



The
Global Citizenship
and
Multilingual
Competences
Toolkit



Teaching module

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Unit 3:

Questioning images:

Representation and critical visual literacy in secondary classrooms



Teaching Module



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Unit 3: Focus on teaching

Questioning Images: Representation and Critical Visual Literacy

Introduction

The aim of this unit is to provide you with some teaching ideas and methodologies to develop your learners' critical visual literacy, a very important 'global citizenship' skill to have in the 21st century. We are surrounded by images, from photographs in newspapers and magazines to videos on television and social media; they are fundamental in how we perceive and interpret the world around us. Images shape our attitudes towards certain groups in society, while reinforcing some aspects of our own identities. One of the main objectives of this unit is to encourage an active and critical engagement with images, so we can avoid becoming passive consumers of them. The resources included in this unit have been carefully chosen, especially in terms of their capacity to challenge ethnocentric views and foster multiple perspectives. The activities themselves are designed to take your learners (ages 14-17) out of their comfort zone, thus allowing them to consider alternative representations of the world. Developing critical visual literacy is an ongoing process rather than an end in itself. This unit is an invitation to see the world differently, which can continue beyond the classroom.

Learning objectives and outcomes

Learning objectives 	Learning outcomes 
<p>This unit aims to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> [Values, n. 3] Promote learners' sense of responsibility for challenging exclusionary and stereotypical visual representations both locally and globally. [Attitudes, n. 5] Enable learners to engage with sensitive and controversial topics related to visual representation. [Knowledge, n. 1, 2 & 3] Increase learners' awareness of how visual representation operates in society and its relationship with issues of power, discrimination, and exclusion. [Skills, n. 2] Develop learners' ability to engage in the critical analysis of visual representation in everyday life. 	<p>At the end of the unit, your students can:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> [Values, n. 3, 5 & 9] Embrace critical visual literacy as a way of challenging exclusionary and stereotypical visual representations of different groups in society. [Attitudes, n. 3] Acknowledge the importance of reflecting on their own visual practices and ways of seeing the world. [Knowledge, n. 1, 2 & 3] Understand how different groups in society are visually represented, the reasons behind such representations, and their effect on people's lives and society at large. [Skills, n. 1, 2 & 3] Question practices of visual exclusion as well as stereotypical forms of visual representation.



Activities

Activity 1: Warm-up

Estimated time: 30min.

Learning objective:

- Get students to reflect on stereotypical visual representations they come across every day.

Resources needed:

- Flip chart and felt tip pens.
- Internet access.

Exercise 1: Girls are not meant to be scientists

This warm-up activity aims to generate some initial ideas about the main topic of this unit.

- Show your students the advert for Aptamil baby milk formula (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLfH70nm9VM>) and ask them to share their views on it. If the issue of gender stereotypes does not come up, you can highlight that the baby girl in the advert is supposed to grow up to be a ballerina, whereas the baby boy's interest seems to be geared towards maths and science.
- Ask the whole class what the risks of such visual representation may be, especially with regard to aspirations and social relations.
- You can draw a mind map with your students' ideas and invite them to consider other examples of visual representation in the media (e.g. adverts, television shows, films) that also reinforce stereotypes in relation to gender, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, etc.
- Finally, introduce the article titled '*Harmful* gender stereotypes in adverts banned' (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-48628678>) and pose the following question to your students:
 - Should the Aptamil advert be banned? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Bring the activity to an end by summarising the main points of the discussion.



Activity 2: Only available in one colour

Estimated time: 45min.

Learning objective:

- Develop students' critical thinking skills in relation to how certain groups in society are made invisible in everyday life.

Resources needed:

- Flip chart and felt tip pens.
- Internet access.

Exercise 1: Where are the white dolls?

Before you start this activity, please read pages 4, 5, 22 and 23 of the 'Critical Literacy in Global Citizenship Education' booklet (<https://decolonialfutures.net/osde/>). This material introduces the Open Space for Dialogue and Enquiry (OSDE) methodology, a tool for promoting critical literacy in secondary schools which is widely used by education practitioners around the world. OSDE has been recommended in various educational policy documents and translated into several languages. For the purpose of this activity, OSDE has been slightly adapted; however, the main steps of this methodology remain largely the same.

