

The *Different and the Same*  
Video Series



**VIDEO EIGHT:**

# I'm American, Too



DEFINITIONS OF BEING AMERICAN

## KEY CONCEPTS

These key concepts are identified to help in your instructional planning. Student understanding of these concepts and themes is developed through activities, viewing the video, and discussions.

**Foreign**—of a country or identity other than one’s own. Also, strange, not familiar.

Cat-a-lion: *“Well, suppose you’re talking to this guy, see, and you think he’s an American like you, see, but he’s really a **foreigner**.”*

**American**—someone or something from America.

Francine: *“There’s no such thing as ‘most **American**.’ My mom says everyone in America is equal.”* (Young children may confuse communities, states, and countries as their sense of geography is often not well developed.)

**Cooperate**—work together toward a common goal or purpose.

Francine: *“My mom says America is made up lots of different kinds of people who **cooperate**.”*

**Different/Same**—unlike, not the same/similar or resembling.

Puppets’ song: *“I used to think Americans were just like me. But now I’ve learned things differently, Whatever their noses or language or name, Wherever they come from, Whenever they came, However they got here, We now proclaim, Americans are **different and the same**.”*

# I’m American, Too

*Theme: Definitions of Being American*

## Program Summary

While working on a school project about **foreign** countries, Cat-a-lion tells Audrey that Francine isn’t an **American** because she wasn’t born in this country. Audrey agrees Francine probably isn’t **American** but thinks it’s because Francine doesn’t “look like the rest of us.” Francine insists she is **American** regardless of what the others think.

Mrs. Sanchez, the social-studies teacher, enters and joins the discussion. When she speaks alternately in Spanish and in English, she confuses Cat-a-lion, who wonders whether she is an **American**. The group discusses other **Americans** they know who can speak a language other than English or whose families have come from other countries. Audrey wonders how to tell whether a person is an **American** if nationality doesn’t depend on the way people speak, look, or where they came from.

To help answer the question, Mrs. Sanchez assigns her students a team project with “**Americans**” as the theme. They decide to do a video on what **Americans** look like. Mrs. Sanchez asks what difference “looks” make. Cat-a-lion says he thinks it is important to know whether someone is a **foreigner**, and he again tells Francine that he doesn’t think she’s an **American**. Francine angrily tells Cat-a-lion, Audrey, and Arthur that she knows “what it’s like to have people be mean to you because they think you’re not **American**.”

Mrs. Sanchez agrees, saying that it makes her angry when people do that to her. She tells Francine she is proud of her for speaking up. Audrey, Cat-a-lion, and Arthur finally realize how unfair they have been and how they have hurt Francine’s feelings. They each apologize.

Working **cooperatively**, the students make a video that shows how **Americans**, in their diversity of languages, looks, and traditions, are **different and the same**.

# Preparing to Present the Video

For many years, America was called a “melting pot,” suggesting that people from different cultures relinquished their old ways and created—or became a part of—a common culture. More recently, we have begun to speak of a “quilt” or “salad bowl”—a collection of different items that retain their identity while creating a satisfying whole. Do you think these images are accurate or do you have another image?

- How important is a common culture and/or a common language? Should all Americans speak English?
- Should all Americans be able to communicate, at least minimally, in another language?
- To what extent can Americans retain an individual culture while participating in a common one?
- What do you think is important for a successful, welcoming, and well-functioning American society?

**What does it mean when we say that somebody is “a real American” or “as American as apple pie”?**

- Are there degrees of being “American”? Can one person be more American than another? Why or why not?
- What characteristics do you consider typically American? Where did these concepts originate?

**The puppets decide that Americans can be different and the same—both at the same time. Understanding such seemingly contradictory concepts is not easy for young children or, for that matter, for adults.**

- Are there people in your life with whom you share both important similarities and differences?
- Do you play different roles in your own life?

