

# **Speaking Up For Yourselves and Others**

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## **A Thematic Unit for ESL Learners**

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# Speaking Up For Yourself and Others

## A Thematic Unit

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### Table of Contents

Checklist for Learning	2
Opening Story- The Perfume Counter	4
Playing with Language	5
Check Your Understanding / Talk it Over: What Would You Do?	6
Reading: Miguel's Story	7
Playing With Language / Talk it Over	8
Think About it: Compare and Contrast	9
Speaking Up For Yourself and Others/Extension Activities	10
More Reading: Jerfhy's Story / Talk it Over	11
More Reading: Azad's Story	12
Working with Words / Check your Understanding	13
Think About It	14
Tell Your Story	15
What Can We Do about Discrimination and Hate?	16
Checklist for Learning	17
Looking Back	18
Thematic Unit Fieldtest Form	19

**Speaking Up For Yourself and Others:**  
Responding to Prejudice and Discrimination

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**CHECKLIST FOR LEARNING**

**In this unit you will be able to:**

- Talk about problems with prejudice
  - Speak up about prejudice
  - Write a complaint letter
  - Read short stories
  - Write about something that happened in the past
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**Opening Story:****The Perfume Counter****Warm-up**

Take a few minutes to think about these questions. Discuss them with your classmates.

1. Do you feel comfortable speaking English when you go shopping?
2. Where do you usually speak English?
3. Do you ever have problems when you speak English in public?

**1) Monica's story**

A few months ago I went to Macy's. I went inside and went to a woman who was working there. I asked for a perfume and said what perfume I wanted. The problem was that I couldn't pronounce the name. She talked to me very meanly and said, "What did you say? I can't understand you." I tried again and she was still very mean. I told her again and she just smiled very ironically. I told her, "You work here with these brands. I think you understand." So she said, "Oh, I'm sorry, honey. I just understand people who really speak English."

I left the store. She really hurt my feelings. I try to speak English and people are really mean.

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**Playing With Language:**

Complete Monica's story by filling in the blanks with the correct form of the verb in the past tense.

A few months ago I \_\_\_\_\_ to Macy's. I \_\_\_\_\_ inside and \_\_\_\_\_ to a woman who  
(go) (go) (go)  
\_\_\_\_\_ working there. I \_\_\_\_\_ for a perfume and \_\_\_\_\_ what perfume I  
(be) (ask) (say)  
\_\_\_\_\_. The problem \_\_\_\_\_ that I \_\_\_\_\_ not pronounce the name. She  
(want) (be) (can)  
\_\_\_\_\_ to me very meanly and \_\_\_\_\_, "What did you say? I can't understand  
(talk) (say)  
you." I \_\_\_\_\_ again and she \_\_\_\_\_ still very mean. I \_\_\_\_\_ her  
(try) (be) (tell)  
again and she just \_\_\_\_\_ very ironically. I \_\_\_\_\_ her, "You work here with  
(smile) (tell)  
these brands. I think you understand." So she \_\_\_\_\_, "Oh, I'm sorry, honey. I just  
(say)  
understand people who really speak English."  
  
I \_\_\_\_\_ the store. She really \_\_\_\_\_ my feelings. I try to speak English and  
(leave) (hurt)  
people are really mean.

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**Check Your Understanding**

Answer the following questions. Use past tense verbs in your answer.

1. Where did Monica go?

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2. What did she ask for?

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3. What was the problem she had?

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4. How did the woman talk to Monica?

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5. What did Monica do when the woman was mean?

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6. How did Monica feel?

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**Talk it Over: What would you do?**

If this happened to you, what would you do? Check the actions you would take.

Discuss your answers with your group.

leave the store  complain to the manager

try to speak to the clerk again  write a letter to complain

write down the name of the perfume  take your business to  
another store

your own idea: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Journal topic:**

Did you ever have an experience like Monica? What happened? What did you do?

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**Reading: Warm-up**

Think about the following questions for a few minutes. Discuss them with your classmates.

