

Lesson Plan: The Character Creator's Wheel of Diversity

Materials Needed:

- Large sheet of paper or poster board
- Colored pens, markers, or pencils
- A second sheet of paper for writing
- Access to an online spinner tool (like wheelofnames.com) or small slips of paper and a bowl to draw from

1. Learning Objectives (The Goal for Today)

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Identify the different internal and external dimensions of diversity using Loden's Wheel.
- Create your own personal Wheel of Diversity to better understand your unique identity.
- Apply the concepts of the Wheel to design a rich, multi-dimensional fictional character for a story.

2. Alignment with Learning Standards (The "Why")

This lesson connects to key learning areas such as:

- **Language Arts:** Developing complex and believable characters for creative writing.
- **Social Studies & Civics:** Understanding personal identity, perspective, and the diverse components that make up individuals and communities.
- **Critical Thinking:** Analyzing how different aspects of a person's life and identity intersect and influence their experiences.

Lesson Activities

Part 1: The Warm-Up - What Makes a Person? (5 minutes)

Let's start with a quick thought experiment. Think of your favorite character from a book or movie. Now, quickly list 5-7 things that make them who they are. Don't just list what they look like! Think about:

- Where are they from? (Geographic Location)
- What is their family like? (Family Status)
- What do they do for a living or what is their goal? (Work/Aspiration)
- What is a major experience they had? (Past Experiences)
- What are their personal beliefs? (Personal Philosophy)

This shows us that interesting characters are made of many layers, just like real people.

Part 2: Introducing Loden's Wheel of Diversity (10 minutes)

Loden's Wheel is a tool to help us see all those different layers that make a person unique. It's divided into two main parts:

1. **Internal Dimensions:** These are things at the very center of the wheel. They are aspects of ourselves that we have very little control over, like age, ethnicity, and physical ability. They are a core part of who we are.
2. **External Dimensions:** These are things in the outer ring of the wheel. They are aspects that we have more control over and that can change over time, like our hobbies, our education, our job, our geographic location, and our relationships.

Your Task: Take the large sheet of paper. In the center, draw a small circle and label it "Internal." Around that, draw a much larger circle and label it "External."

Part 3: Activity - Mapping Your Own Wheel (15 minutes)

Now, let's make this personal. Using your two-circle diagram, you are going to create your own Wheel of Diversity. This is for you, so be as honest as you feel comfortable.

- **In the Center Circle (Internal):** Write down words or draw symbols that represent your core identity. Examples: Your age, your gender, your race/ethnicity.
- **In the Outer Circle (External):** This is where you can get really creative! Fill this space with all the things that make you, YOU. What are your hobbies? What kind of education do you have (homeschool!)? What are your spiritual beliefs, if any? What is your family like? Where have you lived? Do you like video games, art, science? Fill it up!

Reflection Question: Look at your completed wheel. How do the things in your outer circle connect to the things in your inner circle? For example, does your age (internal) affect your hobbies (external)?

Part 4: The Main Event - The Character Creator! (20 minutes)

This is where you become an author. We will use the *idea* of the Wheel to build a brand-new, totally original character from scratch. The goal is to make them feel real and interesting.

Step 1: Set up your Character Creator Spinner.

Use an online spinner tool (like wheelofnames.com) or write these on slips of paper to draw from a bowl. Create a spinner/bowl for **each** category below.

- **Internal Trait Spinner:** Add these options: Teenager, Elderly Person, Child, Middle-Aged Adult.
- **External Situation Spinner:** Add these options: Has just moved to a new city, Is starting a new job, Has lost something very important, Is an inventor working on a new machine, Is training for a major competition.
- **Geographic Location Spinner:** Add these options: A futuristic space station, A small village in the mountains, A bustling underground city, A magical forest, A desert marketplace.

Step 2: Spin the Wheels!

Spin each of your three wheels (or draw one slip from each category) to get the basic building blocks for your character. For example, you might get: **Elderly Person + Has just moved to a new city + In a futuristic space station.**

Step 3: Build the Character's Wheel.

On a new sheet of paper, use your "spin" results as the starting point. Now, fill in the rest of their "Wheel of Diversity" just like you did for yourself. Ask yourself questions to flesh them out:

- **Given their age and situation, what is their income level?** (Are they a wealthy retiree? A struggling elder?)

- **What are their hobbies on a space station?** (Zero-gravity knitting? Studying alien plants?)
- **What was their previous life experience?** (Why did they move? Were they a famous pilot? A quiet librarian?)
- **What is their family status?** (Did they leave family behind? Are they trying to reconnect with someone?)
- **What is their educational background?** (Are they self-taught? Did they attend a famous academy?)

Write a short paragraph (5-7 sentences) describing your character. Give them a name and explain how all these different parts of their identity make them interesting. Focus on how the different dimensions (age, location, experience) influence each other.

5. Assessment (Checking Our Work)

Your "assessment" is the character you created! We will look at it together and check for the following:

- **Completeness:** Did you include a variety of dimensions (both internal and external) in the character's profile?
- **Connection:** Did you explain how the different aspects of the character's identity connect and affect each other? (e.g., "Because she is an elderly person who just moved, she feels isolated in the futuristic city...")
- **Creativity:** How unique and believable is your character? Does their Wheel of Diversity make them feel like a real, complex person?

6. Differentiation and Extension (Going Further)

- **For Support:** If you're stuck creating a character, start with just one dimension. For example, start with "a baker" (work experience) and then ask questions to build the rest of their wheel. What kind of person becomes a baker? Where do they live?
- **For an Extra Challenge:** Write the first page of a story starring the character you created. Your first page should introduce the character and their main problem, making sure to show (not just tell!) at least three different dimensions from their Wheel of Diversity.