

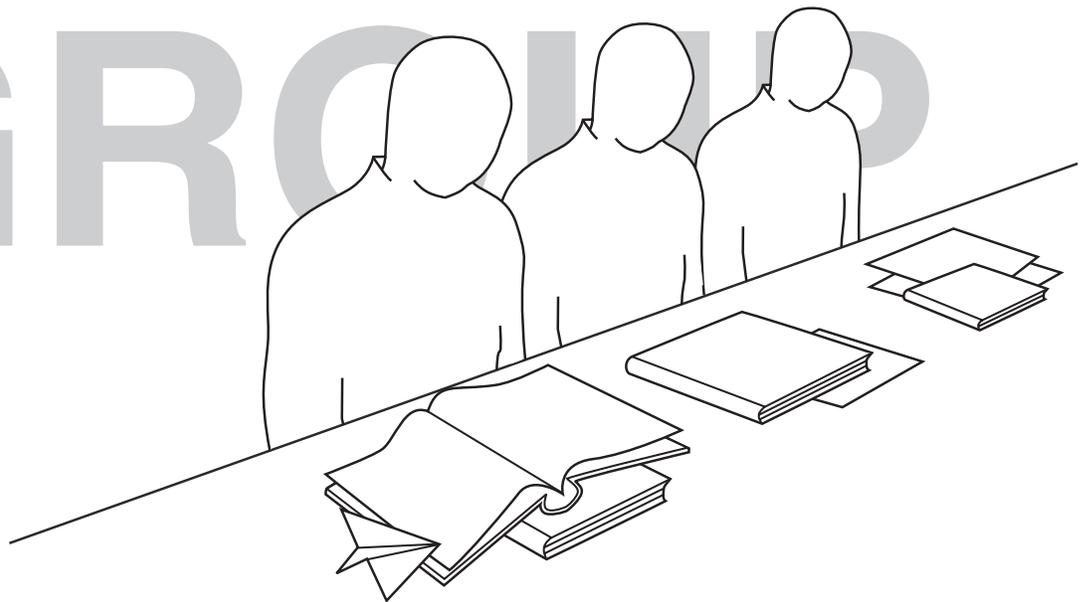
learning lab

BLUE MAN GROUP

BLUE

MAN

GROUP



**The Dance of the Group Member
and the Trickster**

The Picture of Groups

GRADES 3–5

THE BLUE MAN CONNECTION

The Blue Man is both the seamless collaborator and the edgy innovator. Pushing boundaries between leading and following, responding and listening, and giving and receiving, the Blue Man knows the successful road is traveled alongside others in careful symbiosis. The Blue Man understands that the sum of a group is more than its parts. This lesson will take a close look at how groups are established, the role of the individual within a group, and how relationships develop within groups.

LESSON SUMMARY

Gather a wide variety of magazines—like Sports Illustrated, National Geographic, Time, Road and Track, Self, the Sears Catalog, Teen, and Vogue. Facilitate a wide array of visually rich and diverse choices. Try to have 5 magazines per group of 3 to 5 students. You will also need to gather enough 8 ½ x 14 paper for each group to create 3 collages.

Begin the lesson by brainstorming with students about the groups to which they belong. Take 10 minutes to push their thinking beyond family, teams, church, physical description (height, hair color, and eye color, for example), and clubs. Encourage them to think about things like neighborhood, state, nationality, gender, age, race, and language.

Once ideas have been collected, let students know they will be constructing group collages from the magazines. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students. Give each group 5 magazines. Ask students to take 3 sheets of 8 ½ x 14 paper and 5 magazines. Ask groups to create 1 collage per sheet that covers the entire sheet, contains 10-15 images of people, and represents a group that they define. Perhaps show them examples of collages that are groupings of things like babies, basketball players, politicians, or redheads, for example. Each collage must be titled. This exercise should take 25 minutes. Remind students of the importance of supportive group involvement as tales are created and shared.

Once students have finished three collages, ask them to gather as a class. Take 15 minutes processing the exercise. Allow each group to present their collages and share the titles. Ask students how they decided on group membership. What are some criteria for membership in certain groups? Was there debate about what/who should be included/excluded? Did everyone agree on the rules for group membership? Allow broader questions to emerge, such as “What does it mean to be a group member?” and “How can you be an individual and be a group member?”

Allow students to take the last 10 minutes of the exercise to reflect, in writing, on the advantages and disadvantages to group membership. Give students the opportunity to share their answers if they choose.

CONNECTING TO NATIONAL STANDARDS

Language Arts- NL-ENG.K-12.4, Communication Strategies

Social Studies- V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Visual Arts- NA-VA.K-4.1, Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes



A Trickster Tale

GRADES 6–8

THE BLUE MAN CONNECTION

The Blue Man is both the group member seeking to work with others to play, investigate, and explore, and the trickster looking for ways to individually imbue a group process with creativity, spark, and mischief. The lesson will provide students the opportunity to become acquainted with the trickster character from traditional folklore, apply that understanding by drafting a folktale, and explore the way in which the role of trickster may be a part of their everyday life.

