



High School

National FFA Organization

Lesson HS.11

UNDERSTANDING BELIEFS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS

Unit. Stage One of Development—ME

Problem Area. Who Am I as a Leader.

Precepts. **L1:** Nurture a spiritual belief system.

National Standards. NSS-C.9-12.2 — Foundations of the Political System —
What values and principles are basic to American constitutional democracy.



Student Learning Objectives. As a result of this lesson, the student will ...

- 1 Define the terms belief and belief system.
- 2 Identify personal beliefs and belief system.
- 3 Identify influencers of beliefs and belief systems.



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Time. Instruction time for this lesson: 50 minutes.



Resources

Madigan, Timothy J. and Clifford, William K. The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays.
New York, New York. Prometheus Books, 1999.

McElroy, John H. American Beliefs: What Keeps a Big Country and a Diverse People United. Chicago, Illinois. Ivan R. Dee Publishing, 1999.

National FFA Essential Learning materials. 2003.



Tools, Equipment, and Supplies

- ✓ HS.11.AS.A—one per student
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Overhead projector
- ✓ Transparencies
- ✓ Paper
- ✓ Pencils
- ✓ Phone books
- ✓ Writing surface



Key Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson and appear in bold italics:

- ▶ Belief
- ▶ Belief system



Interest Approach



Today we are going to begin by closing our eyes and envisioning some of the values and principles we all have developed from an early age. With all eyes closed, think of some of the lessons you learned as a toddler. Picture some of the discussions you had with parents or other family members at this age.

Pause for approximately 10 seconds.



Now think to a time in early elementary school. Picture some of the life lessons shared by your teacher or principal.

Pause for approximately 10 seconds.



Think about a time when you might have been at a place of spiritual worship or other religious activity. What specific memories can you remember that might shape the way you act today.

Pause for approximately 10 seconds.





Picture in your mind more recent events. How have you drawn upon some of these earlier principles, discussions with your parents, lessons from teachers or religious figures, to help shape the decisions you made.

Pause for about 10 seconds.



Now, with your eyes open, listen to the following story.

Provide each student with HS.11.AS.A.



The Smiths were a young couple struggling to make ends meet. They lived in a very modest rented apartment in the poorer section of a metropolitan area. Teri worked at a fast food restaurant, and David was a custodian at a community church. Together their income was just enough to pay for their rent and monthly essentials but never enough to put any money into savings.



One day Teri became ill and could no longer work. She was hospitalized for an extended period of time and soon their medical bills were more than David could pay with his current job. Teri was diagnosed with an illness that would slowly take her life. Some prescription drugs could prolong her life but only one drug was known to sometimes send this illness into remission. This particular drug was very expensive, and David's insurance would not cover the purchase of it. Many times David had tried to negotiate with the pharmacist and the drug company to purchase the drug at a discounted rate or to set up a deferred payment plan. Neither the drug company nor pharmacist would compromise. David continued to watch Teri slowly slip away.



One day he decided he could no longer accept the fate that awaited Teri. So one night, David went to the pharmacy after closing and took the drug that just might reverse the effects of the disease that was taking Teri's life. Unfortunately, David got caught.

Use the Me-you-us Moment. As an option, you might have your students pretend they are a jury and be forced to pass down a verdict. This activity should take about fifteen to twenty minutes.



Remembering all the things you were told as a child and young adult, how would you answer the following questions:

Was it wrong for David to have stolen the drug.
Based on what you were taught, what would you have done.
Should David be punished for this crime. If so, why or why not.



SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1.. Define the terms belief and belief system.

Ask students to share their definition of a belief and belief system. Challenge the students to be open and honest as they share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.



In your head only, give the definition of a belief and belief system.

Pause for ten seconds.



Turn to a neighbor and share your thoughts.

Ask for volunteers to share their thoughts with the class. This activity should take about five minutes. Continue by providing information on the definition of beliefs and belief systems by using the writing surface or HS.11.TM.A. This should take about five minutes.



125 years ago, a man named William K. Clifford defined belief and belief systems in a different way. Let's see if what he had to say makes sense for us today.