- Show your students the stimulus for this session; it is a photograph from a series called 'Let's Talk About Race', published in The Oprah Magazine. It is the second photo on this website. (<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/this-photo-series-will-make-you-see-race-in-a-new-May-2017>). There is an element of role reversal going on in these pictures.
- Invite them to quickly write or draw their first thoughts.
- Put them in small groups (3-4 students) and ask them to share their thoughts with their group.
- Encourage each group to ask as many questions as they can about the photograph and the meaning(s) it conveys to them.
- Ask each group to share their questions with the whole class and write them on a flip chart. Depending on the issues covered by the questions, you could also add the following:



- Why do toy shops mostly sell dolls with light skin?
- Who decides what colour dolls should be?
- What other types of dolls are usually missing in toy shops?

F. Invite everyone to vote individually on their preferred question (the question that gets the most votes will be the focus of a group discussion with all the students).

G. Open the discussion on the chosen question. As a facilitator, your role is to moderate the conversation and ensure everyone has a chance to express their views. Also, you should try to steer the discussion towards the issue of certain groups being invisible in society.

H. Bring the discussion to an end by highlighting the main points that came up and the conclusions (or further questions) arrived at by the group.



Activity 3: Visualising the Global South

Estimated time: 60min.

Learning objective:

- Develop your students' ability to analyse the representation of people from the Global South in charity appeals.

Resources needed:

- Access to the internet and a printer (alternatively, newspapers and magazines can be used for this activity).
- Flip chart paper, scissors, glue stick, and felt-tip pens of different colours.

Exercise 1: Representing the Global South

This activity is aimed at making your students reflect on how people in the Global South are often represented in charity appeals, a controversial issue that has been at the centre of many debates within the field of international development in recent years. Indeed, many international aid organisations use images that depict African people as helpless and vulnerable in order to raise funds to support humanitarian projects in the region. Although this type of marketing strategy intends to foster compassion and ultimately encourage donations, it also reinforces the idea of people in the Global North as liberators and people in the Global South as passive recipients of (White) benevolence.

- A. Ask your students to read the first article titled *Does charity have an image problem?* (<https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/2/7/does-charity-have-an-image-problem>). After they finish, check that they understood words that may be new to them as well as the main arguments.
- B. Show them the pictures of a fundraising campaign designed by a marketing company for the UK charity Care International (<https://www.fundraising.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/care-international-drink-problem-800.jpg> and <https://www.fundraising.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/care-international-facing-death-800.jpg>). You can explain that these pictures were displayed on the London Underground and therefore seen by thousands of people, both local and tourists, every day.



C. Put them in small groups (3-4 students) and ask them to share their views on the issue of visual representation of people from the Global South in fundraising campaigns. You can use these questions to guide their discussion:

- What are the consequences of representing African people as vulnerable and in need of help?
- Why do some charities still use this type of images in their fundraising campaigns?
- Is it ethical to use these images if the end is a good cause?

D. Ask each group to share the main points that came up in their discussion with the whole class. This is an opportunity for everyone to learn from each other and challenge/expand their own views on this issue.

E. Bring the discussion to an end and introduce the practical task of this activity: developing a charity fundraising campaign with alternative images of people in the Global South. For this task, you need to put your students in small groups (3-4 people).

Exercise 2: Ethical advertising

Explain that they have been hired by a marketing company to develop a new fundraising campaign for a charity that supports access to education for children and young people in Sub-Saharan Africa. To give a bit of context, you can mention that many children and young people in this part of the world are not able to attend school because of the financial hardship experienced by their families. For this reason, many have to work instead, therefore missing out on education.

A. Ask your students to search for alternative images of people in Sub-Saharan Africa on the internet in order to create a poster for a fundraising campaign. The poster should also have some text to invite viewers to donate. Finally, encourage your students to be creative with the text and to translate it into different languages, hence adding a multilingual dimension to this task.

B. Invite each group to share their poster with the whole class and to explain the rationale behind their choice of images and text. You can either end the activity at this point or promote a further discussion based on the visual representation and message(s) in each poster. You should try to encourage the use of positive images as well as a critical debate about the historical and economic relationship between Europe and Africa, and its effect on the creation of both wealth and poverty.



Activity 4: Who gets to be a superhero?

Estimated time: 60min.

Learning objective:

- Use your students' creativity to challenge the under-representation of female characters in comic books.

