

Preparatory Tools

Empathising with physical difference

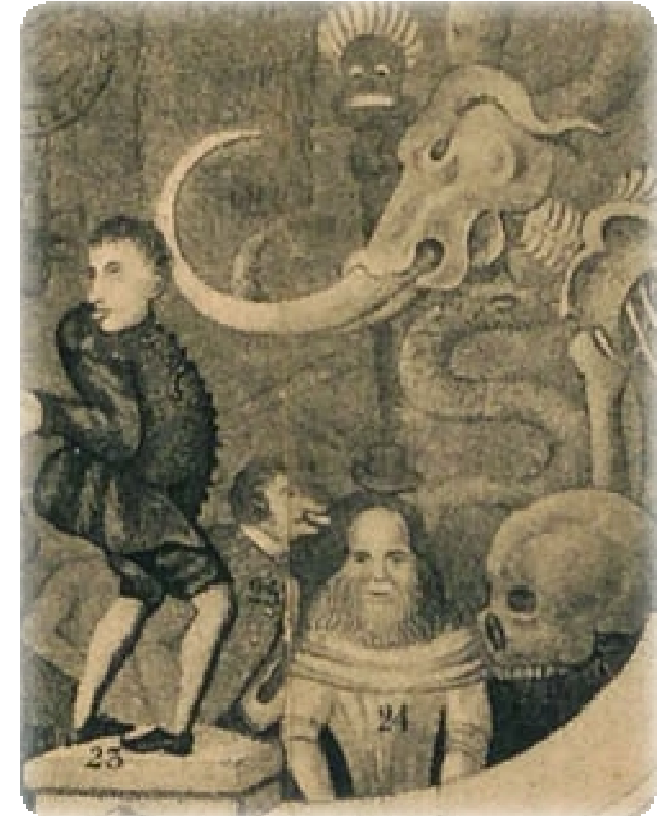
Introduction

These activities explore the relationship between physical appearance and identity. They focus on the experiences of young people, exploring their attitudes towards 'normal' and 'different' bodies.

The exhibition raises many questions including:

- What do we see when we look at one another?
- What aspects of a person help us decide who they are?
- What assumptions do we make about identities based on colour and body image?

Responses to skin and body differences in the 18th century were varied. These activities ask students to think about whether we are still as curious about visible difference now, as people were then.





Introduction

This activity explores the emotional contradictions posed by the impact of the exhibits. The aim of this activity is to develop students' ability to express thoughts, feelings and ideas, and in doing so enhance their engagement with the themes tackled in the exhibition.

You will need:

- Scissors
- Word sheet (page 3)
- Images and biographies of George Alexander Gratton and Mary Sabina
- Information sheet on piebaldism
- Paper and pencils

Steps

1. Prepare by cutting the words out from the word sheet.
2. Divide the class into groups of 6 or 8, and give each student a single word. (Make sure that within a group two students have one half each of any word-pair).
3. Working independently each student draws an image to illustrate their word; they should spend no longer than 5 minutes on this drawing.
4. Now ask them to decide as a group which images should be paired, discussing their understanding of the words.
5. Hand each group the biography sheets of George Alexander Gratton and Mary Sabina, plus the information sheet on piebaldism.
6. Based on their understanding of George and Mary's lives and by looking at the digital images, students must now decide which words from their pairings can be used to label the images of George and Mary. They can also come up with new labels.
7. Each group now feeds back to the class - explaining their choice of words.



Include

Exclude

Curiosity

Rudeness

Perfect

Flawed

Natural

Unnatural

Healthy

Unhealthy

Exploit

Respect

Slave

Employee

Ugly

Beautiful

Reject

Accept

Belong

Ostracised

Clean

Dirty



Classroom Activity

Are you looking at me?

Introduction

This activity will provoke discussion and questions about how we perceive, look at and make judgements about others

You will need:

- A digital camera
- Sheets of card for each student
- Pens and pencils
- Scissors to share



Steps

1. Ask each student to make a full-face mask from plain card with no features. They should spend no more than 10 minutes on this.
2. Divide the class into two, one half is to be 'exhibited', the other will be 'the audience'.
3. The 'exhibited group' create a scene, each holding blank masks in front of their faces.
4. Photograph the 'exhibited group' using a digital camera.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 with the groups swapping roles.
6. Ask:
 - What does it feel like to be behind the blank mask?
 - To be looked at?
 - To be photographed?
7. Now ask students to take 10 minutes adding features to their masks that convey important aspects of their identity.
8. Get the groups to take turns 'exhibiting' and 'observing' again.
9. Now ask:
 - What has changed?

- What does it mean for us to declare our identities?
- What would it be like if you had a highly visible skin abnormality?
- Does skin colour matter?
- When we meet someone for the first time what do we base our judgements about them on? (e.g. their clothes, accent)
- What judgements might we make based on that evidence? (e.g. on their abilities or background)

Extension

Note: This activity assumes students have already seen pictures of Mary Sabina and George Alexander Gratton and have learnt something of their skin-pigment conditions.

Ask:

- What were your reactions when you first saw images of Mary Sabina and George Alexander Gratton?
- Did finding out more about them change how you perceived them?
- Mary and George were regarded as curiosities because little was understood of their skin conditions at the time. Are we still just as curious now or do you think we are more accepting of physical difference?