



National Farmers Union

“Diversity: It’s What We Have In Common ”

Section 3: Grades 6-8

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Lesson 1: Someone Else's Shoes

- Unit Objective:** Students will be introduced to the concept of how diversity in individual walks in life can combine to create a strong sense of unity.
- Grades:** 6-8
- Length:** 1 hour: 25 minutes for the opening activity and **My New Shoes** worksheet; 10 minutes for snacks, 25 minutes for the **Shoe Stories** activity.
- Materials Needed:** A white table or flipchart. A copy of the **My New Shoes** and the **Shoe Story** worksheets for each student along with markers. Pairs of shoes in a variety of styles and sizes.
- Preparation:** Set up round tables (if available) or rectangular tables in classroom style facing front. In advance, invite two guest speakers from different walks of life... a farmer, a teacher, a military serviceman or servicewoman. Make sure these people bring their work shoes and are willing to allow you to use them for part of the lesson. You will need these shoes prior to the beginning of the lesson.

Background:

This lesson in diversity looks at diversity in terms of careers, especially as defined by a person's shoes. Yet at the end of the day or on weekends, regardless of what our responsibilities are, we all want to change into comfortable shoes: sneakers, sandals, slippers... or socks. This is a relatively simple lesson that invites your students to consider what it might be like walking in someone else's shoes and to appreciate their own path in life.

Teaching Strategy:

1. Welcome your students with an energetic smile and enthusiastically say, *Show me your shoes.* Take a few moments to study each person's shoes. Look for any commonality: sandals or sneakers (also known as tennis shoes, running shoes, or joggers). *Shoes work really hard all day long. We scuff up our shoes, get them dirty, and wear them out or outgrow them. One thing we all share in common when it comes to shoes: we want them to be comfortable.*
2. *We also want them to do a job. But is a sneaker a good choice if you are riding a horse? What kind of shoe works better?* Wait for the answer: *Cowboy boots.* *What kind of shoe works best if you are working in a construction zone?* Wait for the answer: *A work boot.* *What kind of shoe works best if you are running in a track meet?* Wait for the answer: *a track shoe.* *And, what if you are snorkeling in the ocean?* Wait for the answer: *a flipper.* *Would a flipper work well if you are riding a horse? No.* *Would a cowboy boot work well if you were running in a track meet? No.*
3. *Today we are going to learn about diversity. We may not think of diversity as important, but it is. We have diversity in food: think of Mexican or Italian restaurants. We have diversity in music: think of rock and roll or country and western radio stations. We have diversity in our seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter. We have diversity in life: plants and mammals and reptiles and fish. Diversity also is a way of life and it shows up in how we live our lives. We call this culture. The culture in Mexico and Italy are different than in America. This has a lot to do with our family and community history. It has a lot to do with our economic and political conditions as well.*
4. *Have you heard the saying that you should not judge another person until you have walked a mile in their*

shoes? What does this mean? Use this time to lead a discussion on the real meaning of this phrase. Remember, you are a facilitator and your job is to encourage your students to engage in reflection and consideration and making comments. You may ask leading questions such as *Is it right to think you know what someone else is going through when you don't really know them? Is it right to guess at what is going on in another person's life for any reason? Why might people reach opinions about others just by looking at them from a distance?* This discussion needs to take at least five minutes, even if you have a handful of students. You want your students to be actively involved in this discussion. And, you need to make sure all students are encouraged to participate. Do not let one or two students dominate the discussion. You may need to ask a specific student a question, such as *Jill, have you ever heard anyone make a comment about someone else they don't know just because of how that person looked, dressed, or how they acted?* Write down key comments on the white board.

