



Collaboration  
and relationships



Critical  
thinking



Personal  
growth



Social awareness  
and citizenship

# First Impressions and Stereotypes

**Recommended for Grades 6 to 8**

## Lesson Overview

### Subject:

Language arts, social studies, character education

### Time Needed:

45 minutes, plus optional 30 minutes for optional extension activity

### Learning Outcomes:

- Students will describe how first impressions can be misleading.
- Students will differentiate between self-perception and others' perceptions of ourselves.
- Students will recognize the abilities of persons with disabilities and understand that they can live rewarding lives.
- Students will recognize that misinformation can lead to false impressions and stereotypes.

### Introduction:

First impressions can be misleading. We can all do our part to make sure people are not wrongfully judged and ensure everyone is included.



### Activity

1. Show students the five pictures on p. 5-7. Instruct students to write their first impression of the person in each picture.
2. Ask students to share what they wrote. Ask students, “How did you form an impression of the person?” (e.g. their appearance, presence of a disability, their surrounding environment).
3. Share the following information about the pictures:

All 5 pictures are of Rick Hansen. At age 15, Rick Hansen was in a car accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. That didn’t stop Rick from leading an active life. As a young man, Rick set out on the Man In Motion World Tour. He wheeled over 40,000 km through 34 countries, for two years, and raised over \$26 million for spinal cord injury research and rehabilitation. Rick is also well known for winning Paralympic medals and 19 international wheelchair marathons.

**Picture 1:** Rick Hansen preparing for a competition.

**Picture 2:** Rick Hansen as a young child, without a disability. Sometimes we forget that some people with disabilities didn’t always have a disability.

**Picture 3:** Rick Hansen celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Man In Motion World Tour in Australia. We may rarely see someone with a disability in professional settings.

**Picture 4:** Rick skiing (with adaptive equipment) with his wife Amanda and three daughters. Sometimes we are surprised to learn that someone with a disability can play sports and have a family of their own. Rick exemplifies how people with disabilities can have fulfilling lives like everyone else.

**Picture 5:** Rick Hansen racing. This photo was taken the same day as Picture 1. Note how you did not see Rick’s disability in the previous photos, even though he did have his disability in every picture except Picture 2.

Rick Hansen knows first-hand how difficult it is to change others' perceptions of you. When people have already formed an impression of what you are unable to do, it is difficult to make them understand your capabilities. Because he uses a wheelchair, Rick was told he could not pursue a physical education degree at university. He was also told he was crazy for wanting to wheel around the world. He did both and continues to contribute to society's awareness of the abilities of people with disabilities through his work at the Rick Hansen Foundation. He also continues to speak around the world inspiring others with his story.

4. Students work individually, in pairs or in teams to answer the True or False Sheet (page 8). Provide the correct answers and reflect on any that surprised students. Many people make assumptions about what people with disabilities can and can't do, but every person with a disability is different. You may be surprised by some of the things that people with disabilities can do when provided with the appropriate equipment and supports.

### Conclusion:

Have students complete a 3-2-1 Summary. Students write three things they learned in today's lesson, two things they liked or two interesting facts from the lesson, and one question they still have related to today's lesson.

### Extension Activity:

Review the definition of stereotyping with students. Then have a group discussion.

Stereotyping is a mistaken generalization about a group of people. Stereotypes may be positive or negative but they are misleading and unfair, and often lead to unfair treatment of individuals.



