

Adapting “How Belief Affects Perception” Across Disciplines

Cross-Curricular Applications Guide (Teacher Resource)

Original Course: Psychology / AP Psychology

Adaptable For: Government, History, English, Media Literacy, Science, Sociology

Skill Focus: Interpretation, bias, evidence evaluation, critical thinking

PURPOSE OF THIS ADAPTATION GUIDE

The core strength of this lesson is its structure:

Same stimulus + different prior beliefs = different interpretations

That structure is **discipline-neutral**. What changes is:

- The *belief being activated*
- The *type of interpretation being analyzed*
- The *academic lens used during debrief*

This guide shows teachers how to adapt the lesson while preserving its instructional integrity.

CORE STRUCTURE (DO NOT CHANGE)

All adaptations should preserve these elements:

1. **Pre-existing belief sorting**
2. **Identical stimulus presented to different groups**
3. **Observer/control group**
4. **Structured debrief focused on interpretation, not truth**
5. **Explicit connection to disciplinary thinking**



SUBJECT-SPECIFIC ADAPTATIONS



UNIVERSAL DEBRIEF QUESTIONS (WORK IN ANY CLASS)

Teachers can always ask:

- Did the information change, or did interpretation change?
- Why did different groups focus on different details?
- What prior beliefs influenced interpretation?
- How does this affect decision-making in real life?



BEST PRACTICES & CAUTIONS

- Never frame the lesson as determining truth
- Avoid emotionally charged or graphic content
- Always debrief explicitly
- Do not require students to reveal personal beliefs publicly
- Emphasize **thinking processes**, not conclusions



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SUBJECT-SPECIFIC ADAPTATIONS

AP Government / Civics

Focus Concept

- Political ideology
- Media framing
- Confirmation bias
- Public opinion formation

Belief Sorting

- Agree with policy X
- Disagree with policy X
- Unsure / mixed views

Identical Stimulus

- A neutral policy scenario
- A Supreme Court decision summary
- A campaign message without party labels

Debrief Emphasis

- How ideology shapes interpretation
- Why people see bias even in neutral information
- Media framing vs facts

Key Terms to Introduce

- Confirmation bias
- Framing
- Selective exposure
- Political socialization

History / Social Studies

Focus Concept

- Historical interpretation
- Perspective
- Bias in sources

Belief Sorting

- Sympathy toward Group A
- Sympathy toward Group B
- Neutral / unsure

Identical Stimulus

- Primary source excerpt
- Eyewitness account
- Political cartoon

Debrief Emphasis

- Why historians disagree
- How perspective shapes narrative
- Limits of objectivity

Key Terms

- Historical perspective
- Bias
- Contextualization
- Point of view

English / Language Arts

Focus Concept

- Reader-response theory
- Interpretation
- Tone and symbolism

Belief Sorting

- Agree with a character's actions
- Disagree with character's actions
- Undecided

Identical Stimulus

- Short story excerpt
- Poem
- Ambiguous passage

Debrief Emphasis

- How readers bring meaning to texts
- Multiple valid interpretations
- Author intent vs reader perception

Key Terms

- Reader-response theory
- Tone
- Theme
- Interpretation

Media Literacy / Journalism

Focus Concept

- Misinformation
- Framing
- Source credibility

Belief Sorting

- Trusts mainstream media
- Distrusts mainstream media
- Mixed views

Identical Stimulus

- News article with neutral tone
- Image or headline without context

Debrief Emphasis

- How trust affects interpretation
- Why misinformation spreads
- Emotional vs factual reactions

Key Terms

- Media bias
- Framing
- Credibility
- Selective exposure

Science (General or Environmental Science)

Focus Concept

- Scientific skepticism
- Evidence interpretation
- Public understanding of science

Belief Sorting

- Trusts scientific consensus
- Skeptical of scientific claims
- Unsure

Identical Stimulus

- Climate data summary
- Medical study abstract
- Risk assessment scenario

Debrief Emphasis

- Difference between evidence and belief
- Why scientific findings are misinterpreted
- Role of uncertainty

Key Terms

- Scientific literacy
- Correlation vs causation
- Bias
- Interpretation

Sociology / Psychology (Non-AP)

Focus Concept

- Socialization
- Group identity
- Perception

Belief Sorting

- Identify strongly with group
- Do not identify with group
- Neutral

Identical Stimulus

- Social scenario
- Case study
- Survey results

Debrief Emphasis

- Group influence
- Ingroup/outgroup bias
- Social construction of reality

UNIVERSAL DEBRIEF QUESTIONS (WORK IN ANY CLASS)

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