

TITLE OF ACTIVITY: WHO AM I?: IDENTITY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AGE

FILM: *ANGST*

Overview

In the film *Angst*, teenagers describe some of the challenges of living in a social media-fueled world. On the one hand, social media apps offer connectedness and an inroad for communication; yet, the constant access to the lives of peers has undoubtedly sowed anxiety. Social media encourages the presentation of a constructed self on the internet and, in turn, a steady stream of seemingly perfect lives. Moreover, increased online exposure comes with certain risks, including cyberbullying and harassment. What effects does this media consumption and interactions have on the mental health of young people?

In this “image-making” activity adapted from the work of Nancy King in *Playing Their Part: Language and Learning in the Classroom*, participants create representations of their “online” selves with paint or clay. Then, they will engage in a reflective dialogue about the identities that they present online.

Aims

Through an art-making activity, viewers of the film will represent their online presentation of themselves; moreover, participants will reflect on the positive and more adverse effects of having an online presence.

Materials

- ★ Chart paper or board for writing
- ★ Finger paints or moldable clay
- ★ Paper plates
- ★ Wet wipes for cleaning hands
- ★ Paper for painting and journaling

Getting Started

To begin, explain that participants will be discussing their online identities, or how they choose to present themselves within internet and social media platforms.

Importantly, the facilitator of the activity should note that each person has their own level of comfort in disclosing personal information. Each activity should begin with an encouragement to participate in those activities at their own comfort level. Participants should only share voluntarily.

Activities

- ★ Open up an initial conversation about participants' relationship to social media. Ask participants to turn to someone next to them and discuss the following question for a few minutes: *Do you have an online presence? What apps do you use?*
- ★ Take some time to debrief their paired conversations. On a piece of chart paper or board, write: *"An Online Presence is..."* Get the group's responses, jotting them down on the paper:
 - What forms does an online presence take?
 - What purposes does it serve?
 - What are some of the risks of being online, such as cyberbullying?
- ★ Tell participants that they will be doing an activity called "image-making." Image-making is a process of self-discovery through painting or sculpting. Distribute several palettes of finger paints on paper plates and paper. If using clay, hand out a small portion to each participant.
- ★ Let all persons know that image-making is not meant to create something "right" or "perfect." The most important part is engaging in the process of making and thus uncovering ideas and feelings.
- ★ Now, ask the participants to spend 4-5 minutes painting with their fingers or molding from clay a response to the following prompt: *"Who are you online?"* Some participants may not wish to use their fingers in paint or clay, for a variety of reasons. In these cases, provide gloves and or markers to use.
- ★ Tell the participants to stop their making process. Gently reinforce the idea that there are no "correct" responses to this prompt. If needed, pass out wet wipes for cleaning hands.
- ★ Prompt participants to examine their creations and jot down a few words or phrases on a piece of paper that immediately come to mind when looking at them.
- ★ Next, depending on the comfort level of the group, ask participants to share their creations, words, and underlying thinking. They can share with their initial dialogue partner or in small groups. Or, you can ask each participant in the entire group to share one-by-one.
- ★ After giving each person some time to share, ask students to journal about the image-making process:
 - What is your online presence?
 - How does it converge or diverge with your own sense of self?
 - How do people interact with your online presence? What are some of the upsides and



downsides of these interactions?

- How does social media impact your sense of who you are?

Wrapping Up

If time permits, ask each person to read-aloud a line or two from their journaling. Affirm each response, thanking each participant for sharing. Finally, ask participants to share any final reactions to the process of image-making: *What, if anything, emerged from them during the process? Were there any similarities among the images? Do we see any shared impacts of social media on our sense of self?*

Extensions

Facilitators can ask participants to undergo another round of image-making in response to a prompt: *"What effect does being online have on me?"* They would again go through a process of fingerpainting or sculpting with clay for five minutes. Once they finish, they can repeat writing down words or phrases associated with their creations.

Appendix

Works Cited

King, Nancy. *Playing their part: Language and learning in the classroom*. Heinemann Drama, 1996.