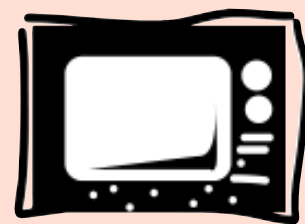
**What do you think happens to children who must adapt to a different culture when they go to school?**

- Why is it difficult to live in “two worlds”?
- In what ways can schools and teachers help students whose home culture is different from that at school?

*If you have not already previewed the video, do so now.*

## Purpose

*To prepare yourself for discussing with students the sensitive topics of this video, reflect on the following questions and, when possible, discuss them with your colleagues. This may help clarify your own feelings, help you understand others’ perspectives, and thus better prepare you to help students fully understand the issues presented.*



**Purpose**

To introduce students to the key concepts of this video, choose the activities that will work best for your class, modifying them if needed. Activities may be interchanged within the series and between the Introductory and Extension Activities sections.

**Materials**

Chart or map to record nations

“My World” worksheets with diagram



My Street \_\_\_\_\_  
 My Neighborhood \_\_\_\_\_  
 My City \_\_\_\_\_  
 My State \_\_\_\_\_  
 My Country \_\_\_\_\_  
 My Continent \_\_\_\_\_  
 My Planet \_\_\_\_\_

Chart paper  
 and markers  
 Chalkboard

# Introductory Activities

## Heritages

Ask the students if their family (parents, grandparents or other relatives) came to America from another country or area. List the countries on a chalkboard or chart or mark them on a world map. Do the children know when and why their ancestors came to America? If they do not know, it might be interesting for them to ask their parents. List the different responses on the chalkboard or chart. (Some young children may tell about different communities or states, as their concepts of “countries” may not be well developed. African-American students may not be able to specify a country in Africa where their ancestors lived.)

## My World



To help younger students distinguish among different geographical and governmental entities, have them complete this series of sentences:

I live on [street] in [neighborhood] .  
 [Neighborhood] is in [city] . [City] is in [state] . [State] is in the **United States of America**. America is part of **North America**. **North America** is a continent of the **Earth**. Or show the relationship graphically by having the students draw themselves in expanding concentric circles like the diagram show at left.

## Families

Have the students interview each other about their families. From where did they come? Have they always lived in this community? If not, what do they remember about the earlier place where they lived? Did their parents or grandparents live in another place? What have they told the children about that place?

## Americans



Ask the students to name all the things they think of when they hear the term “American.” If they have difficulty, suggest looking around the classroom to locate items that represent something American. List their ideas for future use on a chart or the chalkboard—or make a cognitive web of the words. Then ask them to define what it means to be an American. (Be aware that younger children may not be clear about nations and countries. Refer back to this work as an Extension Activity to help children clarify the concept.)

# Introductory Questions

What do you think of when you hear the word “country”? (Some children may think of a farm or they may name specific nations or cities. Group the terms into categories to illustrate the two different meanings of the word.)

- What is the name of the country where you live?

Are all the people who live in America Americans?

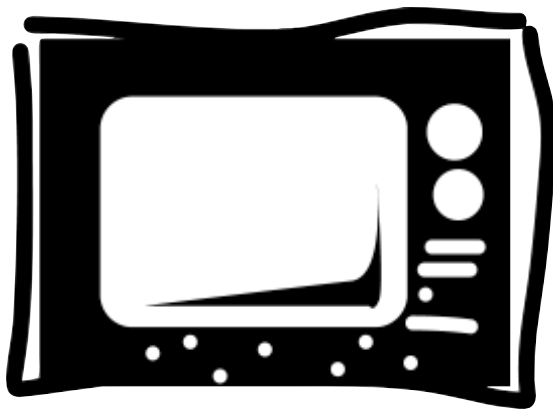
- Why do people come from other countries to live in America?
- Do Americans live in other countries?
- If you lived in another country, what might you be called?  
[A foreigner]

## *What to look for in the video:*

As you watch the video, see how the puppets look for answers to these questions. Are Americans “different and the same”?

