

## Lesson Three — Strangers and Strange Lands

**Objective:** Students will move beyond their familiar family and friends (Lesson Two) to explore their ideas about those they think of as strangers. A stranger can be someone who lives in their neighborhood, village, town, nation, or people they never meet face to face who live in other nations and cultures.

### Materials Required

Copies of the images included in this lesson to hand out to students

Glue sticks or a stapler

Enough strips of colored construction paper so that each student will have four strips

### Background Information

Read the following aloud to the class:

We are most familiar with our own culture and language. When a person or another species does not speak our language or share our culture, misunderstandings can easily occur. Even when two people are from the same species, we often cannot find a way to relate or care about each other because our lifestyles or habits are so different.

In one culture, nodding your head up and down means “yes,” while in another (Bulgaria), it means “no.” In one culture, it is fine to sit with your feet pointed toward another person, while in another culture (Thailand), doing so is very disrespectful. In one culture, you can use your right or left hand for whatever you want, while in another culture, you cannot shake someone’s hand or eat using your left hand. In one culture, you shake hands to greet another person, while in a different culture, you kiss on one cheek, and in still another, you kiss on both cheeks (France). In one culture, two women or two men who are friends hold hands, while in another culture, this is not acceptable. Clothing, language, food, taboos, manners, social customs, and many other subjects are very specific to a particular culture.

### Activity One

Think of a time when you were misunderstood because someone was not familiar with your culture or language.

Think of a time when you misunderstood someone else who was from a culture that was unfamiliar to you.

Share with the class in writing or verbally what it felt like to be on either side of this misunderstanding.

### Activity Two

Individually or in pairs, make a list of some common customs that are different in different cultures. Then make a list of what is common to all people, everywhere. (For

example: All people want to be comfortable, not feel pain, have a desire to live free, need food, water, and shelter, and so on.)

### **Activity Three — First Impressions**

Pass out copies of the optical illusions below to each student.

Ask students to share their impressions. Do they think Line A is longer than Line B in the first illusion? If they measure the two lines with a ruler, they will see that they are the same length.

Do they see gray dots at the white intersections of the second image? Are the gray dots really there?

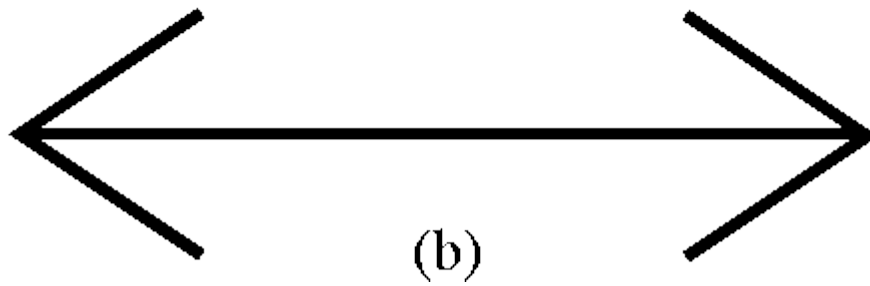
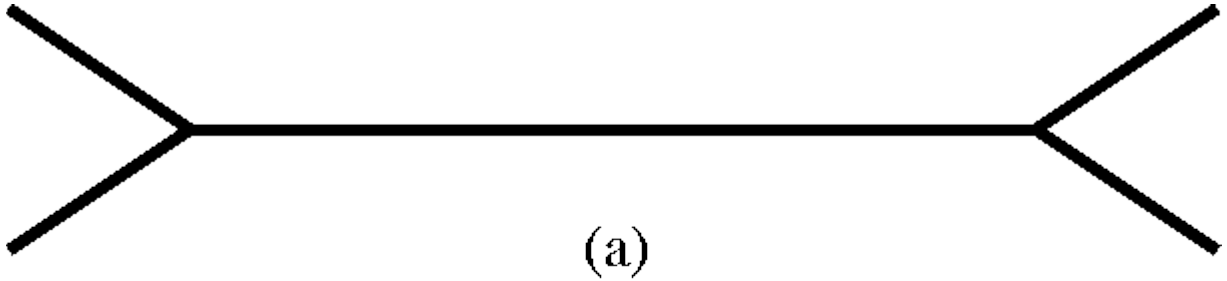
In the third image, do they see gray diagonal lines? Are they really there?

