

**LESSON H-UII-L1**

# Who is a Terrorist?

**Unit II:** Violence, Aggression, and Terrorism

**Grade Levels:** 9-12

**Time:** 60 Minutes+



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## Objectives

- Understand the role that stereotyping plays when identifying terrorists.

## Key Terms

- prejudice
- stereotype
- terrorism

## Lesson Materials

- sketching or blank white paper
- pencil
- invisible tape or masking tape
- student journal
- (if needed) prepare photographs and descriptions of people who commit terrorist acts accessed from newspapers or the Internet—especially those that do not fit the “stereotype” of a terrorist. For example:
  - Timothy McVeigh
  - Individuals who threaten or bomb abortion clinics
  - Women or children who carry weapons or bombs

## Lesson Plan

- Ask the students to close their eyes and picture a terrorist. After one minute, ask them to open their eyes. Hand out paper. Have students write a few sentences (or a list of adjectives) describing their concept of a terrorist, without looking at other students’ papers. Allow the students approximately 10 minutes. When they are finished, have the students post their papers around the room. Have students walk around the room and read the words of their classmates (allow approximately 10 minutes).
- Have the students write down answers to the following questions:
  - What do these words describing terrorists have in common?
  - How many are similar? Calculate a percentage.
- Lead a class discussion of the observations and answers to the questions. Use the following questions:
  - Were any of the terrorists women?
  - Were any of the terrorists children?
  - What were the qualities in your mind that you attempted to depict?
- If time allows, discuss photographs or media excerpts mentioned in the Lesson Materials.

- Introduce the concept of stereotyping. Then divide the class into small groups to discuss the following questions:
  - About whom else have students heard or used stereotypes?
  - What role does prejudice play in stereotyping?
  - Are stereotypes true?
  - What harm can stereotyping do?
  - Is racial profiling acceptable?
- Wrap up the lesson by asking the questions: “Can you really identify a typical terrorist? Are there both good and bad uses of stereotypes?”

## Evidence of Understanding

Have the students write a one-page essay that addresses the question: “How does the use of stereotypes affect our society?”

## Additional Activities and Resources

Research an incident in the United States or in another country that has been identified as a terrorist incident. Have the students consider the following questions:

Who perpetrated the incident?

Why was the incident identified as a terrorism?

Do the perpetrators (or alleged perpetrators) fit a stereotype of a terrorist? Explain your response (i.e., give examples of physical, religious, ethnic, cultural, etc. characteristics that would be identified in a stereotype that also are exhibited by the perpetrators).

How does the perpetrator differ from the stereotype?

Has the perpetrator (or accused perpetrator) been captured, given a trial, and convicted?

Was the trial a fair trial? Explain your reasons for saying “yes” or “no” to the question of a fair trial.

Did the concept of a stereotype play a role in helping or harming the effort to find the perpetrator(s)? Explain.

Source: *Hate Prejudice and Racism* by Milton Kleg (State University of New York Press, 1993)

## Taking Action and Giving Service

Based on the content of this lesson, ask the class how they can help younger students (Grades 5–7) gain a greater awareness of how prejudice contributes to stereotyping. Ask the class to identify two goals and what kind of activity or lesson they would prepare. Be sure the class can determine if their activity is effective. The class can adapt some of the activities in this lesson for younger students.