

Celebrating Differences

This transformative class activity invites students to identify and embrace their unique differences and celebrate each other.

An engaging activity to foster an inclusive classroom community

Objective

Motivated by the DHIFI theme, "The things that make me different make me ME," students will describe their visible and invisible differences and learn to appreciate and accept the unique qualities of their peers.

Ages

Grades 2-6 (Students will work in partnerships)

Time

45 minutes (Plus additional time for creating artwork or an essay in class or at home)

Materials

- Reading Passage: "We All Have Differences" (Page 1)
- Video Link: "Let's Hear From Others"
- T-Chart "Identifying Visible and Invisible Differences" (Page 2)
- Peacock Activity Sheet: "The Things that Make Me Different Make Me ME" (Page 3)
- Optional Art & Writing extension activities with rubrics

Standards

SEL: CASEL Competencies

- Self-awareness: Assessing one's own strengths [...] and possessing confidence and growth mind-set.
- Social awareness: Taking the perspective of and empathizing with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Relationship skills: Establishing healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals.

Introduction

Explain that today, the class will discuss what we have in common: we're all different! Write the following on the board or screen: "We all have differences." Tell the class we will have an opportunity to talk about our differences. However, before we do that, we will read an article and watch a short video to meet other people and learn about their differences.

Instructions

1 **Tell** the class we will read a passage titled, "We All Have Differences" and meet Shona Karp, who has a visible difference, and Roman Hathaway, who has an invisible difference. We can see a visible difference when walking by someone on the street or at the store. On the other hand, an invisible difference isn't easy to see, but we might recognize it if the person is in our family or discover it after spending time with a new friend at camp. Read the passage together and discuss the reflection questions.

2 **Remind** the students that we just met Shona, who has a visible difference, and Roman, who has an invisible difference in the article. **Clarify** the vocabulary of visible and invisible differences with the examples provided in this teaching guide, or choose examples you want to address for your classroom or school community.

3 **Tell** the class we will watch a short video called "Let's Hear From Others" and learn from people sharing their unique differences. Show the class the T-Chart (or hand out a copy to each student). Read the directions on the page and note the examples from the reading passage. **Reflect and discuss** the following questions: If you could ask a question to a person in the video, what would you want to ask? What did you learn from the people in the video?

4 **Ask** students if they think they have differences, too. If they say they don't, explain to students that we are not all robots. Revisit the idea that we all have differences and differences are special and unique. Remind students that sometimes it's easier to notice how others differ, but we all have unique qualities. As their teacher, share a couple of your own visible and/or invisible differences. Then, ask students to turn to their partner and discuss themselves and their unique qualities. Move about, listen as students share, and guide those stuck. Model with "I statements" and encourage students to think about what's unique about their mind, body, family, culture, and daily life. Bring the class together and ask students to share a difference or two with the group.

5 **Hand** out a copy of the activity sheet "The Things That Make Me Different Make Me ME!" to each student. **Invite** them to list their unique qualities on the feathers of the peacock. Encourage students to list both visible and invisible differences with confidence and pride. Remind them that the peacock is incredibly bold and beautiful when it opens its feathers, and when we open ourselves to others, we invite them to do the same.



Celebrating Differences

Objective

Motivated by the DHIFI theme, "The things that make me different make me ME," students will describe their visible and invisible differences and learn to appreciate and accept the unique qualities of their peers.

Ages

Grades 2-6 (Students will work in partnerships)

Time

45 minutes (Plus additional time for creating artwork or an essay in class or at home)

Materials

- Reading Passage: "We All Have Differences" (Page 1)
- Video Link: "Let's Hear From Others"
- T-Chart "Identifying Visible and Invisible Differences" (Page 2)
- Peacock Activity Sheet: "The Things that Make Me Different Make Me ME" (Page 3)
- Optional Art & Writing extension activities with rubrics

Standards

SEL: CASEL Competencies

- Self-awareness: Assessing one's own strengths [...] and possessing confidence and growth mind-set.
- Social awareness: Taking the perspective of and empathizing with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- Relationship skills: Establishing healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals.

Instructions - continued

6 In closing, bring the class together and **ask** them what "flaunt" means. (Flaunt means to express something with confidence and pride.) Once the class has a working definition, start a discussion by asking: What would happen if you flaunted your differences? Be sure to include the following points: flaunting our differences helps us appreciate and accept who we are, which builds our self-esteem. When we fully accept ourselves, we will worry less about what others think and enjoy positive relationships with peers at school and in our community. Remind students that we feel stronger and more confident when we accept who we are, and show people that differences are a positive part of life. Make a class commitment to value one another's differences daily.