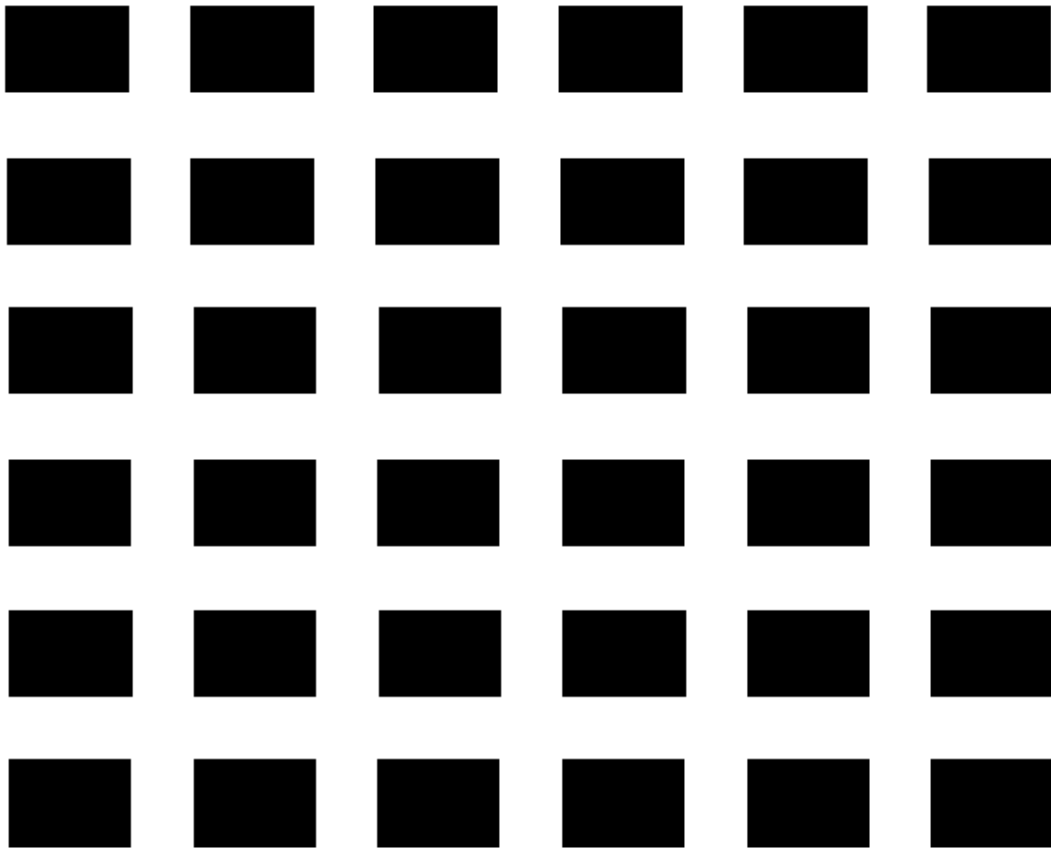
In the fourth image, ask them to try counting the black dots. Are the dots really there?

In the fifth image, are the lines parallel?

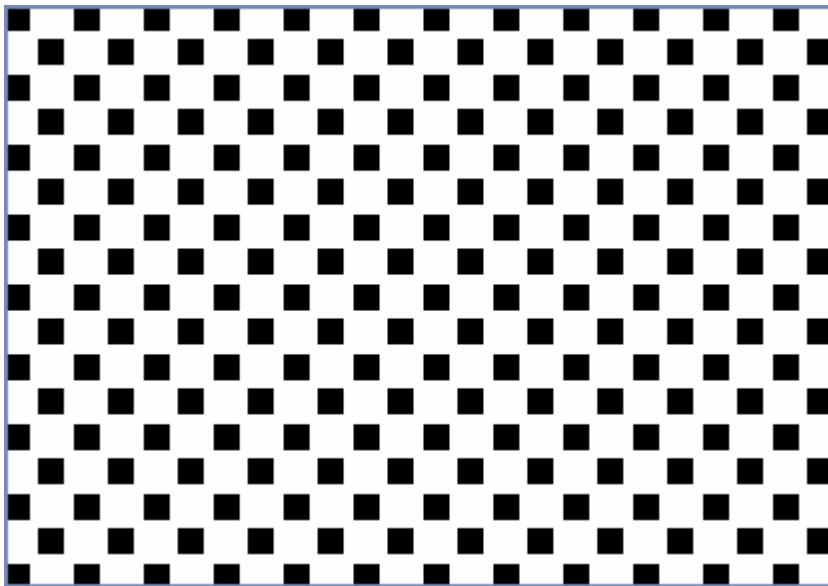
These examples demonstrate how we sometimes see things that are not really there and how first impressions are not always accurate. Discuss in class: How does this relate to our relationships with strangers?

Which line below is longer? Give your first impression and then measure the lines. (Line A appears longer than line B, but if you measure them with a ruler, you will see that they are the same length.)

