

## People Tags <sup>29</sup>

**Class Time Needed:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** One copy of "[People Tags](#)" for every four students

### Objectives

- Students will understand how labels, even those that seem neutral, can influence our thinking about people.
- Students will recognize the importance of getting to know a person before making judgments.

### Introduction

Labels are a convenient, and necessary, way of organizing information about people and events. But labels often become substitutes for thought and experience. Even when labels are accurate and neutral, they describe only one aspect of a person. When they are used as the sole source of information, they limit our understanding and cut us off from full communication. "People Tags" is an activity that illustrates how misleading labels can be when they are applied to people.

### Procedure

1. Prepare for the lesson by making one copy of "[People Tags](#)" for every four students. Cut off the fact cards and keep them for the second part of the activity.
2. Divide students into groups of four. Give each group a set of people cards (Uncle Fred, Aunt Jennifer, etc.) and object cards (dictionary, clock, etc.). Do not give out the fact cards yet.
3. Assign the task: You are doing your holiday shopping for Uncle Fred, who rides in a motorcycle gang; Aunt Jennifer, a librarian; Cousin George, a Navy recruit; and Great-Aunt Phyllis, a senior citizen. From the collection in front of you, which gifts would you choose for each?
4. After a few minutes, discuss the following.
  - Who gave Uncle Fred the leather jacket? Aunt Jennifer the coffee mug? Cousin George the tattoo? Great-Aunt Phyllis the rocking chair?
  - How did you decide who would get each gift?
  - How did the labels (i.e., "senior citizen," "librarian") influence your decisions?
5. Pass out the fact cards and comment that perhaps the students need more information before making their final gift choices.
6. Give students time to "reassign" gifts.

### Debriefing

Use the following questions to guide discussion about getting to know people before making judgments.

1. How did it feel to try to choose gifts for people based on a single piece of information or label?
2. What happened when you were given more information? Who changed their gift ideas? Why?
3. What is the purpose of this activity? Can you give some examples of ways labels influence the way you think about people or things?
4. What are some problems that can occur when we rely too much on labels?
5. What if you were asked to choose gifts for a member of this class whom you don't know well? What could you do that would help you choose the right gift?
6. How can we apply this activity to learning about other cultures?

### Extending the Ideas

- Have students create posters to illustrate the many dimensions behind the labels with which they are most familiar--their names. Ask each student to create a list of words and phrases to correspond with letters in his or her name. Explain that the words should describe what people will learn about them when they look behind their

"label" and get to know them well. Students should feel free to brag a little, as well as to describe things they may like to improve. Their names should be the center points in the designs. The teacher can use the example below or demonstrate the activity using his or her own name to get students started.

li**K**es baseball

Artistic

**R**eliable

Energetic

forg**E**tful

hates **M**ondays

- Have students work with a partner to find out more about each other. Give them time to talk about their interests, families, hobbies, and aspirations. Urge them to look for more than the obvious details. Then have each student create a poster about his or her partner. The posters should depict the person's personality and other attributes. The posters should be used to introduce the "real" person to the rest of the class in a validation activity. Afterwards, these should be displayed around the classroom or school.
- If you are corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer through World Wise Schools, send him or her smaller versions of the posters mentioned above. Be sure to use lightweight paper. If the Volunteer is a teacher or working with youth, ask him or her to consider completing this same activity and sending mini posters to your class in return.