Additional Ideas

1. Create a bulletin board with a peacock, and each student can decorate a feather for a truly unique display. Each feather can include: "My name is... My differences are... What I want you to know about me is..."
2. Revisit the phrase written on the board at the beginning of the lesson, "We all have differences," and the reflection questions from the reading passage. Why is it important to accept and celebrate differences? What advice would you give to a friend worried about their visible or invisible difference?
3. Give each student a "3-2-1 exit ticket" and complete the following prompts:
THREE things you understand from today's lesson, **TWO** questions you have, **ONE** thing you want to know more about. Use the student reflections as ideas for continued conversation about differences and acceptance of self and others.

The optional activity invites students to celebrate their unique qualities with artwork or writing. Although it requires more time, it is a precious and highly recommended experience! Before presenting the planning sheets to students, we recommend visiting the Flaunt It Gallery on the website for examples of how students creatively express their differences. Consider choosing examples to share with your class and prepare for an incredible opportunity to celebrate one another's unique qualities.

7 Hand out the Expressing Differences Planning Sheets. They will create a piece of artwork or write an essay about one of the differences they listed on a peacock feather. You can assign the final activity as homework or do it in the classroom. The rubric is optional.

8 Celebrate the artwork and writing by allowing students to present their creative expressions to the class and validate one another as they flaunt their differences!

Vocabulary

Visible differences are physical characteristics that can be present at birth or develop later in life. Some examples of visible differences include birthmarks, scars from burns, an accident or surgery, paralysis, cleft lip or palate, fewer fingers on one hand, skin conditions such as eczema, various conditions with hair loss, ears, and eyes.

Invisible differences limit or challenge someone's senses, movements, or ability to participate in daily activities but are not visible to others. They affect how one learns, thinks, and interacts with others. Some examples include stuttering, dyslexia, and autism. Other invisible differences might consist of anxiety, depression, ADHD, allergies, or dietary preferences/restrictions.



We All Have Differences

Read about the one characteristic all humans share, then discuss the reflection questions below.

Did you know there are more than 8 billion people on Earth?

All humans share something exceptional in common: differences that make us unique. Some differences are visibly noticeable. For example, some kids in your class are taller than others; others may wear glasses to see or use a wheelchair to get around.



Meg Zucker, author of the book *Born Extraordinary*, was born with a genetic condition called ectrodactyly. Her difference is visible because when you meet her, you will notice she has shortened forearms and one digit on each hand. Despite her differences, she can play the piano, do the dishes, and drive her car, just like other people you know.