Resources needed:

- Flip chart paper and felt-tip pens of different colours.
- Internet access.

Exercise 1: Diversity in superhero comics

This activity is aimed at making your students reflect on the limited number of female characters in superhero comics compared to men and what can be done to redress this issue. A superhero is someone with extraordinary or superhuman abilities and skills, or god-like powers and attributes.

- A. Ask your students to read the article titled *New study shows how badly girls are starved for superheroes* (<https://www.vice.com/en/article/xw973w/new-study-shows-how-badly-girls-are-starved-for-superhero>). After they finish, check that they understood any words that may be new to them as well as the main arguments.
- B. Put them in small groups (3-4 students) and ask them to share their views on the issue of female representation in superhero comics. You can use these questions to guide their discussion:
- Why are there fewer female characters in superhero comic books than male ones?
 - Is there diversity in terms of the visual representation of female characters or do they all look very similar?
 - What does a superhero usually look like and why?
- C. Ask each group to share the main points that came up in their discussion with the whole class. This is an opportunity for everyone to learn from each other and challenge/expand their own views on this issue.
- D. Bring the discussion to an end and introduce the practical task of this activity: developing female superhero characters for a comic book.



Exercise 2: Female superheroes

For this exercise, you need to put your students in small groups (3-4 students). Explain that they have been hired by a comic publishing company (e.g. Marvel Comics, DC Comics) to create a series of new superhero characters which must be female. Before drawing these superheroes, they need to consider what they fight for (i.e. their main cause and values), what their superpowers are going to be (this may include being able to speak multiple languages), and how they are going to look (e.g. physical appearance, clothes, special tools). Please use pupils' handout A for this part of the exercise.

A. Each group can create one character or more depending on the time available. They will draw their superhero on a piece of flip chart paper and give her a name. You should try to encourage the creation of superheroes that defy conventional and/or stereotypical representations of women as well as common physical characteristics attributed to superheroes (e.g. athletic, able-bodied, light-skinned).

B. Invite each group to share their female superhero with the whole class and to explain her superpowers and what she stands for. You can either end the activity at this point or promote a further discussion around other groups in society that are underrepresented in comic books.



Activity 5: Questioning the representation of refugees and asylum seekers

Estimated time: 45min.

Learning objectives:

- Encourage students to reflect on how refugees and asylum seekers are usually represented in the media.
- Enable students to consider ways of counteracting single stories and unidimensional representations of refugees and asylum seekers.

Resources needed:

- Flip chart and felt-tip pens.
- Internet access.

Exercise 1: Seeing beyond the labels

For this activity we suggest using the Open Space for Dialogue and Enquiry (OSDE) methodology we introduced earlier on in this unit. This is an opportunity for you as a practitioner to become more familiar with this tool for promoting critical literacy in the classroom. As mentioned before, OSDE has been recommended in various educational policy documents and translated into several languages. For the purpose of this activity, OSDE has been slightly adapted; however, the main steps of this methodology remain largely the same.

A. Show your students the stimulus for this session; it is a GIF image depicting a family and short description of each member below them

(https://www.rnz.co.nz/assets/news/46678/eight_col_03-what-do-we-call-them.gif?1441151593). Ask your students what this picture means to them.

B. Invite them to quickly write or draw their first thoughts.

C. Put them in small groups (3-4 students) and ask them to share their thoughts with their group.

D. Encourage each group to ask as many questions as they can about the picture and the meaning(s) it conveys to them.

E. Ask each group to share their questions with the whole class and write them on a flip



chart. Depending on the issues covered by the questions, you could also add the following:

- Why do we tend to see refugees and asylum seekers just in terms of their condition as migrants or exiles?
- What difference does it make if we see people beyond the labels society attaches to them?
- What labels do you feel society gives to young people in general? Are they portrayed in a positive or negative light?

F. Invite everyone to vote individually on their preferred question (the question that gets the most votes will be the focus of a group discussion with all the students).

G. Open the discussion on the chosen question. As a facilitator, your role is to moderate the conversation and ensure everyone has a chance to express their views. Also, you should try to steer the discussion towards the issue of single narratives in the visual representation of underprivileged and/or vulnerable groups in society.

H. Bring the discussion to an end by highlighting the main points that came up and what conclusions (or further questions) the group arrived to.