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Thanks!

<b><u>Title of Resource</u></b>	Using Zodiac-based Personality Descriptions to Teach about Biases in Thinking
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<b>Brief Description:</b>	Students are given a list of personality descriptions based on the 12 signs of the zodiac, and have to choose which one best describes them. We then discuss how these personality descriptions are written vague enough to apply to many people. Please indicate the design, statistic, research concept, and/or content area
<b>Keywords:</b>	Thinking Scientifically; Illusory Correlation
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<b>Additional Information:</b>	This activity is similar to the classic Forer effect (Forer, 1949)—Forer used generalized personality descriptions supposedly obtained from a personality test, whereas this activity uses personality descriptions tied to zodiac signs. Forer, B.R. (1949). The fallacy of personal validation: a classroom demonstration of gullibility. <i>The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology</i> , 44(1), 118-123.

**Instructors:**

*Please provide any instructions/tips/suggestions that would help instructors use this resource more effectively. If possible, please also provide your best estimate of how long the resource will take in class.*

*Please paste your resource on the start of the next page. Thanks!*

Most students know that zodiac signs are tied to general personality descriptions, and many students might know personality traits that are tied to their personal zodiac sign. In this activity, students are provided with a list of personality descriptors from each of the 12 signs of the zodiac, and they have to pick the one that sounds most like them, and write a justification of why they chose that sign. Then, they learn whether they actually picked their true sign (a list of birthdates and zodiac signs is attached at the end of the activity).

We discuss several aspects of this activity—first, as a class we determine if anyone did guess their correct sign—most students do not pick their actual sign, but still rate that personality description as very accurate in describing them. In fact, many students pick multiple signs as good descriptions of their own personality. Students begin to realize that these descriptions are written vaguely to apply to many different people. I discuss the role of illusory correlation here—how we pay attention to times when our horoscope does seem to predict our day, or the personality descriptions that seem most like us, and ignore the times when our horoscope doesn't match. This helps to highlight the importance of scientific testing, and to show how just relying on our own individual observations can be biased. Other activities of this nature (i.e., Forer, 1949), take a slightly different approach, such as giving all students the same vague personality description, and finding that everyone rates it as very accurate in describing them individually. However, by allowing students to look at the personality descriptors for each sign, and then try to guess their own, they enjoy it more as a type of 'game', and they see how even though each sign 'sounds' different, all the descriptions are vague enough to apply to anyone.

This is a quick activity—I give students 10-15 minutes to read through all the personality descriptors and choose one, and then I go through the key, and spend about another 10 minutes discussing it in class. I pulled the personality descriptions from several sources on the web (including [www.psychicguild.com](http://www.psychicguild.com) and <http://zodiac-signs-astrology.com>), and condensed them down to fit on one double-sided sheet.

**For each horoscope, read the profile and circle how much it sounds like you. Then, pick the one that is most like you.**

### **Horoscope A**

**Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

Before an A plunges into anything, from a problem to a vacation idea, they need to analyze all the facts and know all the details. This makes them seem indecisive and slow. A's perception is their reality. What they believe is what will be, if they have a negative outlook on life, things will present themselves to be negative and they will be very moody and isolated/detached. If they are positive, the same events that occur will be held in a positive light and they will be a pleasant, well adjusted person. A needs to get in touch with their feelings, this is why they usually seem cold or detached. They will say they feel okay or everything is alright even when it's not. The one thing that A does not like to analyze is their feelings so pretending everything is okay is a good defense mechanism for not having to take a closer look at their feelings.

### **Horoscope B**

**Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

B tend to be rebels just for the sake of having their own way. Their stubbornness sometimes causes their failure, they will continue to do something their way even though others have proved it is wrong, they are very smart people and know it is wrong but they will continue just because it is their way, they are very fixed in opinion and stubborn when confronted. Despite their stubbornness and fixed opinion, they will never impose their ideas on others, they have respect for everybody's differences.

### **Horoscope C**

**Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

C have the ability to react instantly to situations, and as a result, they have a very nervous temperament. They can be compared to a wound up spring as they attempt to absorb everything they can about their surroundings at once. The fact that they enjoy various situations and people add to their nervousness and that means they are almost constantly wound up. However, if they experience boredom and have nothing to survey, they get the same emotions, the need for excitement and variety. This is the C duality, constantly conflicting emotions in one spontaneous, excitable package.