5. Pass out the **My New Shoes** worksheet. *I want each one of you to fill out this sheet. There are no right or wrong answers so don't think too hard about it.* Allow your students time to complete this task. *Flip your sheet over so no one can see it.*
6. *Now, this may sound funny, but take off your shoes and leave them underneath your chairs. After you have done this, I want you to all move one chair to the right but be sure to leave your worksheet where it is along with your shoes.* After your students have moved, select one student and let him or her know he or she is now “in the shoes” of the person who was just in that chair. *Whose shoes are you stepping into?* This will make sure your questions encourage everyone to try to think like the person who just moved to the next seat. Ask this student, *What would you like to learn?* Continue with an additional question or two based on the worksheet. Obviously, after only a few questions it will be clear your student does not know much about “his or her life” based on having not yet walked in “his or her new shoes.” Repeat this line of questions with at least one other student at a different table. Make sure this activity is fun and expect a little confusion while your students adjust to their new “shoes.”
7. *It's not easy to know what another person's life is like unless you are really good friends or you live in the same family. Even then, you may not know everything about another person. Let's try this again, but first I want you to flip over the sheet in front of you and read it. Study what you should know if you really are standing in the shoes of someone else.*
8. Begin the question activity again, asking a different student than before about his or her “new life.” Ask them about their brothers and sisters, the last book they read, what their favorite color is. Be sure to ask at least one question of each of your students.
9. Even if we all go to the same school, live in the same town, and shop at the same stores, we have a lot of diversity in the choices we make. In fact, if we have no diversity at all, people quickly get bored with life.
10. *It's time for a snack.* Be sure to serve appropriate and healthy snacks and drinks to your students. Depending on your snack choices, provide wipes or other hand-cleaning options. Do not rush your students through this time, especially if they are talking about what they discovered on during the first exercise.
11. Once the snack break is over, place pairs of shoes at the center of each table. If you have only a few students and one table, place several pairs of shoes at the center of the group. Regardless, make sure two pairs of shoes are from the two speakers you have invited to your class. Pass out the **Shoe Stories** worksheet. *You have two assignments. Take time to look at the shoes and then do your best to answer the questions on the Shoe Stories worksheet. Then, as a group, write a story about the person who owns the shoes. Make sure you ask everyone at your table to help develop the story.* If you have just one group of students, instruct them to write several stories based on the number of pairs of shoes you left at their table. Be available should any students have any questions during this task. When it appears your students are getting close to completing their stories, give them a two minute warning to wrap up.
12. What did we learn about the people who wore or still wear these shoes? Ask students at each

table to report on their findings. Could they make educated guesses as to what the shoes were used for and by whom? Were there any clues as to whether the owners of the shoes? *Could you tell if the owners liked Mexican or Italian food? Of course not. We try to make judgments about other people without actually knowing anything about them or bothering to actually talk to them. If someone looks or dresses differently than us, we tend to make assumptions about them. Instead, we need to look at diversity for what it really is: just another way of doing something that often achieves similar results.* As you did earlier, use these discussion points to continue the dialog about what we learn when we really try to begin walking in another person's shoes.

13. Invite your two guest speakers into the room (they do not have to be there for the entire lesson but make sure they know to be ready to speak as early as 30 minutes after your start time. Your guest speakers should not enter the room until you are ready for them to speak. *We have guessed at what the people who wear these shoes do. We actually have two people here today who wear two pairs of these shoes. I am going to ask them to come in and tell you what life is like when you wear their shoes.* Introduce your guests by their names and their job titles.
14. After they are done speaking, lead a round of applause to thank your two speakers.
15. *What did we learn?* Pause to listen to any comments. Use the following questions to further your discussion of this topic. *Were you surprised at what it is like to walk a mile in their shoes? Would you want to do their job? Are you happy with where your own feet are taking you? Did you learn about some things you would like to do or try after you put on the shoes of someone else at your table? Life is about diversity. Whatever career with choose, whatever sports we follow, whatever foods we enjoy, our lives are better because of diversity.*

–*Sources:* KnowledgeStorehouse

My New Shoes

My favorite food

The names of my brothers and sisters (if any)

My favorite color

My favorite TV show

What I love to do on weekends

The last book I read

One thing that scares me

Something I want to learn to do

Somewhere I would like to visit

A famous person I would like to meet

One thing I am good at doing

Shoe Stories

What does this person do for a living?

How old is this person?

Is this person male or female?

Is this person into sports?

Is this person hard working?

Does this person like Mexican or Italian food?

Would you want to be this person? Why or why not?

What is this person's story?

Lesson 2: Put Downs Or Put Ups?