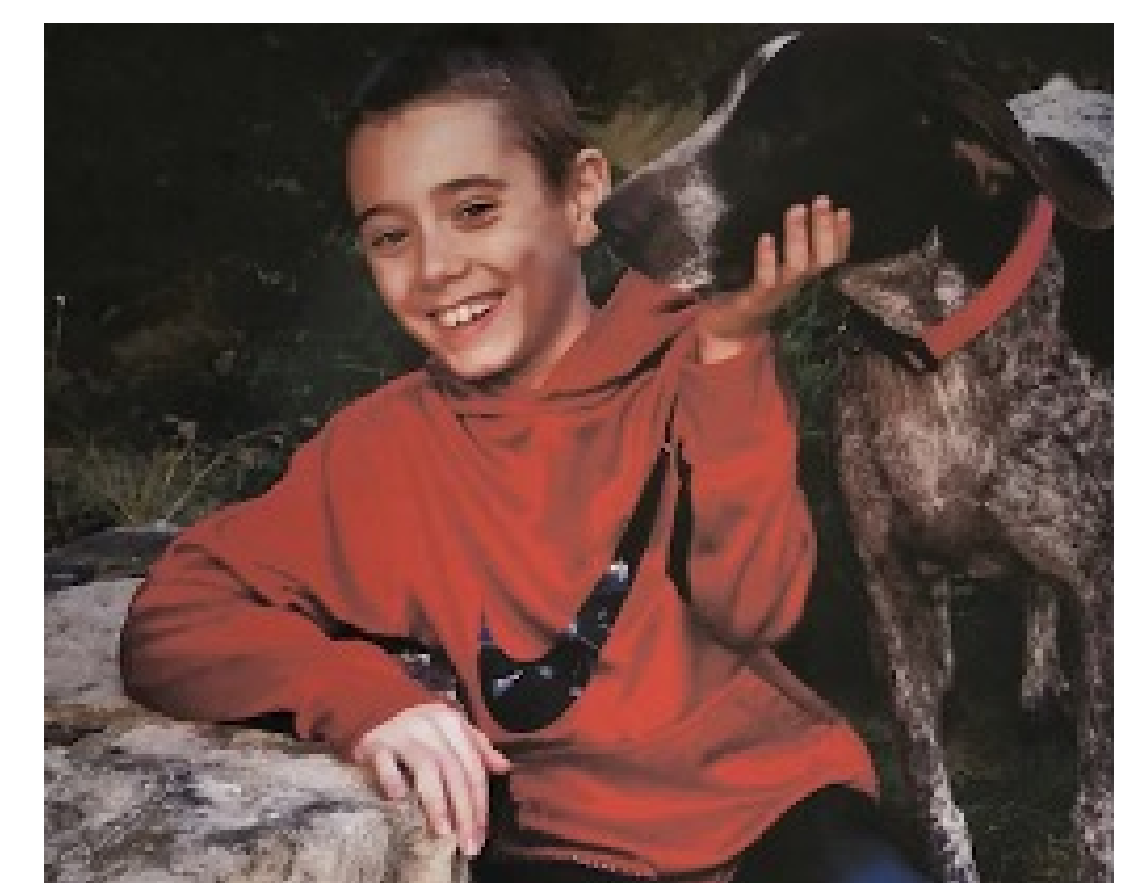


Shona Karp was born with a visible difference, too. She is ten years old and born with one eye. She says, "Having one eye has made me tough!" It means having many surgeries. But I don't get down on myself. I still go to field hockey practice! I love being unique!" In addition to being resilient,

differences can teach us how to speak up for ourselves and explore creative ways to solve problems.

Other differences are invisible. For instance, a child may speak two languages at home or have severe allergies. Some kids have learning differences like dyslexia or psychological differences like anxiety – you can't see them from the outside, but they are there.

Meet Roman Hathaway. He is nine years old, and he has an invisible difference called obsessive-compulsive disorder (or OCD). "My OCD makes my body feel like something is always wrong, out of balance, needs to be finished. If someone touches me, I have to touch them back. If other kids notice what I am doing, they might think it is weird," he explained. Differences can be challenging, especially when other people don't take the time to understand them.



It's okay to notice differences and be curious. But it's unacceptable to make fun of others, point out, and laugh. Remember, we all have differences, and the more we understand ourselves, the more we can support, embrace, and celebrate each other. We don't need to hide our differences. Instead, we can flaunt them proudly. As Meg Zucker always says with a smile, "The things that make me different make me ME."

Reflection Questions

1. Why is it important to accept and celebrate differences?
2. What advice would you give a friend worried about their visible or invisible difference?

Name _____

Date _____

Identifying Visible and Invisible Differences

As you watch the video, listen to the people describe their differences with pride and confidence. After the video, list examples of their visible and invisible differences and discuss the question below.

Visible Differences	Invisible Differences
<i>Born with one eye</i>	<i>OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder)</i>

In what ways do differences impact our lives?

