A logo for a tv show

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Library Extension Project

# Activity: Whose Story Gets Told?

Created by: Sue Ellen Christian, Western Michigan University

## Description: Active or passive program

## Target audience: Ages 11 and older/middle school to adults.

## Objectives: To convey the principle that every media message has embedded values and points of view.

## Program details: A highly-adaptable program that allows you to take advantage of your library’s collection of movies to showcase different ways of representing people of all backgrounds, lifestyles and cultures. **Note:** The program is suitable for those with hearing or visual impairments as closed-captioning or dialogue can be used to develop reflections.

Gather participants for a group viewing of *Wonder Media*’s “Whose Story Gets Told?” segment that showcases eight 2-minute videos. Each of the original videos features an actual person sharing their opinions on how particular movies and TV shows depict their identities. A variety of perspectives are offered. (Abrar on wearing the hijab; Carson on coming out as gay as a teenager; Tirrea on the angry Black female stereotype; JoJo on getting stopped by police as a Black male driver; Julie on the use of Native American rituals for entertainment; Michael on depiction of autism in media; Julianna on Latina type-casting; Joseph on Asian cultural depictions.)

Watch some or all of the videos and then invite participants to draw or write a reflection responding to the prompt, “List some aspects of your identity. How are those portrayed in the media? What’s accurate about the portrayals and what is not?”

## At this point, you can choose to invite participants to share their reflections with others and guide a discussion. If you want to lead the group in an analysis of media content, see this handy list of questions on [media decoding.](https://projectlooksharp.org/Resources%202/Key-Questions-for-Decoding%20Dec-21.pdf)

## Target audience: Ages 11 and older/middle school to adults.

Suggested Text: “What values, lifestyles and points of view are included in, or omitted from the media you consume?” Explore how the mass media portray important parts of your identity as a teacher, parent, person of faith, immigrant or other identity markers. Listen and watch as people from a variety of walks of life share their reflections on how the media tells their stories.

## Materials needed: Computer and wi-fi access to show the Whose Story Gets Told? videos, projector and screen (if choosing to show videos at once to a group), reflection sheets with prompt (available in Printables), access to your library’s catalog of movies and TV shows.

## Suggested runtime: 1 hour

## Extension activity: The program can be extended by inviting participants to explore the library’s catalog of movies on their own to identify a scene that well captures who they are, or that stereotypes or distorts who they are. Invite participants to include the name of the movie and time stamp (point of time in the movie) that captures their chosen scene. Post these reflections either anonymously, using first names only or by self-selected identity, for other library users to learn from.

## Participants may also choose to select non-visual forms of media representation, such as popular songs or show tunes with lyrics that portray ways of being (pretty girls, strong boys, characterizations of non-U.S. born people, etc.)

Extension activity for adults: Consider how the news media distorts individuals’ identities in news coverage or lack thereof. As a starting point, share this [Reuters Institute](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital_News_Report_2023.pdf) 2023 study on how news misrepresents marginalized communities, the impacts of that, and solutions.

## Unique Space or Personnel Needs: A dedicated room for viewing videos either on a large screen or individual computer monitors with headphones so audio is clearly heard. Solo library staff program.

## Resources: [CML Key Media Literacy Concepts and Questions](http://www.medialit.org/sites/default/files/14A_CCKQposter.pdf); harmful teen stereotypes in [social media](http://www.trendmicro.com/internet-safety/blog/nobody-on-here-looks-like-me-breaking-the-chain-of-misrepresentation-online); a study on [Black men and boys’](https://opportunityagenda.org/messaging_reports/media-representations-black-men-boys/media-portrayals-black-men/) representation in media and outcomes in real life; [study](https://seejane.org/wp-content/uploads/if-he-can-see-it-will-he-be-it-representations-of-masculinity-in-boys-tv.pdf) on masculinity in boys on TV; Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media [findings](https://seejane.org/research-informs-empowers/gender-in-media-the-myths-facts/); [United Nations study](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2020/2/infographic-visualizing-the-data-womens-representation) of representation of women in news and all media; [scholarly study](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10218532/) finding that “exposure to objectifying and sexualizing representations appears to be associated with the internalization of cultural ideals of appearance, endorsement of sexist attitudes and tolerance of abuse and body shame.”

## Printables: *Whose Story Gets Told?* Reflection Prompt Worksheet (see below); [media decoding questions](mailto:Note:%20The%20program%20is%20suitable%20for%20those%20with%20hearing%20or%20visual%20impairments%20as%20closed-captioning%20or%20dialogue%20can%20be%20used%20to%20develop%20reflections.).

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