

Assessment

From Fitting In to Belonging Assessment Ideas

Overview

About This Assessment

We have provided two short summative assessment ideas for you to choose from:

- **Option 1:** A Hexagonal Thinking discussion and a written response.
- **Option 2:** A Circles of Action written response and a discussion.

Both assessments invite students to revisit their journal reflections, texts, and handouts in order to synthesize ideas about key concepts in the text set, such as the forces that shape belonging and how we can reduce the barriers to belonging for ourselves and others. These assessment ideas are starting places from which you can create a culminating experience that feels authentic and relevant for your context.

Essential Questions

- What are the forces that shape belonging?
- How can we reduce barriers to belonging for ourselves and others?

Facing History Learning Outcomes

In order to deepen their understanding of the text, themselves, each other, and the world, students will . . .

- Engage with real and imagined stories that help them understand their own experiences and how others experience the world.
- Analyze the internal and external conflicts that characters face and the impact these conflicts can have on an individual's choices and actions, both in the text and in the real world.

Preparing to Teach

A Note to Teachers

1. Preparing for Option 1: Hexagonal Thinking Discussion and Writing

Before class, prepare the hexagons by photocopying the **Borders & Belonging Hexagonal Thinking Template** handout, cutting out the hexagons, and placing each set in an envelope for easy distribution and cleanup. Students will work in groups of three; each group will need a set of hexagons. Students will need to be able to see their group's completed grid in order to complete the written portion of this assessment, and you will also need to see the grids in order to assess students' written pieces. Consider these strategies for documenting each group's grid:

- Students can tape their hexagons together and affix the grid to a sheet of paper with their names clearly written on top.
- Students can take photographs of their finished grids so they can complete the written portion at home. However, you should only use this approach if you know that every student has a phone that can take pictures.
- You can also photograph the grids and post the images to your class's online discussion board so that students can see their grids at home if all of your students have reliable access to the internet.

Here are some resources if you would like to learn more about the Hexagonal Thinking discussion strategy, see examples of print and digital versions, and consider possible extensions and modifications:

- *Cult of Pedagogy*: [Hexagonal Thinking: A Colorful Tool for Discussion](#)
- NCTE: [Getting Started with Hexagonal Thinking](#)
- We Are Teachers: [What Is Hexagonal Thinking? Plus, 13 Examples to Inspire You](#)

2. Pacing the Assessments

Each assessment is designed to take one to two class periods.

Lesson Plan

Activities

1. Hexagonal Thinking Discussion and Writing

Overview

“Hexagonal thinking” challenges small groups of students to draw connections between key concepts about the intersection of borders and belonging that they encountered over the course of the text set. Each concept is written on a small hexagon, and students need to position the hexagons into a grid that connects the concepts. For some concepts, students may only find one connection, while for others they may find two, three, or even six. The deep thinking comes during their discussion as they deliberate, using evidence from the text set and their own experiences to place each hexagon. Every group may come up with a different grid, so there are also opportunities for conversations across groups. After the groups have created their grids, each student will produce a short piece of writing that uses evidence from the text set to explain three connection points on their grid.

Hexagonal Thinking Procedure

- Move students into groups of three and explain the Hexagonal Thinking procedure. Let them know that in addition to the group discussion, there will also be an individual written component, so it’s important for everyone to participate actively. Model the activity by drawing or projecting two or three labeled hexagons (with different labels from the ones students will encounter) and explaining how you might connect them. Try to show how there could be multiple options for each hexagon.
- Have students take out their journals, notes, readings, and handouts from the unit so they are prepared to support their ideas with evidence. Then pass out the envelopes and invite groups to create their Borders & Belonging hexagonal grids. Explain that they can choose what to write on the blank hexagon; it should be a concept or quote that relates to the unit’s themes and essential questions. Circulate to get a sense of their conversations.
- When all of the groups have finished, have them tape their hexagons and affix their grid on a piece of paper. They should write their names at the top of the paper. If you want them to capture any of their connections while students are

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still working in groups, have them explain a few of their choices in writing on the paper (see the NCTE example in Teaching Note 1).

- Debrief the activity with a [Gallery Walk](#). Groups can place their grids on their desks. Prompt students to look for similarities and differences as they circulate. Then invite them to share what they noticed, and allow groups to support their choices if challenged.

Individual Written Response

- This activity can be completed for homework or in the next class period. If students are working on it for homework, they will need access to their grid (see Teaching Note 1).
- Let students know that they will be using their group's grid for an individual written response that uses evidence from the text set to explain three points of connection on their grid. This is an individual activity, so each student can choose the points of connection that they are most interested in writing about. Pass out the **Hexagonal Thinking Written Response** handout and read the instructions as a class. Then have students complete the task.

2. Circles of Action Written Reflection

Overview

Core to Facing History's approach is providing students with opportunities to develop their intellectual, moral, and emotional thinking skills. Whether reflecting in their journals, deliberating with their peers, or stepping into a text to expand their worldview, students have been building their capacity in these three areas over the course of the text set. The [Circles of Action](#) thinking routine, developed by our friends at Harvard University's [Project Zero](#), supports students as they consider the significance of what they are learning for themselves and others and invites them to make connections across texts and concepts.

Circles of Action Procedure

- Have students take out their journals, notes, readings, and handouts from the unit so they are prepared to incorporate ideas into their reflections. Then pass out the [Circles of Action Personal Reflection](#) handout and read the

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instructions as a class. Remind students there is no one “right” answer for the questions. You are looking for thoughtful and authentic responses that incorporate ideas that students have grappled with over the course of the text set. Every student may have a different response, and that’s okay!

- Give students ample time to craft their reflections. Circulate as they write to respond to clarifying questions and support students as needed.
- Collect the responses. Then facilitate a class discussion where students can volunteer to share their ideas for each question. It is important to remind students that you are not looking for a “right” answer. You might focus on the second question about community and use their ideas to develop a classroom project or set classroom goals for reducing barriers to belonging. This process might lead to revisiting and updating your [classroom contract](#) or to check-ins at the end of each week to reflect on how you are doing as a class.