Visible & invisible differences
An activity that helps learners to think about how they see others and how others see them. It makes connections between what we see and identity.

KS2 | 60 Mins | Group

KEY QUESTION: Do we have things in common and things that are different from each other? Could someone else describe your identity?

Background
A circle game activity that allows learners to focus on the ways they are similar and different from others in the class, or with the link learners, and to realize which differences we can see, and which are hidden.

By encouraging learners to look deeper into each other’s identities, you will hopefully help them explore the idea ‘you can’t tell a book by its cover’. Discussing the hidden similarities and differences should break down stereotypes, helping learners explore the idea that working out who someone is and what they are like is a lot more difficult than just looking at them.

Activity

1. Ask learners to sit in a pair with someone they know less well in the class.

2. Ask them to find 3 visible similarities between them (e.g. both have two ears, both wearing shoes, both have brown eyes) and their partner, then repeat for visible differences.

3. Next ask the learners to find 3 invisible similarities (e.g. both have 2 sisters) then repeat for invisible differences (different favourite subject would be an easy one, but learners will hopefully think of their own ideas).

The second part of this activity encourages learners to ask questions to find out about their partner and discussions can take many interesting and challenging directions.

4. Ask the whole group: Do you have things in common and things that are different from each other? You may find some pairs wish to share their findings or you could ask them to work in 4’s to share their findings. Did you find out anything that surprised you about your partner or anyone else in the class? Lead a discussion to draw out some of the things that were new information, and discuss why people were surprised.
5. Could someone else describe your identity for you? Discuss the idea that we ‘label’ people and sometimes decide who they are / what they like without knowing, and whether this is ok. When different members of the group give their opinions, a good way to involve everyone in the discussion is Fist to Five (see box below), helping them decide how much they agree with what has been said. Ask them to find something they have in common with others in the group and something that makes them unique/individual from the group.

**FIST TO FIVE** is a silent way for everyone to show their opinion about a statement or issue. Using the range from a clenched fist to all five fingers spread wide you can show how much you disagree or agree with something, and it allows everyone to participate, even the shy, and takes less time than a discussion.

Make sure that learners do it based on what they think, without being influenced by their peers. Then volunteers can explain their point of view, or the teacher could nominate individuals, as they’ve had the chance to think about their view already.

6. Ask the whole group: What would it be like if everyone was the same?

7. It might be a good idea to ask learners to write some individual reflections about the discussion, and they could use the titles: What we did / What I learned / What I will remember, to help them structure their thoughts, but encourage them to write what they really think, as there are no right answers.

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY**

The class or group could make a list of the types of things that have been found out, and the categories they fall into, e.g. likes, dislikes, family, friends, religion etc.