



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades 8-10
About the Author:	Matthew Johnson, Director of Education, MediaSmarts
Duration:	2-3 hours

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Hate or Debate?



This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

Overview

In this lesson, students learn about the difference between legitimate debate on a political issue and arguments that are based on hate. Through a science-fiction scenario they see how a controversial issue can be discussed rationally, and then learn how purveyors of "reasonable racism" use the trappings of legitimate debate to conceal their true message. Finally, students read newspaper editorials and letters to the editor to see whether a currently controversial debate is characterized by legitimate debate or by ideologies of hate.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- learn the key concepts that media contain ideological and values messages and that audiences negotiate meaning
- recognize the characteristics of hateful ideologies
- discriminate between legitimate political arguments and hate material
- apply critical thinking skills to countering hateful arguments

Preparation and Materials

To prepare for this lesson, photocopy the following handouts:

- *Aliens Among Us*
- *Ideologies of Hate*
- *Protect Your Planet!*

Also, have available the following background materials:

- *Ideologies of Hate Answer Sheet*
- *Protect Your Planet! Answer Sheet*

Procedure

Begin by distributing the *Aliens Among Us* handout and read aloud the opening paragraph:

In the 25 years since the planet Beta Canopus 4 was destroyed, Earth has become home to over one million Canopian refugees. Only a small number of Canopians settled here at first, but because Earth's atmosphere and ecosystem were more like that of Beta Canopus than many of the other planets that took them in the number has steadily increased. As well, Canopians have had more success finding work on Earth than on other planets, so many refugees who first went to other planets have moved here for economic reasons. While the refugees were initially meant to stay on Earth temporarily, there has so far been no success in finding another planet for them to live on. Many people, both Canopians and humans, now assume that the Canopians are on Earth to stay.

Next have the class read the remaining two texts, "The Alien Dilemma" and "Aliens Out!". Make sure students understand that each text was written by a different author.

After reading each text, ask students:

- How do you think the author feels about the aliens?
- How do you know?
- How does the author try to convince you?

Once you have read all the texts, note to students that both "The Alien Dilemma" and "Aliens Out!" texts were negative – there would undoubtedly also be many people who supported the settlement of Canopians on Earth, who are not represented here. Ask students if these two negative texts differ in how they got their message across? Did some texts seem more reasonable than others?

Have students compare the two texts in terms of *how* the authors made their arguments. In particular, ask them to consider whether the arguments are based on facts or on provoking an emotional reaction, and the picture we get of the aliens from each. In the discussion that follows, make sure the following points are raised:

1. The author of "The Alien Dilemma" makes an argument based on relevant and up-to-date facts. He does not try to provoke an emotional reaction. The aliens aren't made to seem different from anyone else.
2. The author of "Aliens Out!" relies heavily on emotional arguments. He tries to get you to agree with him by frightening you and makes the aliens look like monsters.

Ideologies of Hate

Now ask students if they consider either of these texts to be hateful. Why or why not? Don't confirm any opinions yet; explain to them that while being critical of a particular group isn't necessarily hate, many hate groups and hatemongers try to pass off what they're doing as legitimate arguments. The key difference is that while they may use a reasonable tone and do a variety of things to *look* legitimate, their arguments are based on *ideologies of hate*.

Distribute the handout *Ideologies of Hate*. Have students read the handout either singly or in pairs and then find examples in the texts they have read. Take up the handout in class. (See the *Ideologies of Hate Answer Sheet* for correct answers.)

Hate or Debate?

Now distribute the handout *Protect Your Planet*. Have students read it and answer the questions, then take up the answers as a class.

Have students compare "Protect Your Planet" to "The Alien Question." (The key difference is that while the aliens themselves are portrayed neutrally in "The Alien Question", "Protect Your Planet" portrays them as being both inferior and dangerous to humans, as well as suggesting that they are actively scheming against humans and in general emphasizing the things that make them different from us.)