LESSON SUMMARY

Introduce this lesson by sharing several trickster tales with the class. Trickster tales are easily accessed, generally very brief, and have overarching themes that are consistent across cultures. Take 10 minutes to read example tales. Then take 10 minutes to discuss several questions: 1. What are the consistent qualities of the trickster character across the tales? 2. What action happens or what problems are solved within the stories? 3. How are the challenges of each story confronted and resolved? This is a condensed discussion that could take much more time. The main points should be that students are exposed to cultural background and structure of trickster tales. In addition, students should become familiar with the trickster character.

Once students have constructed a basic framework of trickster stories and qualities of the trickster character, divide students into groups of 3-5 and ask them to take 20 minutes and draft a trickster tale of their own. All tales should be constructed with the following elements: 1. They should be 250-500 words in length; 2. They should have a clearly discernible trickster character (The trickster may or may not follow a specific tradition. It does not have to be a coyote, or raven, or rabbit, for example); 3. A problem or conflict has to occur and be resolved in the story.

Students then share the drafts of their trickster tales. Sharing should take about 15 minutes depending upon the number of groups. Being constructive contributors, respectful listeners, and sensitive audience members during the creative process is central to this project being successfully created and shared.

The exercise should end with a discussion that analyzes the following questions: 1. In what ways were the trickster characters similar and/or different across all the tales? 2. What problems were solved in each tale and how? 3. Where do tricksters appear in everyday life? 4. How do tricksters function within groups? 5. Do tricksters generally solve or cause problems in groups?

CONNECTING TO NATIONAL STANDARDS

Language Arts- NL-ENG.K-12.4, Communication Strategies

Social Studies- I. Culture, V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

The Tribe

GRADES 9–12

THE BLUE MAN CONNECTION

A tribe is composed of group members and tricksters, of close family and distant cousins, of rules—some clearly stated and others simply understood. The Blue Man operates like a tribe. As a group, the Blue Man moves through space and makes music. He has a common journey of questions and discovery. Cohesion and community guides his coming and going. As an individual trickster, he tests boundaries, plays jokes, devises plots, sometimes fails, and sometimes leads. The trickster pushes and inspires, challenges and bothers. This lesson seeks to use the concept of a tribe to explore the tension between group membership and the individual trickster.

LESSON SUMMARY

Start the lesson by asking students to think about what they know about tribes. Ask students to name some common examples of tribes. Push the students' thinking beyond the general understanding of a tribe (groups of Native Americans or Africans, or in the context of the television show *Survivor*) to consider families, sports fans, and the military, for example. What are common elements of tribes? Are tribes different from groups in general? What are specific roles fulfilled by people in tribes? What are common rules of tribes? Allow this discussion to take 10 minutes.

Once students have thought broadly about the concept of a tribe, randomly establish groups of 3-5. The random nature of the group division in this exercise is important because students need to work with people with whom they might not already have an established relationship. Tell students they will be forming tribes with the people in their group. Each tribe will be responsible for creating a name, 3 criteria for membership (What/who do you have to be to be a part of the tribe?), and 3 basic rules of conduct for the tribe (What do you have to do to stay in the tribe?). This part of the exercise should take about 15 minutes.

Take about 10 minutes to share tribal information with the class.

Now that tribes have been formed, introduce the idea that each tribe believes they have a right to control the classroom. One tribe says their ancestors built the original classroom so they have a right to control it. Another tribe says they won the classroom in a war. Another tribe says they were given the classroom as part of a treaty negotiated by tribes in the past. Another tribe says they gained control of the classroom through marriage. The number of reasons will depend upon the number of groups. Each group will need to adopt a reason why they feel they have control. At this point ask groups to take about 15 minutes and begin the process of deciding how control of the classroom will be decided. Act as a UN negotiator who has been brought in to mediate the situation. Do they choose a chief to negotiate on behalf of the tribe? What role do the rules and identities of individual tribes play within this situation? How are previous agreements and understandings going to be treated within the current situation? Not all of these issues will be solved in the given time, but allow students to explore how they would approach this situation.

The final 10 minutes should be spent discussing the following questions: 1. How was tribal identity established? 2. Were criteria and rules easily established? 3. Did individual roles emerge within the tribe? 4. Did any tricksters who perhaps questioned or pushed the group emerge? 5. Did those roles carry over into the establishment of classroom control? 6. What was the relationship between tribal identity and the desire for classroom control? 7. Did individuals emerge within the tribes during the process of negotiation? 8. What roles did they play? Leader? Peacemaker? Agitator? Solution finder?

CONNECTING TO NATIONAL STANDARDS

Language Arts- NL-ENG.K-12.4, Communication Strategies

Social Studies- I. Culture, V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions