

Me, Myself and Them

Program:	Mortified
Year Level:	Year 4 to Year 8
Curriculum Study Areas:	English; The Arts; Humanities and Social Sciences; Health and Physical Education (Personal Development)
Themes/Topics:	Adolescence; Families; Self and Relationships; Genre; Change; Growth and Development; Narrative Structure; Film Language; Humour and Satire; Stereotypes; Bullying
Description:	This sequence of learning experiences draws upon <i>Mortified</i> , Episode 12 to explore what it means to be true to yourself, and belonging.
Resources:	Episode 12: Being Me Worksheet 2: Story Ladder

Lesson plan:

3.1 The Rules of Belonging – How Do I Know?

As a class, discuss and list different groups to which children belong, for example, families, friendship groups, class at school, basketball team, tennis club, lifesaving club, scouts, drama class, chess club.

Beside each group list ways of behaving, dressing, speaking in a particular way and so on that can indicate membership of that group. Discuss the ways in which members of these groups know what the rules are so they can belong.

Are there groups we belong to or know about that have unwritten rules? Discuss as a class.

Watch the opening sequence of *Mortified*, **Episode 12, Being Me**.

Clip 6: Episode 12, *Secret Girls Club*

Taylor is watching Brittany and her friends chatting and having fun as they put up a poster about a school disco. Taylor feels alienated from these girls and questions whether there is a secret girls club with rules that she doesn't understand. She considers whether the way to wear your hair, your socks and other clothing are part of some secret codes that she doesn't understand.

After watching this sequence, discuss as a class how Taylor feels about her inability to fit in and relate to other girls and how she recognises that she doesn't really understand exactly what is required to belong to this group.

Hector's response indicates that he thinks this is a 'girl' thing. Discuss this response with the class, is this true or not?

Discuss ways in which clothing and accessories can be used to exclude people from groups, in both overt and covert ways.

Taylor asks Hector what her clothes say about her. He tells her, '*They say you go to school. They don't say anything about you. You're you and you're wearing a school uniform.*' As a class, discuss the message Hector is giving Taylor. Ask students to think about whether they agree or disagree with this message.

The poster advertising the school disco includes the line 'dress to impress'. Ask students to suggest what this might mean.

Have students work in friendship groups to create a collage using magazine pictures that shows what they think the phrase 'dress to impress' might mean. Compare each group's collage and discuss why there might be similarities and differences between the collages.

Ask students to imagine they are members of a secret club. Have each student write a set of rules for the club as an entry in their journal. Ask students to think about ways to ensure their rules do not discriminate against other people.

Have students share the rules they have written and discuss with them the difficulties of creating rules that are inclusive.

Encourage students to share feelings about times when they have felt left out or excluded. Develop a class code of behaviour that helps to eliminate such feelings amongst class members.

3.2 I am ... Myself

View *Mortified* Episode 12.

Taylor hears about St. Joan of Arc at school and conducts some online research where she discovers more about St. Joan's refusal to conform and the way she fought for her beliefs. When Taylor 'meets' St. Joan of Arc, she asks her why she did the things she did. St. Joan replies 'To be myself, that's all I can be.'

Ask students to conduct their own individual research to find out more about St. Joan of Arc. Encourage them to share their findings with a small group of friends, then in friendship groups have them create a dramatic presentation to share findings with the class.

Throughout the series Taylor struggles with her identity. Ask students to give some examples of when this has been evident, for example, when she attempts to have a DNA test in Episode 1 to find out who her 'real' parents might be.

In Episode 12 Taylor is unhappy about many aspects of her identity, particularly her birth names. Soon after the shopping expeditions with her family members Taylor 'meets up' with St. Joan of Arc again and they discuss and laugh about Taylor's names. Taylor refers to her surname, Fry, as a family name and then maintains that she is nothing like her family. As a class discuss:

1. Why does Taylor reject her family in this way?
2. Is this rejection a part of being a pre-teen or are there other reasons?
3. Why do many pre-teens and teenagers reject their families?
4. What are some positive ways of showing you are becoming less dependent on your families but they are still important to you for love, support etc.?

Assist each student to create a silhouette of his or her face and have them write words or phrases, drawing symbols to tell or show others what it means 'To be myself; that's all I can be'.