Now ask students to compare "Protect Your Planet" to "Aliens Out!". How did the two texts deliver similar messages differently? (At first glance "Protect Your Planet" seems reasonable and believable, while "Aliens Out!" is much more stridently negative and doesn't attempt to make any logical arguments.) How did this make it harder to recognize "Protect Your Planet" as hate? (*It had a more reasonable tone and pretended to be using facts and logic to prove its point.*) Why would hate groups want to make their material look like reasonable arguments? (*It makes them less likely to break the law; it makes their arguments seem more believable and appealing; it lets them get the message out to a wider audience; it takes advantage of people who may not know how to read a text critically and might be fooled by its arguments.*)

Again, remind students that they have only been reading articles which take a negative view. Ask students to think about and discuss what arguments might be raised by the other side of the debate (for example, that we have a responsibility to shelter refugees; that rather than excluding Canopians, humans should put more effort into helping them adapt to Earth; that Canopians contribute to the economy of Earth; or that Canopians contribute to cultural diversity on Earth).

Evaluation Activity: "Reasonable Hate"

Collect (or have students collect) editorials and letters to the editor in one or more newspapers on a controversial issue that touches on diversity (examples: illegal immigration, religion in schools, multicultural education, accommodating minority groups.) To find these, you or your students may look through printed newspapers, use online newspapers' own search functions or do a site specific search with a search engine such as *Google*. This can be done by following your search term with "site:" and the newspaper's Web address – e.g. "immigration site:www.theglobeandmail.ca". (*It is recommended that you restrict students to published editorials and letters to the editor and not have students read online comments, as these are frequently unmoderated.*) For links to newspapers online, see <http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/>.

Have students select one or more editorials or letters to the editor and write a short paragraph explaining whether it is an example of a legitimate political argument or whether it relies on ideologies of hate. Alternately, you may have students read a selection of letters and editorials and have them identify whether the debate overall is relying on legitimate arguments or on ideologies of hate.

Extension activity: Allies and Aliens: A Mission in Critical Thinking

This interactive module for Grades 7 and 8 is designed to increase students' ability to recognize bias, prejudice and hate propaganda on the Internet and in other media.

Aliens Among Us

Aliens Among Us

Excerpt from the Encyclopedia Galactica article "Beta Canopian Refugees on Earth"

In the 25 years since the planet Beta Canopus 4 was destroyed, Earth has become home to over one million Canopian refugees. Only a small number of Canopians settled here at first, but because Earth's atmosphere and ecosystem were more like that of Beta Canopus than many of the other planets that took them in the number has steadily increased. As well, Canopians have had more success finding work on Earth than on other planets, so many refugees who first went to other planets have moved here for economic reasons. While the refugees were initially meant to stay on Earth temporarily, there has so far been no success in finding another planet for them to live on. Many people, both Canopians and humans, now assume that the Canopians are on Earth to stay.

The Alien Dilemma

Editorial in the New Earth Times.

As the Canopian presence on Earth reaches a quarter century, it is time to take stock and ask some questions. To begin with, there is no doubt that accepting the Canopian refugees is one of the greatest acts of charity ever performed by humanity. No other planet has been as welcoming, provided as much aid and thrown its doors as wide open as we have. But now we must ask, are those doors too wide open? We are so welcoming that Canopians move here from other, perfectly suitable planets. They are able to do this due to generous policy of allowing Canopians already here to sponsor brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews – even though a typical Canopian has more than sixty nieces and nephews – and due to the fact that we do not aggressively seek out and deport those Canopians who have come to our planet illegally.

None of this would be a problem if the Canopians were thriving here, but they are not. Earth society is simply not set up to deal with them. Few of them speak any Earth languages fluently, few are able to find work and few of their children finish school – despite the millions of dollars that have been spent to provide desks, gym equipment and other material suited to their bodies.

The Canopian presence on Earth is a reality, and it is not going away. But now, long after all of the refugees from Beta Canopus have been settled, we can choose to keep it from growing much larger.

Aliens Out!

