

Lesson 4.1: The Power of Normal

Compelling Question:

How does analyzing systems equip us to resist inequities and promote justice?

Content Objectives

I can:

- Define hegemony, normalization, and implicit bias.
- Analyze a short film through the lens of hegemony.

Purpose

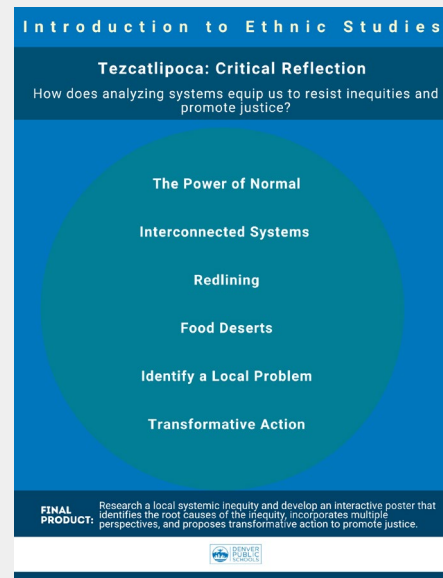
In this lesson, you will reflect on the concept of power. First, you explore normalization and implicit bias in society by evaluating your personal experiences and then by analyzing a short vignette. Next, you will define hegemony and explore the process through which inequitable systems of power and oppression become widely accepted. Finally, you will apply your learnings to a short film, drawing connections to the real world. You will reflect on how hegemony influences and molds societal norms and write an imaginative journal entry that considers what it would take to challenge and dismantle systems of power.

Lesson Steps

- **Reflect on the power of “normal”:** Read “Those Who Don’t” by Sandra Cisneros and discuss the two perspectives that are highlighted in this vignette. Then, using the [Normalization and Power](#) handout, reflect on what it means for something to be “normal,” who decides what is normal, and how normalization can be powerful and dangerous.
- **Define hegemony:** Define hegemony and explore how it creates systems of power and legitimize harmful norms using the [How Hegemony Works](#) graphic organizer. Then analyze the short film, “[Zero](#)” by Christopher Kezeloz through the lens of hegemony.
- **Write to reflect:** Write a journal entry imagining a sequel to the short film and what it would take for Zero to truly dismantle the systems of power in his world.

Explore More

- video: “[What is Hegemony?](#)”



Lesson Overview

Pacing

Lesson Timing: 60 minutes

Summary

In this lesson, students reflect on the concept of power. First, students explore normalization and implicit bias in society by evaluating your personal experiences and then by analyzing a short vignette. Next, they define hegemony and explore the process through which inequitable systems of power and oppression become widely accepted. Finally, they apply their learnings to a short film, drawing connections to the real world. Students reflect on how hegemony influences and molds societal norms and write an imaginative journal entry that considers what it would take to challenge and dismantle systems of power.

Colorado Standards: [Social Studies](#) & Interdisciplinary

SS.HS.1.1.2: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

SS.HS.1.2.h: Analyze and evaluate ideas critical to the understanding of American history.

E1.C1.P12: Present text evidence to support analysis and reflection.

Language Objectives: [9th Grade DPS English Language Competencies](#)

Narrative Writing

- Develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences
- Incorporate narrative techniques to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

Literary Analysis

- Comprehend and analyze key ideas and details in literary texts

Argumentative Writing

- Present text evidence to support analysis and reflection.

Speaking and Listening

- Prepare for discussion by evaluating and collecting information on material under study.

Assessment

Performance Task

- Journal write reflection

Formative

- “During reading” annotation
- “After reading” reflection question
- Discussion checkpoint

Teacher Guide

Lesson 4.1: The Power of Normal Tezcatlipoca: Critical Reflection



Lesson Resources

For Students	For Teachers	Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Normalization and Power handout• "Zero" by Christopher Kezelos• How Hegemony Works handout	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lesson 4.1 Slide Deck• Normalization and Power Teacher Key• How Hegemony Works Teacher Key	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Journals

Teacher Preparation

- **Step 1: Add to the word wall.** Students will engage with three new terms in this lesson: normalization, implicit bias, and hegemony. Consider adding these terms to your class word wall.
- **Step 2: Prewatch "Zero."** Watch the short film, "Zero" by Christopher Kezelos. Read the teacher tip on content warnings and decide how you want to introduce the short film with students.
- **Step 3: Facilitating journaling.** In this unit, students will regularly use their journals to reflect on the larger themes and ideas in each lesson. Make sure that students are all set up with journals, so they can complete step 3.

Lesson Steps in Detail

Step 1: Reflect on the power of "normal"

(20 min)

Purpose: In this lesson, students reflect on the concept of power. First, they read a vignette and participate in a discussion about the notion of "normal." They explore who gets to decide its meaning and the potentially harmful consequences of normalizing certain behaviors and standards.

You might say: *Today we begin our fourth unit of ethnic studies. Throughout this unit, we will learn about systems of power and the importance of disrupting harmful systems in order to create a more equitable standard of living in America. We will explore the ways in which systems of power are normalized and reinforced by authorities and by everyday community members. We will start by tapping into your prior knowledge. Then we will use new vocabulary terms to analyze a short story and have a discussion. Finally, we will watch a short film and design potential sequels in writing journals.*

[Slide 2] Engage student's prior knowledge.

- Distribute the Normalization and Power handout.
- Model examples of the second prompt in a way that connects teacher with student
 - Ex: *In my family, it is normal for my dad to grill for the whole family on Father's day, but in other families, Father's day is about letting the father figure relax.*
- Invite students to share their examples of normal.

