Lesson Plan: The Importance (or Not) of Popularity

By Andrea Aust

Featured Resources

Above the Noise: **High School Popularity: Does It Matter?**

The Lowdown: **How Much Does the President's Popularity Really Matter?**

Opening Quick-Write Prompt

What are some words that you would use to describe someone who is popular? How much does popularity play a role at your school?

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.

Objectives

- Students will analyze the research presented about two types of popularity and how being popular as a teen affects people later in life.

- Students will evaluate the pros and cons of popularity, and reflect on their views about it.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

How does being popular in high school affect life after graduation?

There are two types of popularity: likability and status. Likability is more important in elementary school, while status begins reigning supreme in adolescence. But being likable or having status during the teen years can be indicators of problems or successes post-graduation. Teens who have status in high school more often have a harder time with romantic, professional and social relationships later as adults. Conversely, being likable and having strong friendships as a teen is an indicator of higher self-worth, and career happiness and success in the following decade.

Key Vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the activity, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found here.

Word	Simple definition
Continuity theory (n.)	The theory that older adults maintain similar activities, behaviors and social patterns as they did in their earlier years *According to the **continuity theory**, someone who is likable as a teen will continue to have strong friendships as an adult.*
Fixation (n.)	A deep interest or obsession *Her **fixation** on being popular caused her to engage in risky behaviors, like drinking and smoking, to seem cool.*
Pseudo-mature (adj.)	Adult-like *Pseudo-mature behaviors may include drinking alcohol, substance abuse or sexual activity.*
Relational aggression (n.)	The harming of others through damaging their relationships *Instances of gossiping, cyber bullying or exclusion are examples of **relational aggression**.*
Social competence (n.)	The social, emotional, intellectual and behavioral skills needed to be successful in society *Children that are **socially competent** are more likely to have healthy friendships.*

Investigate

- Discuss the quick-write prompt as a class. You may ask a couple of students to share how they view popularity at your school. How is popularity looked at within circles of friends?

- Have students watch the Above the Noise episode as a class.
    - **Stop the video at 1:00 and ask:** Based on what you just heard, how would you describe "status" in your own words?
    - **Stop at 1:16 and ask:** How would you summarize "likability"?
    - **Stop at 1:40:** Review how and why popularity changes in adolescence.
    - **Stop at 3:02 and ask:** What are some of the problems that people who were popular in high school (had status) have later in life? Why?

- o **Stop at 3:45 and ask:** What have studies found about people who were likable and had strong friendships as teens? Why do researchers think this is the case?
  - o **Stop at 4:07 and ask:** What were the limitations to the study?

- Ask students what they thought was most interesting in the Above the Noise episode. Did the research presented in the video about status and likability surprise them?

- Have students individually or in pairs read The Lowdown post about presidential popularity. In small groups, have students discuss both kinds of popularity--status and likability--as it relates to presidential candidates and the position of President of the United States.

- **Transition to the Make and Share:** Tell students they will have a chance to share their thoughts about popularity in the comments section of The Lowdown. The first time they comment, students must sign in to Disqus, a free discussion app embedded in The Lowdown.
  - o To sign in to Disqus, click the "Comments" button at the bottom of The Lowdown.
  - o Click the blue "Get Started" button in the gray "Welcome to Disqus" box.
  - o Students will need to enter a username. We recommend first name, last initial.
  - o After signing in for the first time, students must verify their email address before commenting. A verification email will appear in their inbox once they sign in to Disqus.

Make and Share

- Individually, students post responses in the comments section answering the following question: ***Has your view on popularity, and the differences between likability and status, changed how you would approach friendships?***
  - o Responses should be supported by evidence from the Above the Noise episode, The Lowdown post, or other research on the topic. (See source list)
  - o Encourage students to reply to other comments after posting their response. Remind them to use evidence to support their claims and respectful language when replying to others.

Assessment/Reflection

- Students reflect on what they have learned through a class discussion or in writing:
  - o What is your biggest takeaway from the content presented in the video and article?

o   What was it like to post your responses publically and reply to other posts? What did you learn from other students? What do you hope they learned from you? What will you do the next time you post a comment in response to The Lowdown?

Circle chats, small-group discussions and think-pair-share provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.

Extension/Homework

Write/speak locally: Students turn their response to this issue into a letter, short speech or presentation, then research ways to make their voice heard in their community. (Example: Speaking during the public comment section of a city council meeting, posting in an online forum, etc.) For a list of how to contact local officials in your area, check out KQED Learning's Local Election Toolkit.

Common Core Standards and NGSS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
NGSS.SEP.7	Engaging in argument from evidence
NGSS.SEP.8	Obtaining, evaluating and communicating information