Post on the Human Defence League Blog

Just when we thought things couldn't get any worse here on New Canopia, we've just learned that North American District schools have been ordered to add a unit on Canopian History to all high school classes. Of course, you can bet it will leave out the only significant thing the Betas ever did: blowing up their own planet! No, it'll be all "Did you know a Canopian invented the space drive?" and other feel-good baloney like that instead of the truth that Humans invented all of the important technology we use today. As if Human kids don't already feel like strangers in their own schools! I can tell you it would have turned my stomach if I'd had to sit next to one of them while he was spitting mashed-up food from his gizzard and then swallowing it again. Did you know that Canopians have to spend two times more energy digesting

their food as we do – well, that's less energy for the brain, and that explains something right? That's probably why Beta hatchlings don't even go to class; they just roam the hallways making trouble – just like they've made it dangerous just to walk on our streets!

And how did we get into this mess? The Betas sure aren't smart enough to trick us like this! It couldn't possibly be because our politicians have been taking money from the Rigellians who want the Canopians off of *their* planet. Not if you ask the galactic media – and who owns that? The Rigellians, of course! What a great deal for them – they get rid of their Betas and keep us too busy to figure out they've bought our planet out from under us. Isn't this *our* planet, the one we struggled for millions of years to evolve on? Remember the good old days when Humans ran things around here? Of course you don't – the galactic media doesn't want you to! Just like they don't want you to hear about the brave Humans who stood up to the idea of letting Betas settle on our planet 25 years ago, and are rotting in jail today for their courage! But you and I know that Humans are waking up. How long can we see our planet being taken away from us before we rise up and kick those dirty birds back to the nest they fouled?

Ideologies of Hate

There's a big difference between hate speech and making real political points. One way to tell the difference is to look for *ideologies of hate*: these are basic ideas that are found in hate material and not usually found in legitimate discussion. (An *ideology* is a system of ideas or a way of thinking.) Writers who use these ideas are trying to play on your emotions to get you to agree with them.

The Other

The most important hateful idea is that the world is divided into two groups: "Us" and "Them." Hate content creates an idea of an "Other" who is absolutely and unchangeably different from us. Writers who use this idea will always emphasize things that make the Other seem different and will argue that people are born different, rather than the differences come from our cultures or how we are raised. Sometimes writers will use negative terms for the Other or compare them to animals to portray them this way.

The Other is usually shown as either *inferior* or *threatening* (or both). It's important to hate speech that the writer's group is shown as being both smarter and better than the Other. At the same time, the Other will often be shown as a threat to the writer's group. This is often done by misinterpreting facts, statistics or history to suggest that the Other is trying to hurt the writer's group.

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the Other being shown as inferior:

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the Other being shown as threatening:

The Glorious Past

Another important idea in hate material is that the writer's group has lost its rightful place in the world. Usually, the writer will say that this is the fault of the Other or people within the group who've turned against it.

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the Glorious Past:

Victimhood

It's important for hatemongers to feel as though they are the victims. Since we all sometimes feel like the world is against us, it can be very effective to tell us that our problems are somebody else's fault. Also, if members of the writer's group are the real victims, this means that people we have designated as Other are not victims, so we don't need to feel any sympathy for them.

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the writer's group being portrayed as victims of the Other:

Divine or Natural Sanction

Hatemongers will often say that their group is better because either God or nature made them that way. They'll misquote from holy books or use outdated, misinterpreted or just-plain-wrong scientific theories to show that they have more of a right to be here than the Other does.

The idea of divine or natural sanction leads to two other ideas. One is that there is a *Coming Conflict*, a war that will happen soon between the writer's group and the Other that will put the writer's group back on top. The second is that anyone who suffers as part of the struggle (including those who are arrested for hate crimes, or whose websites are shut down for spreading hate speech) are not just victims but *martyrs*, whose suffering is almost holy because it happened as part of the struggle.