### Discussion Questions

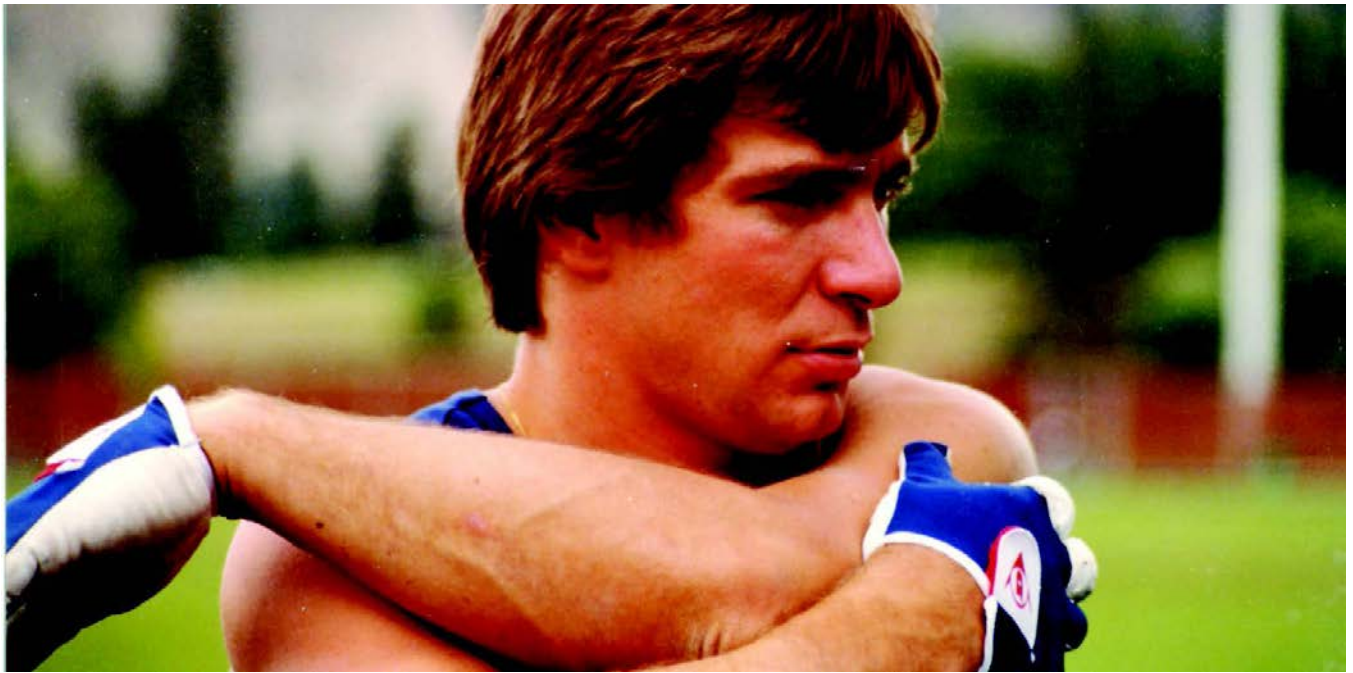
Discuss why is it important to not judge people before you have had an opportunity to get to know them, and write student responses on chart paper or on the board.

Answers will vary but some suggestions include:

- Judging a person does not define who they are, it defines who you are.
- We are more alike than different.
- No one is perfect.
- You may pass up an opportunity to make a friend.
- To feel good about myself; If I feel good about myself I have no reason to judge others.
- Being more tolerant is a good feature to have
- We don't want to be judged.
- You could be treating someone unfairly and it could be hurtful.
- Getting to know people first gives you a better understanding of others.
- I set a good example.
- People who constantly judge others run the risk of being judged themselves
- You could cause harm to someone.
- Opens our mind to new experiences and learning.
- I can feel good about myself.
- You can socially isolate people and this has long term harmful consequences.  
It can hurt people.

Think of a time when you were unfairly judged. How did you feel? Who judged you? Why do you think they judged you that way? Did you make any assumptions about the person in the pictures we looked at earlier because in some photos you could see he had a disability? People with disabilities can do many things, some of which may surprise you. You should never assume that someone can or can't do something, just because they have a disability.

Picture #1



Picture #2





Picture #3



Picture #4



Picture #5



## True or False Sheet

True or False	True	False
1. It is always easy to see if someone has a disability.		
2. Many people who are legally blind can see light and forms.		
3. If you see someone with a disability, you should help them as much as possible.		
4. American Sign Language (ASL), the primary sign language used in Canada, is just like English, except you use your hands instead of your voice.		
5. It's okay to pet a guide dog or service dog because they are incredibly well-behaved, trained dogs that know how to interact with lots of people.		
6. The first time a person with a disability competed in the Olympics was in 1904.		
7. If you use a wheelchair you can play hockey.		
8. Even though you have to have a disability to compete in the Paralympics, people without disabilities can join sports teams for people with disabilities, such as sledge hockey or wheelchair basketball teams.		
9. According to the United Nations, people with disabilities are the world's largest minority.		
10. Under the law, people with disabilities have the same rights and freedoms as people who do not have disabilities.		



