

ReelEducation

LESSON: Spectrum: A Story of the Mind

Film Length: 23 minutes

Lesson Length: 40 minutes

Grades 4-6, 6-8, 9-12

ReelAbilities
FILM FESTIVAL
TORONTO

 **Ontario**
An EnAbling Change Project
with the Government of Ontario

Rick Hansen
Foundation 
School Program

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Lesson Title: Spectrum: A Story of the Mind

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the positive characteristics of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Understand that everyone processes sensory information and that people with ASD process sensory information in a variety of different ways
- All people perceive environmental and sensory information differently
- Appreciate that we all have different talents, interests and strengths
- Understand that we can't make assumptions about people's abilities and strengths based on our first impression
- Increase understanding of ASD as a sensory issue.

Synopsis:

Spectrum: A Story of the Mind, made its world premiere at the United Nations General Assembly, won the CINE Golden Eagle Award for Best Documentary Short and was produced for PBS national distribution for Autism Awareness month.

While autism is largely regarded as a social disorder, *Spectrum* reveals the underlying sensory differences that create the perspective of someone with Autism Spectrum Disorder. The story is a series of character-driven portraits beginning with Temple Grandin, the most well-known adult with autism in the world. Rather than fearing autism, *Spectrum* seeks to understand it.

Film Length: 23 Minutes

Resources:

Film Link: <https://vimeo.com/261222296>

Chart paper, markers

Time: 40 Minutes

Before Viewing

1. Bring the students together and tell them they are going to watch a film about the learning styles and people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Ask the students to think about what they know about ASD. Ask students to identify the positive characteristics people with autism spectrum disorders have. Write key information in point form notes. Add additional information not discussed from the list below.

People with ASD:

- are people first
- are concrete thinkers
- see the sensory world in a different way
- can be very visual learners
- like and are good at having routines
- want to have friends
- want to be seen for their abilities
- want to be loved and respected

After Viewing

Discussion Questions

1. In the film Temple Grandin explains sensory issues. What are sensory issues?
Differences in the way the brain processes sensory information such as auditory, visual, tactile, movement, smell, taste and spatial awareness.
2. Judy uses the words “neurotypical”. What does that word mean?
People who experience the world using their senses in a way that is the same for people without ASD.
3. Give examples of people in the movie and how they experienced the world through their senses.
4. What differences did the people in the movie demonstrate?
The people in the movie experienced the world in a very sensory way through their sensory system.
5. How are the people in the movie similar to you?
They enjoy similar activities, they have similar talents and interests as others, everyone has some things they are good at and other things that are hard.

6. When you first meet Tito what assumptions might you make about him?
*Because he does not talk we might think that Tito has limited verbal abilities.
Why do we make this assumption?*
7. What did we learn about Tito in the movie?
He is a very talented poet. His writing is interesting.
8. What was new or surprised you about the movie?
Create a list on chart paper.

Learning Activity

1. Place four pictures around the room: artist, writer, athlete and musician.
2. Ask students to walk to the corner that best represents their learning style or personality.

Ask students:

If they were to choose one picture that best represented them, which one would it be?

3. After students select a picture, ask for volunteers to explain WHY they selected this picture.
4. Explain that these pictures represent their learning styles strengths through Visual (Spatial), Aural (auditory-musical), Verbal (linguistic), Physical (kinaesthetic). Explain that they chose this picture because it represents their own strengths and interests.

Teaching Tip:

You could use this opportunity to discuss the work of Multiple Intelligences and the work of Dr. Howard Gardner. See websites below.

5. Explain that some people with ASD identify and perceive the world through a sensory lens. This movie demonstrated that each person has strengths and they communicated their strengths in their own ways.

Wrap Up:

1. Divide students into groups or pairs and tell them they are going to create Twitter hashtags. The hashtags should explain the main message/idea of the movie to someone who has never viewed it before. It must use “people-first language” (see suggested website) and be clear and concise.
6. Bring the class together and have each group share and explain their take away message.

Examples:

- #Everybodycanbeanartist
- #weallhavethingswearegoodat
- #ASD
- #autism
- #weallhavestrengthsandcreativeabilities
- #Dontmakeassumptions
- #Firstimpressions
- #livinglifethoughyoursenses
- #weallseetheworldindifferentways

Enrichment:

1. Students research a famous or notable person with Autism Spectrum Disorder
2. Students search for other films about autism spectrum disorders and write a film review.
3. Students create an ASD Awareness Campaign for their school.

RESOURCES

Rick Hansen Foundation School Program lesson connections

Rick Hansen Foundation School Program has free resources for teachers via the **Abilities in Motion** page, too! Register for free [HERE](#) to see the following lesson plans:

- Abilities in Motion Toolkit: Secondary - First Impressions and Identity Labels
- Abilities in Motion Toolkit: Secondary - Inclusive Society
- Abilities in Motion Toolkit: Challenge, Picture This
- Abilities in Motion Toolkit: Project, Social Media Connects

Autism ON

Educating in a Neurodiverse World (TedTalk)

Autistic Self Advocacy Network

Learning for All (2013)

Multiple Intelligences

Child Development Institute

A way with words and Images

