

Decision Making Influences in Literature

Summary

The decisions teenagers make are influenced by many factors. This lesson will help students differentiate between a variety of influences and recognize the impact these influences have on decision making.

This lesson is written as an interdisciplinary unit for both the Health and Language Arts classrooms. It can however, be taught in just one of the classes.

Main Core Tie

Health Education I (7-8)

[Strand 1: HEALTH FOUNDATIONS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS OF HEALTHY SELF \(HF\) Standard HI.HF.2:](#)

Time Frame

2 class periods of 60 minutes each

Group Size

Large Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

Variety of 6-10 beverages including: soda pop (with and without caffeine), juices, sports drinks, etc. (these will be given away to students)

1 small square of paper for each student

Container for the prize drawing

White board or butcher paper and markers

1 regular-sized sheet of plain paper for each student

Pen or pencil for each student

Copy of "Influences" handout for each student

Word strips with the influences listed in the (see Background for Teachers)

Overhead projector, one transparency, and overhead markers

Classroom set of novels or short stories

Copy of the "Decision Making in Literature" reading log for each student

Background for Teachers

In order to help students make better choices for themselves, it is important they become more aware of the influences on their decision making:

Habits = what one is accustomed to doing; e.g., doing/not doing drugs, being/not being honest, following through/not following through with responsibilities.

Emotions = the way in which feelings, mental perceptions and reactions are expressed.

Media = ways in which impressions, ideas and information is conveyed; e.g., TV, music, movies, print, etc.

Faith = beliefs (likely spiritual in nature) which may or may not stem from a religion.

Peers = other people, approximately the same age, that one comes in contact with; e.g., friends, classmates and teammates.

Esteem = the way one values (high esteem) or devalues (low esteem) themselves.

Family = relations, immediate and extended, living together or apart.

Values = those things held in highest regard; e.g., learning, friendship, money, health, peace, etc. It is also important that students begin to realize when influences are internal or external.

Student Prior Knowledge

Familiarity with the use of comprehension strategies during reading.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will identify factors that influence decision making.

Students will relate text to life situations and experiences.

Students will monitor their own comprehension.

Instructional Procedures

Day 1:

(Health classroom)

Prize Drawing

Distribute the small squares of paper, one to each student. Display the various beverages, showing each container to the class. Inform students that there will be a prize drawing where one student will win the beverage of their choice. Instruct students to write the name of one beverage on the small paper, fold it one time, and place it in the prize drawing container. Before selecting the winner, ask students why they selected the beverage they did as well as why they passed over others. Record responses on board/butcher paper. Reasons may include: "I like the taste"; "It has caffeine in it"; "It doesn't have carbination"; "It's an ugly label"; etc. Draw the name of the winner and tell them they can pick up their prize at the end of the day (this allows you to continue to display all beverages for the remaining classes).

Influences on Decision Making

Tell students that their beverage choice has been influenced by one or more factors. Show the word strips or write the influences listed in the "Background for Teachers" section on the board. Refer back to the reasons students gave for selecting or passing over certain beverages and have students match the reasons to the corresponding influence(s).

Examples:

1. "It has caffeine in it," may be influenced by habit (an addiction), or by faith ("It's against my religion.")
2. "It doesn't have carbination" may be influenced by values ("What my coach says is important,") or by peers ("It's what my friends on the swim team drink.")
3. "It tastes good", may be influenced by media (commercial) or family ("It's what we drink at home and I'm used to it.")

Optional note taking: Pass out a plain sheet of paper to each student. Instruct students to fold the paper into eight equal sections (a vertical fold followed by two horizontal folds). Use an overhead transparency to communicate the eight influences and their definitions as outlined in "Background for Teachers". Invite students to demonstrate their comprehension of the terms by listing examples of, and/or creating illustrations for, each influence in their notes.

Text to Life Examples

Distribute a copy of the handout, "Influences", to each student. Instruct them to work in pairs or small groups to identify and list the two or three most likely influences on each of the six decisions. When finished, students are to think up their own decision making mini-story and list the influences. Invite each group to share their mini-story with the class to see if other students can correctly identify the influences.

Day 2 and Beyond: (Language Arts classroom)

As a class, read a novel or short story in which the characters make numerous decisions (this would include most novels/stories already used in Language Arts classrooms). Ask students to use the "Decision Making in Literature" reading log to keep track of the decisions made by the characters and to identify one or more influences for each decision. Instruct students to distinguish whether the influence comes from within the person (internal), or if the influence comes from outside sources (external).

Strategies for Diverse Learners

Instead of writing out the notes on influences, students can write one or two examples and/or draw a picture which illustrates the influence.

Students act out their mini-story rather than writing it.

A variety of stories on differing reading levels can be utilized. The Decision Making Reading Log can also be used with books in the students' native languages or books on tape.

Extensions

Students use the Decision Making Reading Log for individual reading (it could be done in place of a book report.)

Assessment Plan

Use the Influences handout to verify whether students can determine the correct decision making influences for each mini-story.

Students use the rubric to self-assess their ability to identify characters' decisions in literature as well as the influences on the decision making process.

Rubrics

[Decision Making in Literature](#)

Authors

[Val Murdock](#)