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of Divine or Natural Sanction:

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the Coming Conflict:

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of Martyrdom:

Ideologies of Hate Answer Sheet

There's a big difference between hate speech and making real political points. One way to tell the difference is to look for *ideologies of hate*: these are basic ideas that are found in hate material and not usually found in legitimate discussion. (An *ideology* is a system of ideas or a way of thinking.) Writers who use these ideas are trying to play on your emotions to get you to agree with them.

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Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the Other being shown as inhuman or inferior:

"It would have turned my stomach if I'd had to sit next to one of them while he was spitting mushed-up food from his gizzard and then swallowing it again."

"The Betas sure aren't smart enough to trick us like this!"

"Betas", "dirty birds"

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the Other being shown as threatening:

"Beta hatchlings don't even go to class; they just roam the hallways making trouble -- just like they've made it dangerous just to walk on our streets!"

"How long can we see our planet being taken away from us before we rise up and kick those dirty birds back to the nest they fouled?"

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Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the Glorious Past:

"Humans invented all of the important technology we use today."

"Remember the good old days when Humans ran things around here?"

Victimhood

It's important for hatemongers to feel as though *they* are the victims. Since we all feel like the world is against us sometimes, it can be very effective to tell us that our problems are somebody else's fault. Also, if the writer's group is the real victim that means that the Other are not victims, so we don't need to feel any sympathy for them.

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the writer's group being portrayed as victims of the Other:

"Beta hatchlings don't even go to class; they just roam the hallways making trouble -- just like they've made it dangerous just to walk on our streets!"

"They get rid of their Betas and keep us too busy to figure out they've bought our planet out from under us."

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Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of Divine or Natural Sanction:

"Isn't this *our* planet, the one we struggled for millions of years to evolve on?"

"Did you know that Canopians have to spend twice as much energy digesting their food as we do -- well, that's less energy for the brain, and that explains something right?"

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of the Coming Conflict:

"But you and I know that Humans are waking up. How long can we see our planet being taken away from us before we rise up and kick those dirty birds back to the nest they fouled?"

Find an example in the Aliens Among Us handout of Martyrdom:

"They don't want you to hear about the brave Humans who stood up to the idea of letting Betas settle on our planet 25 years ago, and are rotting in jail today for their courage!"

Protect Your Planet!

Article from the Institute for the Protection of Terrestrial Life website

Reasonable minds can disagree about many things. But no one can disagree that Earth is not the right place for Canopians. Humans have been on this planet for more than two million years, and our ancestors go back to the first life ever to evolve here. Canopians' roots are on their own planet, and it shows. After a quarter-century they have not integrated into Human society but instead live in their own communities as though they were still on Beta Canopus. Nor have they contributed to our society, because accommodating them – modifying schools and other public buildings to suit their forward-bending knees and training doctors to deal with the diseases they bring with them – has cost us much more than they have contributed with cheap labour being all they have to offer.

Those are just the problems caused by the Canopians that come to our planet legally. But illegal immigration has even more severe consequences. Frequently, three or more Canopians will share a single refugee number and come to Earth, the moon, Mars and the Kuiper Habitats at the same time, counting on us not being able to tell them apart. Suppressed government statistics suggest that there may be as many as double the official number of Canopians on Earth because of number-sharing. Because these illegals can't find legitimate work, they naturally end up involved in gangs and crime. There are many cities where Canopians now commit the majority of violent crimes, knowing that if Humans try to defend themselves and their property they'll be the ones thrown in jail, like Qris Paresson was when he shot a Canopian who was building a nest in his garage.

Even if we were to stop accepting Canopian immigrants – and start actually defending our borders – we wouldn't be much closer to solving our Canopian problem. The Canopians like it here and many are starting families. While the Human population is just barely staying stable, Canopians have three to six children in each litter and can have a litter every two and a half years. At that rate Humans will be a minority on our own planet within two hundred years. If we don't act now to put a stop to alien immigration and control Canopian breeding, these problems will escalate to the point where it will be impossible to have peace between us and them.