## True or False Key

1. It is always easy to see if someone has a disability.

**Correct Answer:** False – Many disabilities cannot be seen; for example, deafness and learning disabilities. Also, someone can have a mobility disability even if they don't use a wheelchair, and someone may have a vision disability, even if they don't use a white cane or guide dog.

2. Many people who are legally blind can see light and forms.

**Correct Answer:** True – Disabilities range a lot in how they are experienced. Many blind people can see light, forms, and colours. There are even blind artists!

3. If you see someone with a disability, you should help them as much as possible.

**Correct Answer:** False – People with disabilities can live independent lives and do not always need help. If you ever want to help someone with disability, treat them like you would anybody else and ask if they need your help first.

4. American Sign Language (ASL), the primary sign language used in Canada, is just like English, except you use your hands instead of your voice.

**Correct Answer:** False – ASL is a separate language with a different structure than English. While spoken English came to Canada by way of Britain, ASL came to the U.S. and Canada through people from France who were d/Deaf and hard of hearing. ASL is therefore most closely related to French Sign Language.

5. It's okay to pet a guide dog or service dog\* because they are incredibly well-behaved, trained dogs that know how to interact with lots of people.

**Correct Answer:** False – you should never pet a guide or service dog because you can distract them from performing important jobs for their owners. \*Service dogs assist people with a range of disabilities, not just persons who are blind or partially-sighted. A guide dog is a kind of service dog.

6. The first time a person with a disability competed in the Olympics was in 1904.

**Correct Answer:** True – In 1904 (the 3rd “modern day” Olympics), a U.S. athlete with a wooden left leg competed in several Olympic events. More recently, Marla Runyan, a U.S. runner who is legally blind, competed in several Olympic track and field events.

7. If you use a wheelchair you can play hockey.

**Correct answer:** True – There are many adaptive sports, such as sledge hockey, that people with physical disabilities can play. Sledge hockey uses specialized equipment such as a sled you sit on and an adapted stick that is much shorter than a regular ice hockey stick.

8. Even though you have to have a disability to compete in the Paralympics, people without disabilities can join sports teams for people with disabilities, such as sledge hockey or wheelchair basketball teams.

**Correct Answer:** True – People without disabilities sometimes choose to join teams for people with disabilities; for example, because they have a family member or friend with a disability and want to enjoy playing sports with that person.

9. According to the United Nations, people with disabilities are the world’s largest minority.

**Correct Answer:** True – In every country around the world, there are people with disabilities.

10. Under the law, people with disabilities have the same rights and freedoms as people who do not have disabilities.

**Correct Answer:** True – People with disabilities have the same human rights and freedoms as everybody else. In some countries, like Canada, we have extra laws such as the Accessible Canada Act that aims to identify, remove and prevent barriers faced by people with disabilities.

**Check out our other Rick Hansen Foundation School Program offerings - available for youth of every age and grade level!**

.....

### **Lessons and Activities**

Classroom lessons and activities engage students on the topics of disability, accessibility and inclusion, and support teachers in leading these important conversations. Our online resource library provides access to lessons for grades K-12, in French and English, in a variety of subject areas, and that connect to the educational values of collaboration and relationships, critical thinking, equity and inclusion, personal growth, and social awareness and citizenship.

### **Videos and Storybooks**

Disability representation comes to life through fun storybooks and impactful videos. Books for younger readers including Roll On and The Boy Who Loved to Move are available in multiple formats including E-book and audiobook, and videos such as On the Move for elementary grades and Just Like U for secondary grades can all be accessed through our resource library.

### **Ambassador Presentations**

RHF Ambassadors are speakers with diverse lived experiences of vision, hearing and mobility disabilities who engage youth with their personal stories. By challenging perceptions about disability, youth are motivated to learn more about how they can become champions for change. Presentations are available at no cost to schools.

### **Difference Maker of the Year Awards**

It is important to acknowledge and celebrate how youth are making a difference. These annual awards recognize youth for their contributions in creating accessible and inclusive schools and communities for people with disabilities.

**Learn more, access resources, book an Ambassador Presentation, or nominate your Difference Maker at:**  
**[RickHansen.com/Schools](http://RickHansen.com/Schools)**



Made possible by the generous support of Scotiabank, The Gordon and Ruth Gooder Charitable Foundation, and The Skidmore Foundation.

**Scotiabank.**

THE GOODER FOUNDATION

Skidmore