I. Belief

- A. Acceptance of something as truth
- B. A belief is generally formed around the following ethical premises
- C. Use these three premises to test your beliefs
 - 1. Inquire—sufficient evidence to support your belief
 - 2. Authority—assumption that a belief, shared by another, is spoken in truth
 - 3. Inference—comparing what we might not know to what we have previously experienced

II. Belief system

- A. A structure or organization that helps form and encourage your beliefs
- B. A structure or organization that helps process and support your beliefs



Objective 2. Identify personal beliefs and belief system.

III. Activity to help identify belief and belief system.

After the students finish capturing the previous information in their notes, ask them to think about the following questions and write their responses in their notebooks. Encourage them to reflect and be genuine. This activity should take about 10–15 minutes.



What beliefs have you inquired evidence to support, trusted the authority about and compared against past experiences. Think about this for a moment then write your responses in your notes.

Pause for about 30 seconds or until most students finish writing.



Think for a moment about the belief system that helped form and support the belief you just wrote down. Write in your notes the structure or organization that supports your belief.

Pause for about 30 seconds or until most students finish writing. Have the students use the Hieroglyphics Moment. When finished ask for a volunteer to share their picture with the class and explain its meaning.



What picture or icon could you draw that will help you remember these beliefs and belief system. Take the next couple of minutes to draw your picture or icons. Be prepared to share.

Objective 3. Identify influencers of beliefs and belief systems.

IV. Activity to help identify influencers of beliefs and belief system.

Use the Eye Witness News Moment to interview and identify potential influencers of our beliefs and belief systems. You can take all students suggestions and craft an unduplicated list on the writing surface. This activity should take about 10 minutes.



All throughout this lesson you were asked to think back and reflect on your beliefs. It is important to know where these beliefs come from. So, for the next activity you will interview each other to determine what influences your belief systems. After each pair or group of three have finished interviewing each other, one of you will come to the front and record your answers on the writing surface.



Review/Summary

Explain to the students that each one of them has a belief window within them that is constantly being challenged, affirmed, or receptive of something new. Ask them to write down something in their belief window that has challenged, affirmed or was new for them today. Take about five minutes.



►Extended Classroom Activity:

Have the students create a personal belief statement that is a reflection of their belief system. Have them share this with their family or spiritual figurehead. An alternative application would be to get a phone book and make a list of the various religious/spiritual organizations located in the students' community.

►FFA Activity:

Have the students use the belief window scenario used in the lesson review and apply it to the last FFA activity they attended. How were their beliefs challenged, affirmed or receptive to something new.

►SAE Activity:

Have the students agree or disagree with the following statements based upon their beliefs and belief system. Remind them to remember the three ethical premises they should base their beliefs on. The questions should be crafted around the students SAE projects. Have them state and support their beliefs. Questions might include: Farmers need sub sides and price sup ports to survive. Biotechnology does not pose a threat to humans or the environment. Organic food is healthier than traditionally grown food.

✓ Evaluation

HS.11.Assess

Answers to Assessment:

True or False

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. True

Short Answer

Check answers against the students *Eye Witness News Moment* interviews list.



BELIEFS AND BELIEF SYSTEMS

► True or False

Instructions: Read each statement and decide if it is true or false. Write the word “true” or “false” in the blank beside the statement.

- _____ 1. A belief is the acceptance of something as truth.
- _____ 2. A belief is generally formed around five ethical premises.
- _____ 3. The ethical premise of inference is comparing what we might not know to what we have previously experienced.
- _____ 4. The ethical premise of authority assumes that a belief, shared by another, is spoken in truth.
- _____ 5. A belief system is a structure or organization that helps form, encourage, process and support your beliefs.

► Short Answer

Provide information needed to answer the following question.

List five ways our belief systems might be influenced.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.



BELIEF

- ◆ **Acceptance of something as truth**
- ◆ **A belief is generally formed around the following ethical premises**
- ◆ **Use these three premises to test your beliefs**
 - ➔ **Inquire—sufficient evidence to support your belief**
 - ➔ **Authority—assumption that a belief, shared by another, is spoken in truth**
 - ➔ **Inference—comparing what we might not know to what we have previously experienced**

BELIEF SYSTEM

- ◆ **A structure or organization that helps form and encourage your beliefs**
- ◆ **A structure or organization that helps process and support your beliefs**

Madigan, Timothy J. and Clifford, William K. The Ethics of Belief and Other Essays. New York, New York. Prometheus Books, 1999.



BELIEF SCENARIO

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