

Television Prejudices

(Borrowed from Kelly Watson, Fishers Jr. High, Fishers, IN)

Objectives: To demonstrate the prevalence of stereotypes and prejudice in the media

Audience: Middle school or high school classes

Materials Needed: “Television Prejudices: Logging Form” handout, writing utensils

Time Required: This is an out-of-class assignment. However, you may want to spend 20 minutes of classroom time discussing students’ responses.

Teacher Instructions: Distribute the “Television Prejudices: Logging Form” handout. Instruct students to watch at least two television shows and one news program. These should be aired between the hours of 5:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Students are to record the number of times that they hear a prejudicial remark or see a stereotype being depicted in each program. The stereotypes should relate to race/ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or age. Students are then to write about the feelings they experienced when they watched the programs and the importance of being aware of stereotypes.

When they turn in their assignments the next day, take about 20 minutes to ask the following questions:

1. What kinds of programs contained stereotypes and prejudiced language? Comedies? Dramas? The news?
2. Which types of programs contained the most stereotypes and prejudicial language?
3. What groups of people did these shows stereotype?
4. Do you think it is acceptable for these programs to portray stereotypes and use prejudicial language? Does it make a difference if the show is a comedy, a drama, or the news?
5. What effect do these shows have on our individual lives? What effect do they have on society as a whole?
6. Do you think shows like this help or hurt people’s ability to get along with and understand each other?