## Show the Video

*It is recommended that the students’ first viewing be uninterrupted.*



## **Purpose**

*Before students view the video, you may want to ask some of these or similar questions to activate prior knowledge and predict events.*

*“What to look for in the video” can help students focus their viewing.*



**Purpose**

These are suggested questions to initiate discussion after viewing the video. Other productive questions may arise in the course of the discussion.



Here are places to stop the tape for discussion during viewing. (We recommend that, for most students, the first viewing be uninterrupted.) The questions can help students probe concepts in greater depth. The time is given in minutes and seconds from the start of the program.

**Pause Tape:**



Francine says: "No, not the same. Equal!"

## Follow-up Questions

Audrey, Cat-a-lion, and Arthur thought Francine wasn't an American. Why?

- What could you have told them to change their minds? How do you think Francine felt?

Cat-a-lion thought Mrs. Sanchez wasn't an American because she wasn't speaking English. Was this true?

- Why do you think Mrs. Sanchez spoke in English and Spanish?
- Do you know someone who can speak a language other than English?

What did Cat-a-lion, Arthur, and Audrey do when they realized they were wrong?

When the puppets all decided at the end that Americans can be "different and the same," what did they mean?

- How did they cooperate to make the video showing all kinds of Americans?

## Interactive Viewing Questions

What does Francine mean? What is the difference between "same" and "equal"?

- How can people—or things—be equal but not the same? Can you think of some examples? (Give a few examples to help with this difficult concept:  $2 + 5$  and  $3 + 4$ ; houses that have the same number of rooms but are built in different styles or of different materials; similar containers with different physical characteristics.)

Do you agree with Francine that "There's no such thing as 'most American.'" Why or why not?

- Do you know Americans who came from other countries long ago and not so long ago?
- People from Chile, Peru, Guatemala, and Mexico sometimes call themselves "Americans." Do you know why? (Show students on a globe or a map where these countries are located.)

**What do they mean when they say “Me”?**

- How do you think Francine is feeling now?

**Ask the children to look around the room. Does everyone look the same?**

- Can you tell whether people are American by the way they look or speak?

**What does Audrey mean?**

- How do you think Mrs. Sanchez feels?

**How many of you can speak a language or know some words in a language other than English? What languages are they?**

- How many of you have parents or grandparents who can speak a language other than English?
- Can people who aren't Americans speak English? How do they learn it?

**Francine said people were being mean to her. Why?**

- Do you agree with her that everybody's family, except Native Americans, came from another country?

**Mrs. Sanchez said something made her furious recently. What was it?**

**How do you think Audrey, Arthur, and Cat-a-lion are feeling?**

- What should they do next?
- What advice would you give them?

## Pause Tape:



Mrs. Sanchez asks:  
*“What do you think Americans look like?”* Arthur, Audrey, and Cat-a-lion respond: *“Me.”*



Audrey says: *“So I guess you can be American no matter what language you speak.”*



Mrs. Sanchez says:  
*“I’m proud of you for speaking up. It must have been very hard to do.”*

**Purpose**

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*These activities extend student understanding of the concepts of the video. You may modify them for use with your students or use activities from other sections of this guide.*

**Materials**

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Music or recordings of the songs

Chart from "Americans"  
(Introductory Activity)

Magazines, catalogues, etc., for clipping  
Scissors  
Paste

## Extension Activities

### *Different and the Same*

Have students draw pictures (or bring in photographs) of themselves for a bulletin board display showing that Americans are "different and the same."

### *America Sings*

The puppets sang a song to help tell their story in the video. Have students write their own song (or poem or rap) about being an American. It may be an original tune or new lyrics to a familiar song. Or have the students listen to and sing patriotic songs from a variety of cultures. Most will be familiar with such American songs as "The Star Spangled Banner," "America the Beautiful," or "America." You can expand their awareness by including other anthems like "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and songs from other countries. Involve parents and community people in presenting these songs. Ask students to think about the lyrics: What did the words mean to the composers? What do they mean to the students?



