

The stories within us

Diversity Workshop for children 6-9 years
Guidelines for the workshop leader

Oulu European Capital of Culture 2026

Intro

What goals are set for the workshop?

- Cultural competence, communication skills, encouragement of self-expression
- Practicing making a choice
- Expressing empathy
- Basic understanding of equality and promotion of anti-racism

What needs to be prepared in advance?

Pick a book/visit the library/spend a few minutes thinking about your own story that you can share with your class. All you need to do is to tell a story from your life that you find important. You can also invite an artist or a writer to tell their story. Find in your bookshelf an art book by a multicultural artist or a story book that deals with diversity. Alternatively make a visit to a local library/ art exhibition and select a work that will act as an inspiration. The point of this exercise is to communicate an example of sharing your own story, be vulnerable, be open, be proud of one's achievements and be confident to share just who you are.

Please see the end of this document for the list of local and international resources.

Make sure you have the legal guardians' permission to share the child's artwork/have her or his face visible on photographs.

Prepare art materials: there are two options for artworks that can be made. The detailed instructions are below.

Before you start, it is a good idea to arrange the classroom in a non-hierarchical way, where everyone including the teachers is sitting in a circle around one large table or a long line of desks put together.

The presentation:

Slide 2 Context

The national Anti-Racism Week takes place in Finland on week 12 due to 21 March being the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. A variety of activities will be organized in Oulu during the week. The events will especially discuss respecting other people and intervening in racism. The artworks made during this workshop will be exhibited as part of the program.

Slide 3 Safer space guidelines

Please read the principles of a safer space out loud to the class. Do you all agree on those? Is there anything to add?

Slide 4 Diversity

Please give a brief introduction into the topic of diversity.

Diversity means that people have different characteristics or roles with which they build their own identity. Characteristics can be related to whether you see yourself as a boy or a girl or a non-binary, where do you live, what you look like, what languages do you speak, how old you are and so on.

These factors that constitute diversity are present in the same person at the same time.

Sometimes, unfortunately, people are treated differently and at times badly because of these factors. That is called discrimination. When the discrimination happens for example because of your appearance, way of speaking, or other aspects of your racial identity, it is called racial discrimination or racism.

That is, a person can experience discrimination for several different reasons, in which case the experiences of discrimination accumulate, and then the chances of being marginalized or left out of the group increase. It is important that we notice these types of citations and feelings, and prevent them from happening. Everyone makes mistakes and can hurt another person unintentionally, but the important thing is to be kind, not assume anything about another person, and be willing to learn if you don't know something.

Stop while reading/speaking to ask the children, for example: "What does this word mean?" "Do you understand what this means? What do you think about this?"

Slide 5 story time

Please have your class sit comfortably and share a story.

All you need to do is to tell a story from your life that you find important, a funny moment of your childhood or a recipe for your favorite dish. Can you share a photograph or a slideshow?

You can also invite an artist or a writer to tell their story. Alternatively make a visit to a local library/ art exhibition and select a book or an artwork that will act as an inspiration. Ask the librarian for advice or select a book from the list below.

The point of this exercise is to communicate an example of sharing your own story, be vulnerable, be open, be proud of your achievements and be confident to share just who you are.

Slide 6 Personal experiences

Let your students be inspired by what they just heard and saw and briefly tell about their own experiences. This is a short exercise to get them to focus on what they would like to communicate to the world. You can come back to this slide later and have it open as an inspiration for making the artworks.

Slide 7 Exercise break

At this point, before we go into making the artwork, it's a good moment for a physical exercise to shake up our body and open our mind.

This is a good time to prepare for the next art of the workshop where we will be making art.

Slide 8 Options for the artwork

Please select in advance an option that feels right for you and your class.

Option 1 Self-portrait made of small parts

Materials:

Paper

Pencils/Markers

Scissors

Glue

Beads, glitter, dry leaves, small shapes, shape cutter, yarn, fabric, tinfoil, colour paper

Optionally:

Old Magazines, shapes cut out of colour paper.

The process: Offer a piece of paper. Ask the child to create a portrait of themselves, how do they see themselves? It can be a face or a full-figure portrait. If the child is struggling to draw - offer pre-cut shapes or images to make a collage from.

Offer small parts like natural material, leaves, beads, pieces of fabric. Have the child select materials that respond to their character. Ask them to imagine if parts of their body were made of something else than blood and bones, what would it be?

What materials and textures feel good to touch? What can represent their traits, character. What materials tell different stories? These can be glued on top of the portrait or around it. Add your name and think of a title for the artwork.

The portrait is ready!

Option 2 Collective portrait drawing:

Materials:

A large round or rectangular table where all the participants can fit. Alternatively, you can sit on the floor in a circle, with each drawing paper secured to a board.

The process: Participants sit around one large table. Each participant receives a sheet of paper, A4 or A3 size, and a selection of simple drawing tools like pencils and markers. In this exercise we look to the left side and each time we move anticlockwise. We draw the person on our left, each time the features of the same person on a different portrait. First is to draw the head. Once the head is drawn, give the paper to the person next to you anticlockwise. Then, on the paper you received, draw the eyes of the same friend on your left. Then exchange the paper again. Continue passing the paper along this way, adding elements, until the collective portrait is ready.

Bonus - add color, add a superpower, a hat, a pet, etc. The last person can come up with a title for the artwork.

The portrait doesn't need to go back to the person who started to draw it. These are now the collective works of your group. Place them on the table or the wall for all the class to see, admire and reflect on.

Slide 9 & 10 Reflections and feedback

Place all the completed artworks for everyone to see. Encourage the students to comment and ask questions about the works and think about what they have in common.

Thank you!

Resources:

Books:

Change sings, Amanda Gorman, 2021

How Kids Live Around the World, Pavla Hanackova, 2021

Julián Is a Mermaid, Jessica Love, 2018

Places to visit in Oulu:

Oulu library <https://www.ouka.fi/kirjasto>

Oulu art museum <https://ouluntaidemuseo.fi/>

Contemporary art galleries in Oulu <https://artgalleries.fi/oulu/>

Online resources:

<https://www.kulttuuriakaikille.fi/moninaisuus>

<https://www.poc-lukupiiri.fi/post/muutos-soi-amanda-gorman>

About the workshop author:

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Anastasia Artemeva is a visual artist based in Helsinki, Finland. Artemeva works in techniques of immersive installation, photography and textiles. These processes are also used in her workshops.

She graduated from Limerick School of Art and Design (Ireland) with a BA in 2012, and from Aalto University (Finland) in 2016. One of the main focuses of her work is prisoners' rights and the project Prison Outside. Anastasia is a certified Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development Dialogue Cards workshop facilitator.

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