1. Did you ever see someone act rude to another person?  
What did you do?
2. Did you ever speak up for another person? Why or why not?  
What happened?

## 2) Miguel's Story

One time I was in the bank, waiting for my turn. This was in my country, Peru. A white man came into the bank and he wanted to take the place of an indigenous man who was waiting for his turn too. The white man started to call him bad names, like "Indio", and "undeveloped man", things like that. I felt angry listening to that man, and I told him, "Leave him alone. You don't have any right to treat him like that." The other people behind me began to help me and help the indigenous man. The white man was embarrassed and left the bank without his money or anything.

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**Playing With Language**

Number the sentences from 1 to 7 in the correct order.

\_\_\_\_\_ The white man was embarrassed and left the bank without his money or anything.

\_\_\_\_\_ The white man started to call him bad names, like “Indio” and “undeveloped man”.

\_\_\_\_\_ One time I was in the bank, waiting for my turn.

\_\_\_\_\_ I felt angry listening to that man.

\_\_\_\_\_ The other people behind me began to help me and the indigenous man.

\_\_\_\_\_ A white man came into the bank and he wanted to take the place of an indigenous man who was waiting for his turn too.

\_\_\_\_\_ I told him, “leave him alone. You don’t have any right to treat him like that.”

Put the sentences in order to re-write the story.

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**Talk it Over: What would you do?**

If this happened to you, what would you do? Check the answers. Discuss your answers with your group.

- Tell the white man to leave the indigenous man alone
- Keep quiet
- Call the bank manager
- Your own idea: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Think About It: Compare and Contrast**

How are Monica and Miguel's stories the same? How are they different?  
List the similarities and differences below.

Similarities	Differences

Now compare and contrast the two stories.

To show how they are the same  
use **both**

To show how they are different  
use **but**

In both stories...

In Monica's story...but in Miguel's story...

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### Speaking Up For Yourself or Others

How can you speak up for yourself when you are in a situation like Monica's or Miguel's?

You can say...

- I'm sorry but you don't have to be so rude to me/him/her.
- I think I deserve an apology. I think he/she deserves an apology.
- I'd like to speak to your manager/supervisor.

### Extension Activities:

1. Choose one of the two situations in the stories or create your own. Write a dialogue. In this situation one person is rude to another. Someone speaks up for the person who is being treated badly. Practice your conversation and present it to the class.
2. Read Monica's letter to the manager at Macy's. Think of a situation where you were treated badly. Write a letter to the manager.

To whom it may concern:

Last week I was in your store. I spoke to Ms. Klein at the perfume counter. I asked her for a bottle of "Blue Lagoon". She was very rude to me. She said, "I'm sorry honey, I only understand people who speak real English".

I was very hurt by her actions. My English is not perfect, but I should be treated with respect like all of your customers. I will never shop at Macy's again.

Sincerely,

Monica

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**More Reading**

Before you read Jerfhy's story, think about the following questions. Discuss them with your classmates.

1. Were you ever treated badly because of who you are?
2. Did you ever treat someone else badly because of who they are?

**3) Jerfhy's Story:**

I remember in 7th grade I had a gay classmate. I didn't like that and I was always calling him names and treating him bad. One day he was collecting money for some event and when he asked me for money I spit on his shoe. Another time we were in class and I was throwing trash at him. When he did the same thing to me, I went to his chair and I punched him three times in his face and kicked him once. Then the teacher stopped me.

Now I know gay people, so my attitude has changed. I feel bad about what I did to my classmate.

**Talk it over:**

Discuss the questions with your classmates.

- Why did Jerfhy hate his classmate?
- How does he feel now?
- Why do you think he changed?

