**Who Are You Online?**

***Essential Question:*** *How do you present yourself to the world online and offline?*

**Lesson Overview**: Students explore how they and others represent themselves online, and the relationship between their online and offline selves. Students watch a video of a teen talking about what it means to be “real” or “fake” online and discuss the video in groups, relating these issues to their own online selves. They learn that assuming different personas online carries both benefits and risks.

**Students must complete the Digital Citizenship Google Form located on the main page of the FHS website as documentation of lesson completion. A direct link is here** [**https://goo.gl/mDtR3d**](https://goo.gl/mDtR3d)

**Learning Objectives:** *Students will be able to ...*

• reflect on the similarities and differences in how people represent themselves online and offline.

• understand that they might choose to show different parts of themselves online, depending on context and audience.

• consider the risks and benefits of assuming different personas online, and think critically about what it means to be genuine in an online context.

**Standards Alignment –**

**Common Core:**

grades 9-10: RI.4, RI.10, W.6, SL.1a, SL.1b, SL.1c, SL.1d, SL.3, SL.4, SL.5, L.4a, L.6

ISTE: 1a-d, 2a, 2d, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 4d, 5a-c

**Key Vocabulary –**

**represent:** to depict yourself to others as being a certain way or having particular characteristics

**persona:** an image and personality that you show

**anonymous:** without a name or other information that identifies who you are

**inhibited:** careful or restrained about your actions or impulses

**Materials and Preparation**

Preview the video, “Ramon’s Story – Being Real Online,” and prepare to show it to students.

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/videos/ramons-story-being-real-online>

**LESSON PLAN**

**Warm-up**

*(5 minutes)*

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary terms **represent** and **persona**.

**ASK:*****Does the way you represent yourself online differ from the way you represent yourself offline? What is similar and what is different about your online and offline selves?***

**DISCUSS** the idea that the Internet gives people the chance to express different parts of themselves and even try on different personas. In the lesson, they will explore how they represent themselves online, and all the possibilities, risks, and benefits involved in experimenting with their online selves.

**Being “Real” or “Fake” Online**

*(20 minutes)*

**DIVIDE** students into groups of four or five.

**ASK:*****What do you think it means to be “real” or “fake”?***

**ASK: *Do you think it’s easier for people to be “fake” online than in real life? Why or why not?***

**EXPLAIN** to students that they will be watching a video in which a group of teens explores these questions.

**SHOW** students the video “Ramon’s Story – Being Real Online.”

[**https://www.commonsense.org/education/videos/ramons-story-being-real-online**](https://www.commonsense.org/education/videos/ramons-story-being-real-online)

**ASK:**

***Ramon talks about how some people exaggerate or seem very different online than in person. How do you explain these differences between their online and in-person personas?***

Guide students to draw on points that Ramon has made. He thinks some people want to seem tougher or cooler than they are offline so they will be more accepted.

***Are there risks for creating an online presence that is very different than the offline one? Are there benefits?***

Guide students to identify risks, such as setting up false expectations for others, spurring violence, and depending on online communication to the detriment of in-person communication. Benefits are that you can enter interest-driven communities that you couldn’t before, you can take time to compose your thoughts before responding to others, and you can experiment with the opinions you put forth and how you present yourself.

***What are other reasons people might feel they can act in ways online that they wouldn’t offline?***

Sample responses:

• You have time to plan what you want to say, and you can shape how you want to come across to others.

• You can’t see other people’s faces, so you don’t see their reactions.

• Because you can’t see other people, you might behave differently based on your assumptions about who you think they are and what they’re like online.

**DEFINE** the Key Vocabulary terms **anonymous** and **inhibited**.

**DISCUSS** the idea that people may feel less inhibited when they are online. This is especially true if they are anonymous or are interacting with people who don’t know them offline. (Even when they know the people, it’s easy for people to feel anonymous when they are online, because they are alone with their computer or phone.) People might feel free to invent new personas online, or they might change particular parts of themselves.

**ENCOURAGE** students to think of the risks and benefits involved in being anonymous or feeling less inhibited online. Have them identify types of behavior this might encourage, and urge them to provide concrete examples.

**ASK:**

***Are there any benefits to being anonymous or being less inhibited online?***

Some benefits include:

• You might feel freer to say things you’re really thinking.

• You might be able to try things out that you can’t in the offline world.

• You can highlight or emphasize the parts of yourself that you feel good about.

***Are there risks involved with being anonymous or less inhibited online?***

Some risks include:

• You are not accountable for your actions, so you might do or say things you wouldn’t offline.

• You might behave in ways that are unsafe or harmful to yourself.

• You might behave in ways that are disrespectful or harmful to others.

**INTRODUCE** students to the idea that it may be possible to “stay real,” even when they are representing themselves in different ways online, by staying true to who they are and to how they would treat themselves and others in the offline world.

**INSTRUCT** students to work in groups to come up with a set of advice for “Staying Real Online.” Examples include:

• Present yourself in a way that’s positive and not harmful to you.

• Treat people the way you would treat them in person.

• Don’t say or do things that harm other people or betray their trust.

• Never get into a relationship that is not safe.

• Avoid getting involved in a community that is not appropriate.

**INVITE** groups to share their lists with the class.

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