### *What's an American?*

Refer to the chart of American terms and the definition of an American that the children wrote before viewing the tape. Ask whether they would make any changes in their definition after seeing the video. Have them revise the definition and copy it in their journals.

### *Languages*

hello!

Help the children learn how to say "hello" in several languages (for instance, Spanish, Japanese, Navajo, Hebrew, Italian, French, Swahili, Russian). Parents, other teachers, and community residents can help you come up with the correct expressions—and their pronunciation. See **Books for Students** for other videos, especially "Long Distance."

### *Field Trips*

What ethnic neighborhoods exist in your community? Take a field trip to these communities and visit shops, factories, schools, houses of religion, restaurants, etc.

### *Collage*



Using magazines, catalogues and other sources, have the children work in pairs or cooperative groups to find pictures of the different racial and ethnic people who are American. Make a collage of the images—perhaps in the shape of a map of the United States.

## Rice for Food

Rice is prepared in many different ways in different cultures, but it's always the same grain. Have the children make, or bring in, rice dishes from various cultures. How are they different? How are they the same? (Refer to the book, *Everybody Cooks Rice*, in the **Books for Students** section.)



## Ongoing Activities

### *Different and the Same People Journals*

Have students add Mrs. Sanchez to their journals and any additional information they have learned about the other characters. They might also record their definition of "American."

### *Class Philosophy*

Help the children create a belief statement about the common beliefs and values that are a part of the American culture.

### *Different and the Same Puppets*

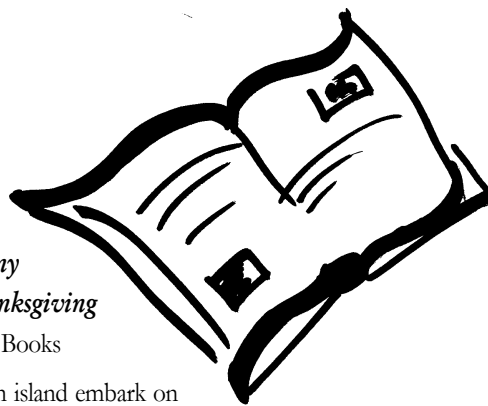
If students have made their own puppets, have them role play scenarios related to the many different races and nationalities that make up America.

### **Purpose**

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*These ongoing activities are cumulative in nature with students returning to them as they view each video. They provide continuity to their increasing understanding of the themes and concepts of the series as a whole.*

## Books for Students



Bunting, Eve (1988). *How Many Days to America: A Thanksgiving Story*. New York: Clarion Books

Refugees from a Caribbean island embark on a dangerous boat trip to America where they have a special reason to celebrate Thanksgiving.

Dooley, Norah (1991). *Everybody Cooks Rice*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books

A child is sent to find a younger brother at dinner time and is introduced to a variety of cultures through encountering the many ways rice is prepared in the different households visited.

*Books from this list can be read to or by students before and after viewing to expand understanding of the concepts and to encourage appreciation of a wide range of cultures and communities.*

*Continued from page 95...*

Heller, Linda (1982). *The Castle on Hester Street*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society

Julie's grandfather's fanciful version of how he and his wife came to America is very different from her grandmother's realistic accounts of the difficulties they faced. Although the grandmother's account is clearly the true one, grandfather's eternal optimism is thoroughly enjoyable.

Kuklin, Susan (1992). *How My Family Lives in America*. New York: Maxwell Macmillan International

African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic-American children describe their families' cultural traditions through food, dance, clothing, and education.

Levine, Ellen (1989). *I Hate English*. New York: Scholastic Inc.

When her family moves to New York from Hong Kong, Mei Mei has a hard time adjusting to school and wishes she didn't have to learn the alien sounds of English.

Surat, Michele Maria (1989). *Angel Child, Dragon Child*. New York: Scholastic Inc.

Nguyen Hoa has just arrived in the United States from Vietnam and worries about her mother whom she has left behind; at the same time, she is taunted about her clothes by her American classmates.



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