#### 4) Azad's Story:

I was born in Baghdad, Iraq to an Armenian family of eight children. Since I was a little girl, I knew that I was different from my sisters. I identified more with my brothers. I used to steal my brothers' shorts and wear them secretly, away from my mother. This secret battle inside me continued for years even after my family immigrated to Los Angeles, California. I was very sad and miserable. I was always asking myself, "Why is this happening to me?" My family was pressuring me to get married. Finally I told them I was a lesbian. It was a nightmare. The whole family went crazy. My older brother pulled a gun on me. My mother screamed that I was going to hell. She was mostly worried about what to tell people if they found out. I couldn't believe it. I asked them "What is stronger, your worries about other people, or your love for me?" They had no answer. Finally my oldest sister made my brother put down the gun. My family told me to leave the house and never come back. They said, "We don't have a sister named Azad anymore." We were so close and now I was alone. It hurt me a lot. I missed them so much.

This is one of the reasons I started the Armenian Gay & Lesbian Association in 1997. I didn't want others to be alone and suffering like I was. I try to help families deal with their gay and lesbian kids. After many years, I was able to educate my family about my sexuality and now they accept me. We are a close family again. It is very important to me. It makes all the difference in the world.

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**Working with words:**

Do you know these words from the story?

	I know it.	I've heard it before but I'm not sure what it means.	I don't know it.
identified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
battle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lesbian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
nightmare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
pressuring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
suffering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Talk about the words you don't know with your classmates who know them.

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**Check your understanding:**

Answer the following questions about Azad's story.

1. What was Azad's problem when she was a little girl?
2. Why did Azad tell her family about being a lesbian?
3. What happened when she told them?
4. How did Azad feel?
5. What are some things Azad did to change the problems in her life?

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**Think about it**

Do you understand what the people in Azad's story did and what they felt? Check the box that most closely matches your feeling.

	Strongly agree-----Strongly disagree				
I understand Azad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand Azad's mother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand Azad's brother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand Azad's sister.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Share your answers with a classmate. Are your answers the same or different? Talk about it.

<b>homophobia (noun):</b> hate or prejudice against someone because of their sexual orientation
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**What can we do about discrimination and hate?**

Read the following suggestions from the Southern Poverty Law Center. Brainstorm with a small group and add some more ideas.

1. Volunteer at a local social services organization.

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2. Speak up when you hear hate speech. Let people know that prejudice is always unacceptable.

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3. Be careful what you say in front of children when you are angry.

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4. Invite someone of a different background to your home for a meal.

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5. Imagine what your life might be like if you were a person of another race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. How might your life be different?

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6.

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7.

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8.

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9.

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10.

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*Adapted from: "101 Tools for Tolerance: Simple ideas for promoting equity and celebrating diversity." By the Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery, AL. 2000.*

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**Checklist for learning: Vocabulary**

Check the words you know. Add more words if you want to.

**Nouns**

- hate
- racism
- prejudice
- discrimination
- homophobia
- apology
- respect
- tolerance
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Verbs**

- hate
- speak up
- hurt
- complain
- treat
- respect
- identify
- pressure
- suffer
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Adjectives**

- mean
- rude
- indigenous
- embarrassed
- hateful
- respectful
- tolerant
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Language** Check what you can do in English. Add more if you want.

- talk about problems with prejudice
- speak up about prejudice
- write a complaint letter
- read short stories
- write about something that happened in the past
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Looking Back

A. In this unit I learned \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. I want to study more \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. The activity I liked best was \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. The activity that I liked least was \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Thematic Unit Field Test Form  
First Amendment Plus**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

School or program \_\_\_\_\_

Title of unit tested \_\_\_\_\_

1. General description of your program: size, goals, general curriculum focus:
  
2. Description of class: proficiency level, size, #hrs/week
  
3. Description of students, i.e. country (ies) of origin, age, native literacy level, goals for learning English
  
4. Overall reactions:
  - a. What did you like best about this unit, overall?
  
  - b. In general, do you have any suggestions for improvement? Anything you would add, delete or change in the unit as a whole?

This whole unit took \_\_\_\_\_ hours over the course of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks

Did you add or skip any segments? Please comment.

Please send Thematic Unit Field Test Forms and/or notes written directly on units to:

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