Unit Objective: Students will learn that put downs can be linked to rejecting diversity, and that one way to accept diversity is to begin using “put ups.”

Grades: 6-8

Length: 1 hour: 24 minutes for the Put Up exercise, 10 minutes for snacks, 26 minutes for Diversity activity.

Materials Needed: At least one copy of the **Put Up** and **Diversity Makes Our Lives Better** worksheets for each student. Markers.

Preparation: A classroom with a whiteboard or flipchart and tables (preferably round). Print out the worksheets.

Background:

Students this age are used to put-downs (giving and/or receiving), but what about put-ups? This activity will help students see the positive things that their schoolmates are doing and gives them skills to affirm each other’s qualities across social boundaries.

Teaching Strategy:

1. Greet your students with obvious enthusiasm and excitement. *Tell me, have you ever used a put down on anyone else? If so, what did you say and why?* Pause to listen to the responses. Write them down on the white board.
2. *Has anyone else ever given you a put down? What did they say and why? Again, write down the responses on the white board.*
3. *What is a put down and why do people use it? Listen to the responses. Do people put others down to make themselves feel better? Just to be mean? Have you heard people voice a put down aimed at a politician, celebrity, or in a business?* Listen to your responses.
4. *I am sorry you have heard put downs either aimed at you or meant for others. Put downs are kind of like insults. What is the opposite of a put down? Well, a compliment for one. What makes you feel better, hearing a compliment or an insult? Hmmmm.... What makes you feel better inside, giving someone a compliment or insulting them?*
5. We are going to look at compliments. So, instead of coming up with put downs, we are going to come up with put ups. A put up is finding something that another person is good at and letting them know. Here is how this will work. I will hand out these Put Up worksheets. You will spend two minutes talking to the person next to you. Then they will spend two minutes talking to you. During these conversations, each of you will have to learn enough about the other to discover one thing that person does well or is good at. You will write this down at the bottom of the Put Up on your worksheet. I will time you. You need to talk to six other people in this classroom.
6. Use a timer or watch to call out *two minutes, reverse positions, and time to change to a new person.* Keep an eye on this activity. Float through the room to answer questions, as needed.
7. Cut out your Put Ups and give them to the person to whom they now belong.
8. *It's time for snacks.* Be sure to serve appropriate snacks and drinks for this age group. Allow your students time to enjoy this break. When you believe the timing is right, reconvene your class.
9. *Diversity is a funny thing. On one hand our country's culture is based on diversity. Native tribes had widely different cultures from what became Florida and Oregon to Arizona and New York. Others who were*

emigrated from Europe and Asia and Central America to America brought their respective cultures with them. Even then, someone who emigrated from England had a much different background than someone who emigrated from Germany or Norway.

10. *On the other hand, we run into people who don't like diversity. These people think we all should celebrate a holiday a certain way or live in homes that all look alike or wear the same style of clothes. Some people think diversity is strange or dangerous or weird.*
11. *If we did not have diversity, we would not have baseball and football and hockey and golf and soccer for sports. We would not have cats and dogs and fish and rabbits for pets. We would not have comedies and dramas and science fiction and thrillers for movies. We would not have pickups and SUVs and sports cars and convertibles to drive. Diversity gives us choices and diversity gives us new points of view to consider in looking at ways to solve problems.*
12. *I want each of you to work in the group at your table to come up with five things we have in America that show how diversity makes our lives better. There are no right or wrong answers for this activity. Just think about ways diversity has made our lives better. Write down your answers on your worksheet.*
13. *Allow your students five to ten minutes to discuss this topic and write down their responses. Float through the classroom to offer any advice if the need arises and to encourage any discussions that may stall during the process.*
14. *Let's find out what we discovered. Ask the first table to report. Look for opportunities to offer additional supportive examples and to applaud each group's initiative. Continue with reports from the rest of the groups.*
15. *Lead an overall discussion of examples of diversity in your own class, in your own community, and in your region. These examples should showcase both the variety of diversity (social, culture, economic, even geographic). Ask your students to compare these examples with what life might be like with the rich diversity at hand.*
16. *The next time you hear someone suggest that a different way of doing something is bad or is wrong, think about how diversity really works in everyone's favor. Diversity in people, in cultures, and in countries is the reason America became a great nation.*

