there physical attributes that identify you, or that you consider part of your identity?
- What are some of the disadvantages faced by the little people we met in the film? How did they overcome some of these disadvantages? How do you overcome disadvantages you face?
- Who determines what is "normal" and what is "average"?
- In the film Anu says (01:05:76) *"a couple of times a weekend you are reminded that you are different ... someone takes a picture or insists they know how old you are."* How do you treat people who are different from you? How would you deal with being constantly reminded that you are different?
- How can the use of different descriptive terms change the way someone is perceived? What words does your community use to describe different groups of people? Why do you think people in your community use particular terms or choose to use particular terms?

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ASSESSMENT

- After all students have completed their written work invite those who feel comfortable to share their work with the class.
- Discuss as a group how each shared piece introduced the idea of identity and what particular images or words the author used to create the image of identity for the listener.
- Ask the students to discuss how the terms used by the author differ in the kinds of images they create and why people in the community might prefer some terms over other terms when describing differences.
- Refer back to the group definitions that were done in the beginning of this lesson and also to the film **Big Enough**. Did the class want to change any of their initial definitions? Did seeing the film help any of the students gain a better understanding of difference and identity issues?

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EXTENSIONS & ADAPTATIONS

- Work with your school art teacher to have the students create self-portraits.
- Invite a guest speaker from a local group such as Little People of America to come speak to your students.
- Have a screening of the film **Big Enough** in your school and invite a speaker to talk about identity, stereotyping and difference with the entire student body.
- Work with your students to think of ways to educate other students in their local community about issues of acceptance, diversity and self-esteem.

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RESOURCES

[POV website for the film Big Enough](#)

In this intimate portrait, Jan Krawitz revisits some of the subjects who appeared in her 1982 award-winning film "Little People." Through a prism of 'then and now,' she contrasts the youth of these individuals affected with dwarfism with their lives 20 years later. From navigating everyday life to dating and marrying, they confront physical and emotional challenges with humor, grace and sometimes, frustration

["Project Implicit" - Hidden Bias Test Website](#)

Psychologists at Harvard, the University of Virginia and the University of Washington created "Project Implicit" to develop Hidden Bias Tests - called Implicit Association Tests, or IATs, in the academic world - to measure unconscious bias.

[Little People of America Website](#)

Little People of America (LPA) is a nonprofit organization that provides support and information to people of short stature and their families. Here you'll find resources pertaining to dwarfism and LPA, medical data, instructions on how to join an e-mail discussion group, and links to numerous other dwarfism-related sites. Enter, learn, and enjoy!

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STANDARDS

Level III (Grades 6-8)

Language Arts - Listening & Speaking

Standard 1: Plays a variety of roles in group discussions (e.g., active listener, discussion leader, facilitator)

Standard 2: Asks questions to seek elaboration and clarification of ideas.

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Benchmark 4: Listens in order to understand topic, purpose, and perspective in spoken texts (e.g., of a guest speaker, of an informational video, of a televised interview, of radio news programs.)

Knowledge/skill statements

1. Listens to guest speaker
2. Listens to informational video
3. Listens to televised interview
4. Listens to radio news programs
5. Understands the topic of a spoken text
6. Understands the purpose of a spoken text
7. Understands the perspectives in a spoken text

Language Arts - Writing

Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

Standard 4: Evaluates own and others' writing (e.g., applies criteria generated by self and others, uses self-assessment to set and achieve goals as a writer, participates in peer response groups.)

Standard 8: Writes compositions about autobiographical incidents (e.g., explores the significance and personal importance of the incident; uses details to provide a context for the incident; reveals personal attitude towards the incident; presents details in a logical manner.)

Bias, Meaning, and Perspective - Behavioral Studies

Standard 6: Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions

Benchmark 3: Knows the ways in which culture influences the perception of places and regions (e.g., religion and other belief systems, language and tradition; perceptions of "beautiful" or "valuable").

Knowledge/skill statements

1. Knows the ways in which culture influences the perception of places
2. Knows the ways in which culture influences the perception of regions
3. Knows how religion and other belief systems influence the perception of places
4. Knows how religion and other belief systems influence the perception of regions
5. Knows how language influences the perception of places
6. Knows how language influences the perception of regions
7. Knows how traditions influence the perception of places
8. Knows how traditions influence the perception of regions
9. Knows ways that culture influences the perception of "beauty"
10. Knows ways that culture influences the perception of "value"

Source: [McCrel \(Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning\)](#)

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Learn more about: [Big Enough](#)

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