

# ERC 2: Myths about Sexual Violence

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Lesson plan connections: ELA 4

Time spent on each component of this lesson depends on allotted time for varying classrooms.

All activities can be shortened or extended based on student response and teacher facilitation.

## Aim/Rationale

Students will explore and challenge myths surrounding sexual violence by identifying, exploring, and discussing their own misconceptions.

### Trigger Warning

Sexual and gendered violence.

#### Competencies:

- 1) *Reflects on ethical questions*
  - *Students will reflect upon ethical questions concerning myths and stereotypes about sexual violence*
  - *Students will organise their thinking in order to develop and substantiate their points of views through individual reflection and group discussion*
- 2) *Engages in dialogue*
  - *Students will explore moral issues surrounding sexual violence*

# Lesson

## Materials

1. Large sheets of paper and markers

## Hook [15 min]

### Group Activity

#### Myths: Survivors, Perpetrators and Locations of Sexual Assaults

1. Divide class into three groups and provide each with a sheet of paper and markers.
  - The first group will draw what they think a survivor of sexual assault looks like. They can also write key words on the sheet.
  - The second group will draw what they think a perpetrator of sexual assault looks like. They can also write key words on the sheet.
  - The third group will draw where they imagine a sexual assault might take place. They can also write key words on the sheet. (Disclaimer needed)
2. Each group will be expected to report back afterward. Images should include details like time of day, neighbourhood, scenery, clothing and anything else groups feel is necessary to convey their message.

## Development/Teaching Methods

1. Each group will share what they drew and the discussion they had (10 minutes per group max).
2. The teacher will facilitate discussion based on what students come up with. All students participate in the discussion.

### Question ideas for “Survivor” group:

- If they drew a woman... Why did you draw a woman? Can a man be sexually assaulted? **Myth: men can't be sexually assaulted. Myth: men always want sex**
- If they drew a person with a specific ethnicity... Why did you choose that ethnicity?
- If it is unclear, ask what they think the racial/ethnic identity of the survivor is.
- If they say that sexual assault happens in all racial and ethnic groups, ask them how they think the race or ethnicity of a survivor could affect support and services they receive.
- If the students draw a genderless stick figure, a question mark, or some other unidentifiable mark in order to state that anyone can be a survivor, you can agree with them and say that, in other classes, people drew.... Ask them why they think those students might have done that and where those myths come from.
- For example, mention obstacles and barriers that aboriginal women or immigrants of ethnic minorities might face.

- What is the ability of the person they drew? Do you think people with disabilities can be survivors of sexual assault? **Myth: people with disabilities are undesirable; no one wants to have sex with them therefore no one would sexually assault them.** People with disabilities are sexual beings, we need to deconstruct the notion that sexual assault is about desire; rather, it is about someone choosing to abuse their power and disrespect another person. This often happens with caretakers who abuse people under their care.
- Ask the students: Why did you choose to dress the survivor in those clothes? What do they indicate about the survivor? **Myth: someone can ‘ask’ to be sexually assaulted because of the way they dress (‘she dressed like - she wanted it’)**

Question ideas for “Perpetrator” group:

- If they drew a man...Why did you draw a man? Can women be perpetrators of sexual assault? Can sexual assault occur in same-sex relationships?
- What do you think of the idea that men always want sex and cannot control their sexual urges?
- Why did you choose to dress the perpetrator in those clothes? What do they indicate about them (e.g. social class, age, etc.)?
- If they drew someone of a certain ethnicity... Why did you draw a person of that ethnic origin? Do you think stereotypes exist that certain people are more violent? Where do these stereotypes come from (the news, movies, etc.)? Are these stereotypes true? What is a stereotype?
- If the perpetrator appears to be a stranger in a trench coat or appears to be threatening, mention that most survivors know or at least are acquainted with the perpetrator who assaulted them - friends, friends of friends, family, partners, etc.
- Is it more difficult to accept that perpetrators of sexual assault are more likely to be people we know than a stranger? How come? Where does the “stranger in an alley” concept come from?

Question ideas for “Locations of Sexual Assault” group:

- Why did you choose this location and/or time of day?
- What “kind of neighbourhood” would this place be in? (If they say “sketchy” or “ghetto”, ask them what stereotypes exist surrounding poor neighbourhoods.
- For example, do they think that these “kinds” of neighbourhoods or communities are more violent?
- If they draw a dark alley, at night, remind them that most sexual assaults occur in familiar places, such as a party, a car, or a person’s home.

3. Present the working definition of sexual assault: any unwanted act of a sexual nature. The class can discuss any ways to adapt their drawings.
4. If there is time, have students create their own definitions otherwise provide them. Ensure that everyone understands that stereotypes are generalisations/assumptions made about whole groups of people based on single encounters or minimal information.

## Culmination

Individual activity [10 minutes]

Students will write a reflection about this last discussion. Students may choose any myth(s) discussed and reflect on how their understanding has/has not changed.

They may also discuss: Where do they think they come from? What are some harmful consequences these myths cause? Who is responsible to challenge these beliefs? Who is responsible for preventing sexual assault?

## Additional activity

### Discussion

- Why do you think sexual violence happens?
- What leads to someone committing sexual assault against another person?
- Deconstruct the myth that the perpetrator cannot control their sexual desire.
- Discuss how people can always control their desire and stop their actions; sexual assault is not about desire, it's about power, and it's about choosing to abuse one's power and choosing to disrespect someone else's choices and boundaries.

## Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson:

- Students will have gained an awareness of how myths about sexual violence can affect individuals and society.
- Students will have challenged notions surrounding myths.
- Students will have a better understanding of how these myths permeate their lives and inform their decisions/the way they think.
- Students will be able to concretely discuss and define the concept of sexual assault.
- Students will have broadened their understanding of survivors, perpetrators, and locations of sexual assault.

## Assessment idea

1. Students can receive a mark for completion of the reflection in the culmination. This writing can also serve as a formal assessment.
2. The teacher will informally assess student participation in drawing. Students can be asked to mark each other on their participation in their group.
3. Students can be encouraged to research and write a report on affirmative consent.



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