Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TEDtalk The Danger of a Single Story, A Culture Narrative

After viewing the TED Talk Danger of a Single Story, students will discuss in pairs situations in which they have perpetuated a single story, and been the target of a single story.

**Objectives**

* Students will be able to discuss some of the problems of using a single story and to identify parts of their lives impacted by a single story

**Materials**

* [The Danger of a Single Story](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg) - Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

**Procedures**

* Students will watch "The Danger of a Single Story"
* After the video, study the following quote and question

*“…to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience, and to overlook the many other stories that formed me...The single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.”*

– For example, Adichie had a single story of Fide and his family: they were poor. That was all she knew about them, and when she saw them, that’s all she saw.

1. What are other examples of single stories from the video?
2. What is “a single story”? How is Adichie using this expression?
3. Has a single story ever been told about you? How did you know? How did it make you feel? THEN--
4. Have you ever told a single story? What did you do? How did you come to realize it was a single story?

* Reflect quietly on questions 3 and 4
* Make notes for 5 minutes.
* Discuss with a partner in 5 minutes.

MORE QUESTIONS

5. What does the story about her visit to Mexico prove?

6. What does the example about ‘American Psycho’ tell you?

7. What does Adichie mean when she says: “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete.”

Do you agree or not? Explain.

8. What do you think Adichie means by saying, at the end, that to reject the single story is to “regain a kind of paradise”? When a single story is rejected as untrue or impossible, what takes its place?

9. One story can lead to a more complex series of assumptions. Achide discusses the POWER of single stories throughout her lecture. There is the power of what one single story can do to how we view a place or people and how the imbalance of power prevents more stories from being told. What are some ways we see the power of telling a single story play out in our lives?

Consider:

* + How will you bring this concept of a single story into your life?
  + Could your single story be a stereotype?
  + Multiple stories create multiple perspectives
  + The easiest way to keep a stereotype alive is to dehumanize the other
  + Americans may view Africa as one country
  + Build your resilience by gathering more and more stories
  + Use "that's a single story" as code for "that's a stereotype you are buying into" to soften the way of saying it

MORE–

Adichie shares stories to illustrate the theme of how only knowing one story of a culture can enhance our implicit biases and create incomplete pictures of those different from us. She ends the lecture by encouraging us to reject the single story and to recognize that no place or people has one single story.

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