– **Source:** KnowledgeStorehouse



Diversity Makes Our Lives Better

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Lesson 3: In My Other Life

- Unit Objective:** Students will consider what their life might be like growing up in another culture.
- Grades:** 4-6
- Length:** 1 hour: 25 minutes for the first activity, 10 minutes for snacks, 25 minutes for the guest speaker and closing comments.
- Materials Needed:** Access to the internet and one computer, tablet, or smart phone for each working group of students (it may be possible to do this class in a community library or public school, with advance planning and permission). Writing paper and markers or pens.
- Preparation:** You will need to assure you have working Internet access and available electronic smartphones, tablets or computers. Locate a guest speaker who has traveled to, lived in, or is a native of a country in one of the three regions of focus. This person will put a face on the country they are familiar with and also answer questions and share stories about the actual culture. Both a week and a day prior to your class, verify the time and location with your guest speaker.

Background:

What would it be like to grow up in another culture? One way to explore this question is through books, movies, and by talking to people from other countries. Now, with the Internet, you can offer your students a way to venture outside the borders of their own hometowns to try on an alternative cultural identity. This lesson will help students challenge stereotypes about cultures with which they are not familiar, and to expand their awareness of the range of factors that help create a cultural identity.

Teaching Strategy:

1. Greet your students with enthusiasm and a smile. What would your life be like if you lived in Asia or Africa or South America? Let your students consider this for a moment. *Diversity means different cultures. Our culture right here may be different than in other areas of our own state and certainly different that across the United States. Culture means our overall community environment, from what we eat and what we buy to the type of entertainment we like and traditions we have at holidays. People who live in other communities, other states and around the world have different cultures. We call that diversity.*
2. *I am going to have to work in small groups of three to five students. I want you to create five questions you would want to know the answers to if you were learning about a new culture. Some topics they might cover include: historic milestones, architectural landmarks, great works of art and literature, religious traditions, family life, trends in popular culture, foods, climate, and environment. Write down your questions on a sheet of paper. Take your time to discuss this. There is no reward for getting done first, and there are no right or wrong questions.* Allow your students enough discussion time to develop serious questions. “Float” among the tables to assist, if necessary. You may ask leading questions to help your student groups consider what they would want to know, such as *Are people in this country more likely to live in big cities or small towns?*
3. Advise your students that you prefer they use Wikipedia to research a country in either Asia, Africa, or South America. (**NOTE:** Although not considered a vetted source for research

purposes, Wikipedia is concise and written for easy comprehension. Also, if you do not have Internet access, you may print out these pages in advance and allow the students to use highlighters to mark specific information.) Tell your students to limit their research to mark certain topics relating to the questioned they agreed to in the previous step (for example, popular music or sports). Allow your students time to do this research. Be sure to keep an eye (and ear) on the process.

4. When their research is complete and the groups have answered their questions, have each group report their findings to the class. You will encourage questions about each report from other groups, or from yourself if you have a small class.
5. Focus discussion of these reports on the similarities and differences that mark teenage life in different cultures from life in your community. Build on these points of comparison to help the class develop some general conclusions about factors that create regional cultural identity. You might clarify this issue by asking, *What distinguishes two teenagers in two different cultures if both are wearing blue jeans and t-shirts, both listening to the same music, both watching the same movies and both learning about other cultures in school?*
6. *It's time for snacks.* Serve appropriate snacks and drinks for this age group.
7. *We have a guest speaker with us who has firsthand knowledge of a country in one of the areas we just learned about. He (or she) will tell us a little about what it is like to live there, and what life might be like for teenagers. After he (or she) is done, please be ready to ask a few questions. Here is (introduce your speaker by name and by the country to be discussed.*
8. After your speaker has concluded his or her comments (to be not more than 10-15 minutes), ask your students if they have questions. You may also ask a few questions of your own, such as *What kind of food is most popular? Are stores a lot like ours or a lot different? What do students have to look forward to as adults? Will they go to school? Are they likely to move?*
9. *Once the questions are done, lead applause for your guest speaker.*
10. *Take a few more minutes and, based on what your just learned, develop five new questions you would ask if you wanted to know what it is like to live in another country.*
11. After the time is up, ask your groups what new questions they would ask and what inspired them to choose these new areas of interest.
12. *We learned a lot today about other cultures. Would it surprise you to know teenagers all across the world share a lot in common? Despite their local cultures and traditions, many of them are enjoying life and looking forward to their futures.*