[Slide 3] Define normalization and implicit bias.

- Share definitions of normalization and implicit bias.
 - Normalization is a process that makes something feel more normal or regular within a specific community.
 - Implicit bias is a negative attitude of which one is not consciously aware, against a specific social group.
- Share a real world example for each term.

[Slide 4] Facilitate a shared reading and annotation.

- Review the new vocabulary and annotation symbols by reading the directions out loud
- First reading: Read the story out loud to the students once without stopping for accurate fluency and appropriate processing time while students annotate
- Second reading: Allow a student volunteer to read the story out loud while the class checks their annotations

[Slide 5] Invite students to respond to the “after reading” prompt.

- Prompt students to respond to the “after reading” question in the **Normalization and Power** handout using text evidence to support inferential thinking.
- Have a few volunteers share their responses to begin the reflective discussion.
- Use the following questions to guide class discussion:
 - *In this story, what does the narrator think of as normalized?*
 - *What role does skin color play in shaping character feelings and experiences of normalcy?*
 - *Why does what’s normal give us a sense of safety? To what extent does it make sense that this would be a hard cycle to break? To what extent could this feeling of safety become harmful on a larger societal scale?*

[Slide 6] Facilitate a discussion.

- Invite students to Think-Pair-Share on the following question:
 - *In the United States, who decides what is normal and what is not normal? Who or what reinforces normalization?*

Teacher Tip: Maximizing discussion engagement

To maximize student leadership and engagement, have students call on each other during the discussion. If you want to increase accountability, track on the board which pairs have already participated as a way to silently encourage all pairs to share.

Consider developing an anchor chart with sentence stems that students can reference throughout the year. Refer to TeachThought’s [list of sentence stems](#) for inspiration. Read the Medium article “[Ping-Pong and Volleyball](#)” about the benefits of avoiding ‘ping pong’ discussions.

Step 2: Define hegemony

(25 min)

Purpose: Students will define hegemony and explore the process through which inequitable systems of power and oppression become widely accepted. They will apply their learnings to a short film, drawing connections to the real world.

You might say: *We have explored the power that ‘normal’ holds in society and why it is so difficult to disrupt what is normalized in human practices and mindsets. Now we will learn about a vocabulary term that can help us continue our conversation about systems of power: hegemony. We will apply this term to our prior knowledge as practice before using it to describe the systems of power in a short film, titled “Zero” by Christopher Kezeloz.*

[Slides 7-8] Define hegemony.

- Distribute the **How Hegemony Works** handout and review the directions for part one.
- Share the definition of hegemony and encourage students to write and share the real world examples they generate for this word. Use the flowchart to help students understand how the term hegemony relates to the earlier vocabulary terms.
- Use the following questions to guide examples:
 - *What are some of the bigger historical examples of hegemony that you can think of?*
 - *Where do we still see hegemony in current day America?*
 - *Are there any hegemonies you can think of that feel normal to you here in Denver?*

[Slide 9] Watch the short film “Zero” in its entirety.

- Review part two of the **How Hegemony Works** handout with students, explaining what students should write in each segment of the graphic organizer. Emphasize the importance of paraphrasing details from the film as examples.
- Play the short film “[Zero](#)” while students complete the graphic organizer.
 - Turn on subtitles to support student understanding.

Teacher Tip: Content Warnings

Though the film “Zero” is fictional and not visually realistic, it does have instances of bias motivated violence and hate crimes. It might be worthwhile to voice a content warning before showing the film. [This University of Michigan resource](#) explores what content warnings are (also known as ‘trigger warnings’), when to use them, and what to say.

Step 3: Write to Reflect

(15 min)

Purpose: Students will reflect on how hegemony influences and molds societal norms and consider what it would take to challenge and dismantle systems of power.

You might say: *Now we will explore aspects of the film’s systems of power by charting the details that are and are not realistic. This way, we can see how the film connects to our real world and develop a sequel that challenges hegemony with realistic methods.*

[Slide 10] Facilitate a pre-writing activity.

- In pairs, prompt students to create and fill out a t-chart in their writing journals that lists realistic and unrealistic elements of Zero’s society.
 - Encourage students to think about how the film ends when considering what is realistic and unrealistic about Zero’s society.
- Invite students up to the board to transcribe and explain what they wrote in their T-charts. Time allowing, fill more details in the ‘realistic’ category of the chart so that students have robust options for their upcoming writing.

[Slide 11] Write to reflect.

- In writing journals, invite students to design a sequel in which they explore what it would take for Zero to truly dismantle the systems of power in his world.
- Share the following writing tips with students:
 - Think of the short film’s end as the beginning of your sequel.
 - Build upon existing plot details to show cause-and-effect.
 - Consider characterization when shaping motive and behavior.
 - Use your imagination!

Teacher Tip: Getting students ‘unstuck’ during writing

Writing on demand can be challenging for students, even after a pre-writing exercise. Use the article [“12 Techniques for Getting Un-stuck”](#) as a resource to make suggestions when you see a student is stuck during writing time.

[Slide 12] Invite students to share their journal entries.

- Have students trade their journals with their partner, read their partners’ stories, and leave a thoughtful comment.
- Comments should do one of the following:
 - Compliment a specific aspect of the narrative idea
 - Connect the sequel with the real world
 - Observe and explain how the hegemony is effectively dismantled
- For summative assessment evaluation, students can turn in journals for teacher review after the comments are completed.