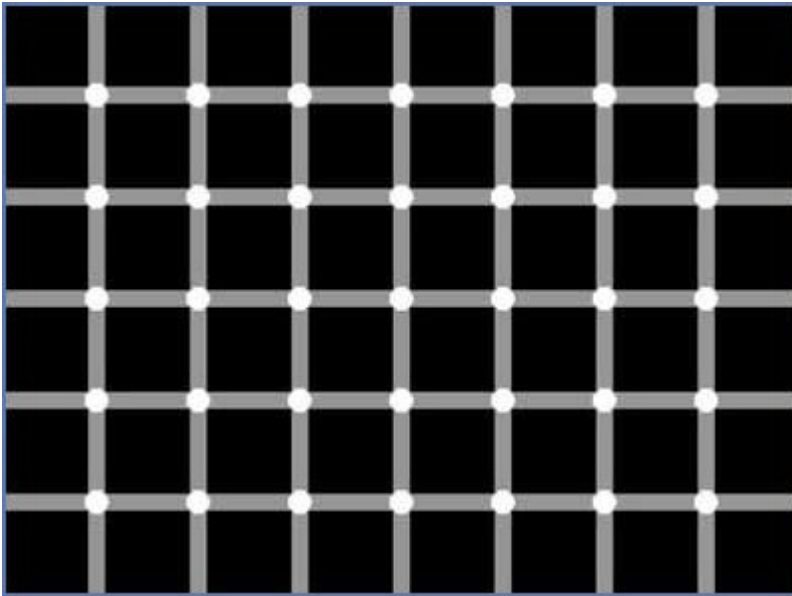




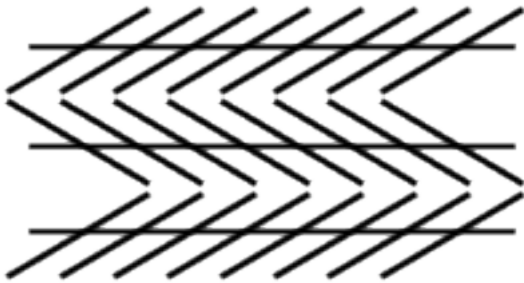
Stare at the black squares. You will see gray dots where the horizontal and vertical white lines intersect.



Do you see gray lines on the diagonal?



Try counting the black dots.



Are the lines above parallel?

## Activity Four

Ask students to name some ways that people are misjudged by first impressions (such as because of their race, physical or mental abilities, economic class, religion, and so on). Some first impressions are based on external factors, like how a person dresses or how tall they are. Some first impressions are not based on outwardly visible factors, but on factors that become apparent in social situations, such as speech difficulties, for example.

While speech difficulties may seem minor, they are one of the major blocks to connecting and understanding one another. If someone has a very difficult time speaking because of a disability, such as stuttering, they are often misjudged as being unintelligent.

### True Story

Read the following aloud to the class:

A young girl from a poor family was able to attend a very expensive private school thanks to a full scholarship she received because she was so intelligent. During her first year at the school, the other children teased her about her hair and clothing so much that school officials and her parents decided that she should return to public school for her own mental and emotional well-being.

Discuss this story in class or ask students to write their impressions of the story and relate any experience they have had in their lives that may compare. These questions can aid the discussion:

- Have you ever felt inferior to someone else because they had different clothes, toys, more money, or a bigger house?
- Have you ever felt superior to someone else because they had different clothes, toys, less money, or a smaller house?
- If someone tells you that you are “different,” do you think that is a compliment, an insult, or neither?
- Have you ever been teased about anything? How did it make you feel?
- Have you ever teased anyone? How did it make you feel? How do you think it made the other person feel?
- When you were teased, did you tell anyone (friend, teacher, or a parent)? If so, what do you think the teacher or your parent should have done in that situation? What did they do?

## Activity Five — Creating a Chain of Similarities and Differences

Pass colored strips of construction paper around the room, asking each student to take four strips.

Explain to students that they are going to have an opportunity to explore some of the ways in which we are all similar to and different from one another.

Ask students to think of ways in which they are similar to and different from the other

students in the room. Ask them to write on each of the four strips one similarity and one difference. Explain that they should be prepared to share what they have written on two of their strips with the entire class.

When completed, each person should have written four ways in which they are similar and four ways in which they are different from the others in the room. Offer some examples of similarities: appearance, birth order, the type of community in which they live, hobbies and interests, age. Explain that the similarities can go well beyond what they see visually to what they assume all people share.

If they don't know each other well, the differences may be based only on appearance.

Ask each person to share two ways he or she is the same and two ways he or she is different from other people in the room.

Start a chain by overlapping and gluing or stapling together the ends of one strip. Pass a glue stick to each person and ask students to add all four of their strips to the chain. Continue around the room until all students have added their strips to the chain.

Discussion:

Ask students to discuss the many things they have in common, as well as the ways that each person in the class is unique. Discuss the idea that even though members of the class may have different family histories, experiences, or culture, in many ways they are the same. Also discuss how the differences might be easy to see, while the similarities can go beyond what we observe to what we assume all people share.

You can display the chain on a bulletin board or around the doorway of the classroom to represent the uniqueness of each person and what everyone has in common.