When Taylor tells her mother that she won't be attending the disco, her mother objects, telling her it is a 'rite of passage'. Her mother recalls her own Year 6 disco and the purple flares that she wore. She suggests they go shopping together as a special mother-daughter moment. As a class, discuss:

1. What is a 'rite of passage'?
2. What 'rites of passage' have occurred in your lives?
3. Are any 'rites of passage' a part of your school lives?
4. How do you think Taylor feels about the idea of shopping with her mother? Why does she feel like this?

Have students imagine they have become Taylor on the shopping trip with her mother. Share the feelings they think Taylor experiences when trying on clothing. Discuss why Taylor's self-confidence plummets when Loretta and Brittany, who appear to be the perfect mother and daughter, arrive at the clothing shop.

Ask students to select one of the shopping expeditions Taylor experiences with her family members. Ask them to imagine they are Taylor and to write an entry in their journals describing one of these shopping experiences.

As a class, discuss how for Taylor, a big part of growing up seems to be her growing self-consciousness which creates much of the angst and comedy in this story. For example, she feels mildly mortified when Leon sees her trying to imitate the girls after reading the disco poster. She also feels 'mortified' by her 'style' faux pas, when she suggests to Brittany and her friends that she might wear her jeans and T-shirt to the Year 6 disco. Have students recall and discuss some of the other ways in which Taylor feels mortified in this episode. Have students use the [Worksheet 2: Story Ladder](#) to create a story ladder showing these moments.

Use the story ladder to guide discussion of the following questions:

1. Does Taylor feel 'mortified' as frequently in Episode 12 as earlier episodes?
2. How deeply was Taylor 'mortified' during Episode 1 about her parents?
3. Do you think she feels 'mortified' to the same level during Episode 12?
4. In what ways do you think Taylor has changed since Episode 1?
5. When Taylor sees her mother dancing, she is 'mortified'. However, she seems to only be mildly 'mortified'. Why do you think she now copes with her mother dancing in front of all her school friends?

Ask students to write an entry in their journals about a time when they felt mildly 'mortified'.

3.3 More Rules

Discuss with the class the scene in which St. Joan of Arc tells Taylor how she changed her name and became herself. Taylor's response to this information is to attempt to change her name.

1. Why is she unable to do this?
2. Why does Taylor find the rules stupid?
3. What does Hector mean when he says 'they are there to protect us – from ourselves.' Do you agree with his explanation of why such rules exist?
4. Why do adults and children often have different opinions on whether rules are necessary?

Make a class list of rules that relate to being under the age of 18. Explain why each of these rules exists.

Hold a class debate about whether one of the rules on your list is needed to protect children from themselves.

3.4 Just Accept It!

Throughout Episode 12 Hector tries to reassure Taylor that she is fine as she is, including her name. When she chats to Mystic Marj at the shopping centre, she is given a similar message. As a class, discuss why students think Taylor finds it so hard to accept herself as she is.

View the clip where Taylor vacillates between accepting herself and losing her confidence.

Clip 7: Episode 12, *The Present*

After watching the clip, have students in small groups map the ups and downs of Taylor's self-esteem and belief in herself. Share ideas as a class, then ask students to write an entry in their journals to explain why this happens, and what sort of things interferes with Taylor's developing self-acceptance. How do Taylor's teacher and St. Joan of Arc help her to feel more positive about herself?

At the end of the episode, Hector shows that he is a true friend and Taylor is able to help Brittany at the disco. Have students work in pairs to compare Taylor's relationships with Hector and with Brittany. Ask students to consider the following questions:

1. What are the surprising aspects of the interactions Taylor has with Brittany at the disco?
2. As a class, discuss what Hector does as they head off to the disco that shows he is a true friend who really understands Taylor well.
3. What evidence is there during the disco that Taylor does not truly appreciate what a good friend Hector is to her?



Assist students to plan a class party or disco in which everybody will be made welcome. They could even take the expected norms and subvert them, jointly creating a new 'in' style that everyone can dress up to. This could be as funny and as crazy as they wish as long as it doesn't hurt anyone's feelings. Create posters and highlight the expected dress code.

Episode 12 closes with Taylor and her school friends dancing 'The Nutbush'. Teach the class how to dance 'The Nutbush' and some other dances. Practice these dances and when students are confident have them work in pairs to create a new dance that would suit the theme of their disco/class party above. Select the appropriate music and perform the dance for the class. Encourage creativity and positive reinforcement of one another's efforts.

Create a play-list for the disco/class party, including music suitable for dancing 'The Nutbush' and any other dances students have learned. Encourage students to also include music that will enable them to dance the new dances they have created.