– **Source:** National Endowment for the Humanities

Lesson 4: Don't Box Me In, Or Others Out

Unit Objective: Your students will learn that when diversity is sometimes used to keep others out it also boxes in our options.

Grades: 6-8

Length: 1 hour: 25 minutes for the first activity, 10 minutes for snacks, 25 minutes for the second activity.

Materials Needed: A white board or flipchart. A classroom with tables, preferably round. Open-top boxes large enough for individual students to stand in (printer paper boxes are one option: check with an office supply, print shop, or grocery store or supply cooperative to secure boxes at little or no charge). A supply of colored construction paper (8.5 by 11 inches) and markers. Scotch tape.

Preparation: Using the construction paper and markers, prepare enough signs so each of your students has one for the first exercise. These signs need to be equally divided between positive and negative labels, such as *pride, gossip, jealous, mean, dishonest, slow* as well as *happy, creative, smart, fast, friendly*. Think of labels that are commonly used by this age group yet are not truly offensive in terms of racial or religious foundations. Next, you will need to make signs or labels that use words that have specific diversity meanings. These signs might be of nationalities such as *Indian, German, Italian, Chinese, African-American*, and so on as best reflects your community. Make additional labels that reflect *Male* and *Female*, and another round of labels for religious faiths such as *Jew, Catholic, Methodist, and Baptist*.

Background:

Children learn early on to place other people in categories. This may be due to observations (for example: some children are tall or clumsy or active). Other observations may be due to comments made by parents or other family members, or through cultural practices (these examples may relate to religion, economic wealth, education, or ethnic backgrounds, to name a few). America is a melting pot of diversity. While a homogeneous group may dominate a community, the reality is that cultural diversity is a way of life that spans the globe. This exercise will help students understand why recognizing, understanding, and embracing different cultures benefits everyone.

Teaching Strategy:

1. Greet your students with a smile and enthusiasm. *For some, diversity is a great thing. For others, diversity is viewed with suspicion or distrust because it represents a different way of doing things, a different way of living, even a different set of values. Diversity is not about right or wrong, it is about how people may have a different approach to solving common problems. Some people in our schools and in our community may use diversity in others as a way to justify bullying them.*
2. *How does this happen? When a person is viewed as being different – remember, that's diversity – they may also be given a label that is meant to be hurtful. People may be given labels on their beliefs, where they live, what they do for work, even what sports teams they like or for having an unusual last name or a hair style that is uncommon. These people may not know others have given labels to them. The others, however, are using the labels to justify treating individuals badly. Having an uncommon hairstyle means that person wants*