There once was a time when Earth belonged to Humans – when we could raise our children safely in our little cradle spinning 'round the Sun, secure in the knowledge that they would inherit it when we die. Today, Humanity is in the position of an eagle that finds out a cuckoo has laid an egg in her nest. The cuckoo knows that the eagle's motherly instincts are too strong for her to abandon a hatchling in her nest, even if it kills all her babies. But Humans are too smart to raise a cuckoo's eggs – aren't we?

Questions

Find an example in this article of the Other being shown as inferior:

Find an example in this article of the Other being shown as threatening:

Find an example in this article of the Glorious Past:

Find an example in this article of the writer's group being portrayed as victims of the Other:

Find an example in this article of Divine or Natural Sanction:

Find an example in this article of the Coming Conflict:

Find an example in this article of Martyrdom:

Protect Your Planet! Answer Sheet

Questions

Find an example in this article of the Other being shown as inferior:

"Cheap labour being all they have to offer"

Find an example in this article of the Other being shown as threatening:

"The diseases they bring with them"

"Canopians now commit the majority of violent crimes"

Find an example in this article of the Glorious Past:

"There once was a time when Earth belonged to Humans"

Find an example in this article of the writer's group being portrayed as victims of the Other:

"Humans will be a minority on our own planet within two hundred years"

"Humanity is in the position of an eagle that finds out a cuckoo has laid an egg in her nest"

Find an example in this article of Divine or Natural Sanction:

"Humans have been on this planet for more than two million years, and our ancestors go back to the first life ever to evolve here"

Find an example in this article of the Coming Conflict:

"If we don't act now to put a stop to alien immigration and control Canopian breeding, these problems will escalate to the point where it will be impossible to have peace between us and them"

Find an example in this article of Martyrdom:

"If Humans try to defend themselves and their property they'll be the ones thrown in jail, like Qris Paresson was when he shot a Canopian who was building a nest in his garage."

Task Assessment Rubric: News Article Analysis

	Learning Expectations	Achievement
<p>Use</p> <p>Skills and competencies that fall under “use” range from basic technical know-how – using computer programs such as word processors, web browsers, email, and other communication tools – to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources, such as search engines and online databases, and emerging technologies such as cloud computing.</p>	<p><i>Finding and Verifying:</i></p> <p>locate, organize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and ethically use information from a variety of sources and media</p>	<p>Insufficient (R);</p> <p>Beginning (1);</p> <p>Developing (2);</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>
<p>Understand</p> <p>Understand includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behaviour and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us. Understand also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.</p>	<p><i>Ethics and Empathy:</i></p> <p>understand the dynamics of hate speech and how it affects all of the people involved</p> <p><i>Community Engagement:</i></p> <p>understand how meaning is produced through multimedia (text, images, audio, video)</p> <p>understand the responsibility of individuals to engage with biased or hateful content online</p> <p><i>Finding and Verifying:</i></p> <p>understand that anyone can publish on the Web, so not all sites are equally trustworthy</p> <p>recognize bias, loaded language and other persuasive techniques</p> <p>identify the point of view of a text</p>	<p>Insufficient (R);</p> <p>Beginning (1);</p> <p>Developing (2);</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>

	Learning Expectations	Achievement
<p>Create</p> <p>Create is the ability to produce content and effectively communicate through a variety of digital media tools. It includes being able to adapt what we produce for various contexts and audiences; to create and communicate using rich media such as images, video and sound; and to effectively and responsibly engage with user-generated content such as blogs and discussion forums, video and photo sharing, social gaming and other forms of social media.</p> <p>The ability to create using digital media ensures that Canadians are active contributors to digital society.</p>	<p><i>Community Engagement:</i> make valuable contributions to the public knowledge domain (e.g. wikis, public forums, reviews)</p> <p><i>Finding and Verifying:</i> create new critical or analytical works</p>	<p>Insufficient (R);</p> <p>Beginning (1);</p> <p>Developing (2);</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>