



educating for cultural literacy
and mutual respect

Creating Inclusive and Equitable Communities – A Call to Action

*Understanding the origins and impact of bigotry in the
U.S. today and what we can do about it*

Lesson 10: Introducing Counter Narratives – Panel of Speakers

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Introduction

This lesson accompanies a panel of guest speakers from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds who will deliver counter narratives to the dominant ones that the students have been studying. Counter narratives are messages that challenge dominant narratives. Counter narratives highlight the voices and lived experiences of people whose stories have often been sidelined or marginalized.

This panel is a live opportunity to engage with and bring to life both some of the content covered in previous lessons as well as new content. In particular, the panel will illustrate how different storytellers interpret and portray the events or people they are talking about. It will also highlight the discrepancies between dominant and counter narratives. For more information on the intercultural panels or to request a free panel session for your class, use the following link:
<https://ing.org/schedule-an-intercultural-panel/>.

Theme: Identity

Disciplinary Area: General Ethnic Studies

Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6

Relevant Curriculum Standards

California's [Literacy in History/Social Studies Standards](#):

- **Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies: RH.9.10.2; RH.9.10.9**
 - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source.
 - Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.
- **Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: WHST.9.10.10**
 - Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Background Information for Educators

This lesson is meant to accompany a live panel of speakers representing various marginalized communities who will provide counter narratives about their history and life today. Counter narratives are messages that are told from the perspective of historically marginalized groups and challenge dominant narratives.¹ These narratives push back against the rhetoric of dominant narratives that often paints non-White ethnic groups as violent, dangerous, and backward.² By telling their own stories, members of marginalized groups are empowered to share their lived realities and help others better understand the first-hand experiences of minority groups.

In contrast to dominant narratives which normally paint monolithic pictures of non-White ethnic groups, counter narratives are much more complete accounts of a person's life.³ Through counter narratives, students are better able to humanize the people they are reading about or listening to.

Learning Objectives

Identity: *How will my instruction help students learn something about themselves and/or others?*

- Students will be able to better comprehend and articulate narratives and perspectives of minority groups.
- Students will be able to reflect upon their own experiences with dominant and counter narratives.
- Students will be able to articulate how narratives are shaped by who is telling the story.

¹ Marianne Wolff Lundholt, Cindie Aaen Maagaard, and Anke Piekut, "Counternarratives," *The International Encyclopedia of Strategic Communication*, 2018, pp. 1-11.

² "Dominant Narratives," Inclusive Teaching Collaborative (University of Michigan), accessed December 6, 2020, <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/sample-activities/dominant-narratives/>.

³ Raúl Alberto Mora, "Key Concepts in Intercultural Dialogue: Counter-Narrative," Center for Intercultural Dialogue, 2014, <https://centerforinterculturaldialogue.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/key-concept-counter-narrative.pdf>.

Skills: *How will my instruction build students' skills relating to the content?*

- Students will be able to engage critically with first-hand narratives and sources.
- Students will be able to critique or challenge dominant narratives about various marginalized groups.

Intellect: *How will my instruction build students' knowledge and mental powers?*

- Students will be able to articulate the importance of listening to counter narratives.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast opposing narratives.

Criticality: *How will my instruction inform students' views of power and equity and the disruption of oppression?*

- Students will be able to articulate a more equitable narrative about oppressed groups.
- Students will be able to describe real-life examples of the disruption of oppression.

Guiding Questions

1. How do counter narratives compare with and challenge dominant narratives?
2. How do narratives and perspectives of marginalized people highlight both their challenges and accomplishments?

Key Concepts and Terminology

- **Perspective** - point of view; a particular attitude toward something or someone.
- **Primary Source** - any original source such as a diary, manuscript, autobiography, or any other source of information that was created at the time that is being studied.
- **Storytelling** - a means for sharing and interpreting experiences.
- **Counter Narrative** - a narrative that goes against another narrative, usually the dominant narrative.
- **Inclusivity** - the practice or policy of including people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

In-Class Activities

1. **The Hook** – Before the panel write the words “Counter Narrative” on the whiteboard. Ask students to state what words or phrases come to their mind when they hear the term.
2. **Main Activity** – Host a panel of speakers representing various marginalized groups speaking about their perspectives, including their challenges and accomplishments. Intercultural panels can be requested using the following link: <https://ing.org/schedule-an-intercultural-panel/>. You may also choose to show a pre-recorded panel for convenience, which is available using the link above as well. Students can take notes on the panel on page 6.

3. **Class Discussion** – Following the panel lead a class discussion about what the students learned, as well as what was surprising or most interesting. Use the Discussion Questions (page 4) to facilitate conversation.
4. **Reflection** – Following the panel, have the class share their reflections in a couple of words popcorn style (each student stands up, gives a brief answer, and then sits back down, signaling the opportunity for another student to stand up and give an answer) with the rest of the class. Next, ask the class to reflect upon the following quote: “It is not the job of a good message to say what is popular. It is the job of a good message to make popular what we need said.” –Anat Shenker-Osorio in her talk “The Audacity of Audacity.” From Working Narratives, “Story Telling and Social Change,” p. 10.
5. **Extension Activities** - Here are some ideas for further student exploration about the topic of counter narratives:
 - Have the students choose a passage from their history book about a marginalized community and rewrite it from the perspective of that group.
 - Have the students practice telling their stories with partners and then sharing how each of them felt with the class.

Discussion Questions

1. What stood out most from today’s panel?
2. What was most surprising about today’s panel?
3. What would you have liked to learn more about from the panel?
4. Name a couple of assumptions that were challenged.

Homework

Students will complete the Intercultural Speakers Bureau Panel Notetaking Sheet (page 5) during and after the panel.

Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

- Refer to steps 3-4 of the In-Class Activities section

Additional Resources

- Zinn Education Project, *A Different Mirror for Young People: A History of Multicultural America* by Ronald Takaki - <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/different-mirror-for-young-people>

- Pennsylvania State University, “Who Can Speak for Whom? Using Counter-Storytelling to Challenge Racial Hegemony” - <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.495.622&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- “Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence” by Derald Wing Sue - https://www.rochester.edu/diversity/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ClosingPlenary_Sue_RaceTalk.pdf
- Working Narratives, “Story Telling and Social Change” by Paul VanDeCar - <https://workingnarratives.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/story-guide-second-edition.pdf>
- American Values Institute, “Telling Our Own Story: The Role of Narrative in Racial Healing” - <https://perception.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Telling-Our-Own-Story.pdf>
- Greater Good Magazine, “Why Telling Our Own Story Is So Powerful for Black Americans” by Andrea Collier - https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_telling_our_own_story_is_so_powerful_for_black_americans
- College Quarterly, “Voices of the Oppressed and Oppressors First, History and Theory Last” by Fred Ribkoff and Amir Mirfakhraie - <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1087340.pdf>
- Teaching Tolerance, “What Counts as History?” - <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/what-counts-as-history>
- Teaching Tolerance, “Exploring History through a Multicultural Lens” - <https://www.tolerance.org/learning-plan/exploring-history-through-a-multicultural-lens>

Student Worksheets

Intercultural Speakers Bureau Panel Notetaking Sheet

During and after the ICSB panel, fill in your notes about what you learned from each speaker. Take note of major challenges and achievements the speakers mention.

Speaker name and stated identity	Challenge 1	Challenge 2	Achievement 1	Achievement 2