### **Horoscope D**

**Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

The D personality is hard to pin down, it is very mysterious and elusive. D are molded by their surroundings, they incorporate their experiences and surroundings into themselves. They have extreme compassion and they feel the pain of others. If something is wrong in the world that affects them, it affects them deeply, they take it to heart and feel extreme feelings regarding the matter. When they are happy, they are extremely happy and when they are sad, they are extremely depressed.

### **Horoscope E**

**Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

Independence is key to E astrology, they do not like to take orders from others and enjoy getting their way. They can get childish or moody should they be given orders that they do not like. E easily take offense to comments made. E are self-involved and can be self-centered, if they do not pay attention to the feelings of others, E can easily become spoiled and resented by others. In order to get their way, E will tell a lie if it seems advantageous to do so. They are however, not very good liars and other people can usually see through them.

### **Horoscope F**

**Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

F are deeply sensitive, the slightest comment or negative remark will be taken personally and they can easily get offended or hurt. Their stubborn streak results in laziness. They can be very lazy when someone gives them orders or wants them to do something they do not want to do.

### **Horoscope G**

**Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

G are not emotional moody people, in fact they can be downright emotionally detached but they do get irritable when they are bored. G is optimistic and positive, even deep inside because they believe that no matter what has happened, something good is always around the corner and the sun will always shine again.

**Horoscope H****Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

H might seem melancholy and stern because they live by self-discipline and responsibility. They evaluate everything and they don't take daring chances without weighing the advantages and disadvantages first. H's self-sufficiency is often mistook for coldness, they are not as cold as they seem, this might be apparent just because H like to do everything themselves; this way there is no worry about something not finished or not done properly. It is all about control of their surroundings and their daily lives and sometimes this spills into other people's lives. They believe they can give structure and organize other people's lives too, which they can but others might see this as intrusive and not welcome the H's suggested changes.

**Horoscope I****Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

They are complex, fragile, unpredictable and temperamental and need constant support and encouragement, more than any other astrology signs, I needs to be needed. Even when all needs are satisfied, they can be irritable and cranky. They have an uneasy, delicate temperament. The contradictory nature of I gives their temperament the wild mood swings and possible temper tantrums. They are easily offended and will sulk and wallow in self pity for a long time when they get hurt.

**Horoscope J****Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

J are extremely ambitious, persistent and determined which is shown through a power hungry, controlling attitude. Not in a stubborn sense however, because a J will work for what they want. This is obvious to any onlooker. A J never gives up, they are so determined to reach their goal. The key to this success is their flexibility. They are able to re-survey a situation and take a different approach if necessary. Js are fierce competitors, combined with their powers of observation and their excellent memory, they will recall facts and when necessary, bring them to the table at the time of need. Js are excellent at restoring order to a chaotic situation and they are just as capable of manipulating for their own greed and benefit.

**Horoscope K****Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

K have excellent instincts and intuition, most of the time they do not trust them enough. K are likely to be underachievers due to the easygoing attitude. This does not mean that they are necessarily lazy, they just make do with whatever comes their way. They do not want anything badly enough to fight for it. The only time that a K will usually stand up is if a situation is unfair, the only time a K will definitely stand up is if they feel something involving them is unfair. They need their respect and their fairness, after all, K has done so much for other people, it deserves at least fairness, right? When this issue comes into play, K becomes courageous.

**Horoscope L****Not like me at all 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely like me**

L loves the new and extraordinary, they despise dull, regular routines and if this is what they are faced with, they will simply create their own drama and excitement. This makes L prone to stir up a situation out of nowhere just for something to keep their vivacious temperament satisfied. L has an amazing ability to bounce back from any feelings of despair or unfortunate events. They do not like to be unhappy, it hurts their pride so they will take matters into their own hands and make things right again. L could come into conflict with other powerhouse type of people who will not take orders and not give an inch, L will not budge their opinion, they will understand and accept opinions of others but they do not take well to people to try to impose their beliefs on them.

Circle the profile that is most like you: A B C D E F G H I J K L

Explain why you chose this profile:

Signs/Birthdates:

- A = **Virgo:** August 23- September 22
- B = **Aquarius:** January 20 - February 18
- C = **Gemini:** May 21 - June 20
- D = **Pisces:** February 19 - March 20
- E = **Aries:** March 21 - April 19
- F = **Taurus:** April 20 - May 20
- G = **Sagittarius:** November 22 - December 21
- H = **Capricorn:** December 22 – January 19
- I = **Cancer:** June 21 - July 22
- J = **Scorpio:** October 23 - November 21
- K = **Libra:** September 23 - October 22
- L = **Leo:** July 23 - August 22