- to look different and not like everyone else. I'm not sure we all would want to look alike. Does a different hairstyle hurt anyone? No. Does it give others reason to treat that individual poorly. No.*
3. *How do we categorize people using labels? What kind of labels have you heard people use to describe someone else? Write the examples your students share on a whiteboard. Let's begin with positive labels, such as smart, funny, and athletic.*
 4. *What negative labels might you have heard people use? These labels may include short, clumsy, funny hair, old clothes, or stretch for tall. Write these examples on the whiteboard.*
 5. *I want each one of you to write down a label we have listed here. You will make it using the markers and construction paper I am handing out.*
 6. *Spread out the cardboard boxes in two clusters in different parts of the room. Now, I am going to have each you stand in the middle of the room and hold your label. If your label is a positive one, pick a box and stand in this cluster over here. If you have a negative label, stand in this cluster of boxes over here. Either by good fortune or bad fate, you are holding a label that tells others what they should think of you. These labels may be the only thing people see or hear about you. How does that make you feel? Is it fair for others to think of you for only one thing? Are the labels wrong?*
 7. *Now, start taking positive signs that you have made and put them in the hands of the "negative" kids. Have them move their boxes to the middle of the room. Then start placing negative signs you have made in the hands of the "positive" kids and have them move their boxes to the middle of the room. I am not saying any of you are full of pride or mean or that you gossip. And I don't know just how funny or smart you might be. What I am saying is we can put labels on people that discourage or even prevent them from really achieving their own abilities in life. When we do that we are hurting diversity in our community and we are hurting our common culture by not allowing uncommon people to flourish. Let your students ponder this for a moment.*
 8. *It's time for snacks.* Be sure to serve snacks and drinks appropriate for this age group. Allow them time to enjoy this pause. When you are ready, reconvene the class.
 9. *It's time for us to make up a new list of labels. This time we will come up with career titles of people we need to make our community worth living in. What kind of jobs do we need in our hometown? Write down the recommendations your students provide. You may need to offer examples, such as teacher, farmer, doctor, police, and a business owner. Try to use examples of what the parents of your students do to make a living. You will need one different job title for each student.*
 10. *Next, ask your students to make a label using construction paper and markers. You will need to assign these so that you have no duplication of labels. After they are done, ask your students to spread out the boxes and pick one in which to stand and hold up their labels. After your students all are standing in the spread out boxes, go to the middle of the room.*
 11. *You said we need a (firefighter or teacher or farmer) to make our community work. I need the firefighter to bring his or her box to the middle of the room. Now I need the (next label) to come to the center of the room.* Continue this way until everyone has moved to the middle of the room.
 12. *If everyone was a doctor, would our community be worth living in? No. This is a simple yet obvious example of why diversity is good. We need people with diverse skills to make our way of life work. Doctors need farmers and construction workers and police officers. Teachers need business owners and mechanics. Society as a whole succeeds only if diversity is present.*
 13. *For many communities, people are moving in and moving out every year. A teacher may be in our school for five years and then take a job at another school in another state. Our community's diversity is constantly changing. This is true even if someone goes away to college and returns to work here. He or she learned all kind of new things at college. Think about this for a moment.*
 14. *Pass out the labels you made before class to your students. You need not match the label with the person (giving a female label to a male). Look at your latest label. Does it matter if a police officer is Lutheran or Catholic? Does it matter if that officer is a he or she? Does it matter if that officer's parents or grandparents or great-great-grandparents lived in Germany or Japan or Mexico or China? You tell me. Listen to the discussion this will begin. Serve as a facilitator to keep this discussion going. Ask leading questions of some students to keep them engaged.*

15. *Now, imagine our town said it was only going to accept people who went to college or only for people whose family once lived in German. Is it possible we would not have doctors or mechanics just because we are keeping out people who do not share the background necessary to get in? Let your students discuss this with you and with each other.*
16. *America is a country that has welcomed people regardless of their backgrounds, their beliefs, their abilities. We want everyone to have the freedom to be uncommonly good at what they do best. We want people to have the freedom to discover what they do best. America was built on diversity.*
17. *So, we have learned that diversity is good. We need people with different skills and abilities and education to make sure our community has the right mix of talent to make it work. We also learned that diversity should not be used as an excuse to keep people out. Sadly, there are a few people who put others down just because of the diversity that we want in America.*
18. *You should never let anyone box you in by making you wear a label. You should never keep someone else out because others have made them wear a label. I want you to do one more thing. Put all our boxes in a circle and stand in one. Hold hands. Using your feet, step on your box until it is flat. Keep holding hands. When you are outside of your box and connected to someone else, you truly discover the value of knowing people who might have a different way of doing things than you. This kind of diversity makes us stronger and better and smarter.*

—**Sources:** KnowledgeStorehouse

Optional Activities

The following activities could be incorporated at the end of any lesson to fill extra time.

1. Look at the number of ethnic restaurants in listed in your hometown or in a large neighboring town. Have your students read through and then right down the different types of food available. Then have your students put a mark behind their favorite type of ethnic food to see which one is the most popular.
2. Make a poster collage using clippings from magazines that reflect cultural diversity.
3. Make a set of ‘Put Up’ door hangers (Lesson 2) for family and friends.
4. Teach some Farmers Union songs.