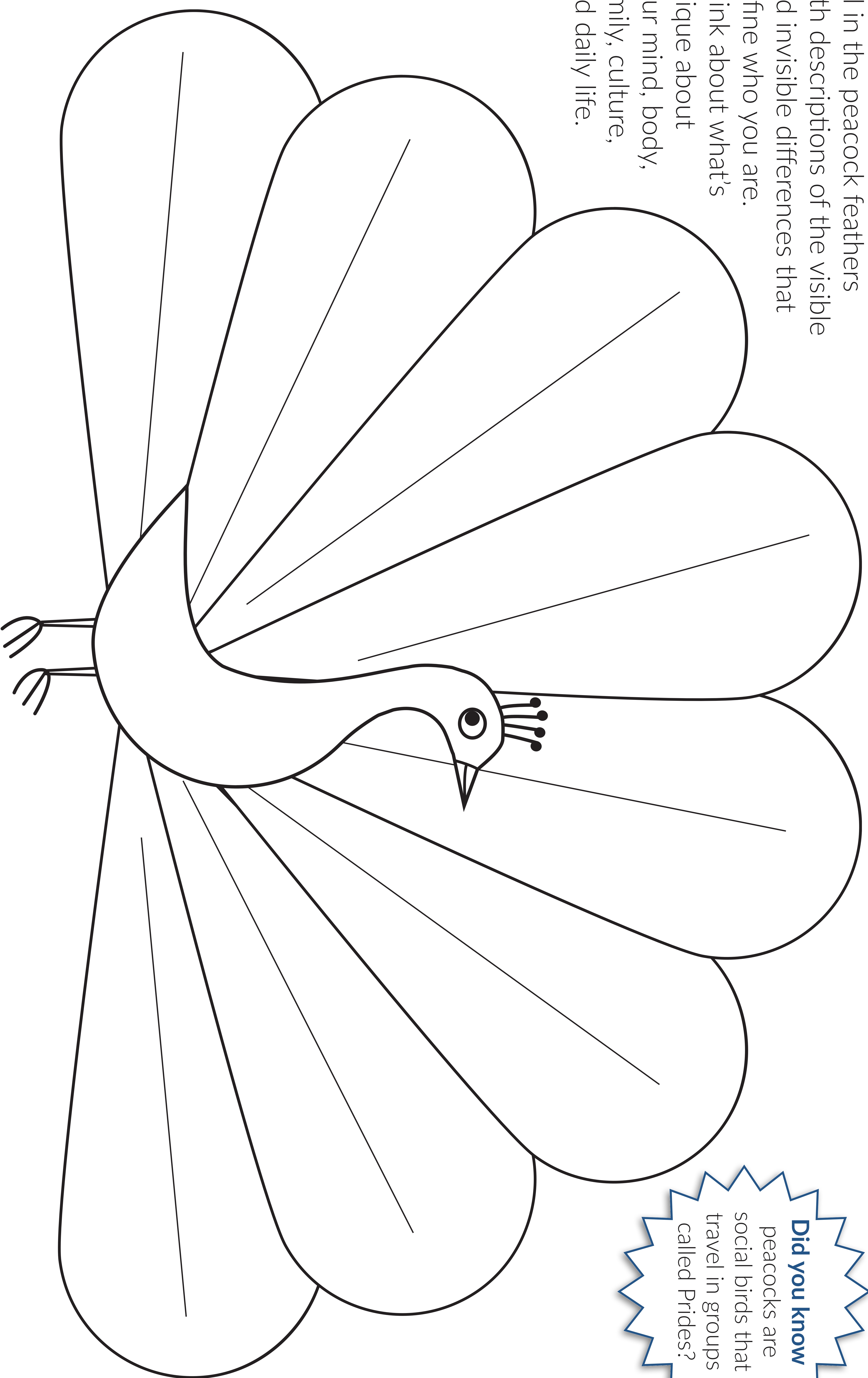


Name _____

Date _____

The Things That Make Me Different Make Me ME!

Fill in the peacock feathers with descriptions of the visible and invisible differences that define who you are. Think about what's unique about your mind, body, family, culture, and daily life.



Did you know
peacocks are social birds that travel in groups called Prides?



Name _____

Date _____



Flaunting Differences in Art

Now that you've identified your visible and invisible differences, it's time to celebrate with creative expression.

Part A: Plan

1. What personal difference do you want to highlight? _____
2. How does this make you unique? _____
3. How does your difference impact your daily life? _____
4. How do you flaunt and celebrate your difference? _____
5. What type of art will you create?
 drawing painting collage comic strip other: _____
6. What images will you include in your artwork? Why? (Think about your answers above.)

Image	Reason

7. What elements will you include in your artwork? Why? Think about how the elements (lines, shapes & forms, color, texture, and space) will communicate the mood and message of your piece.

Elements	Reason

Part B: Create

1. Create your work on a single sheet of paper, and include your signature.
2. Write a brief artist statement that describes the difference highlighted in the artwork, and the message you want to convey to the audience.



Name _____

Date _____



Flaunting Differences in Writing

Now that you've identified your visible and invisible differences, it's time to celebrate with creative expression. Your essay should express the theme: **"The things that make me different make me ME!"**

Introduction: Getting to Know Me

Catch your reader's attention and introduce your big idea.

- Describe yourself. _____
- What personal difference do you want to highlight? How does this make you unique?

Body: How My Difference Impacts My Life

Use a few details to make your essay stronger.

As you write your essay, include various ways the difference you want to highlight impacts your daily life with examples.

Impact On My Life	Example

Conclusion: Flaunt It!

Sum up your ideas.

- How do you celebrate your difference and how are you learning to flaunt it?

- What message do you want your readers to remember? _____

You're Ready! Use this outline to write your essay on a separate sheet!



Name _____

Date _____

Rubric: Flaunting Differences in Art

ART CRITERIA	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS EARNED
<p><u>Artwork: Image</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Images express a unique difference • Images express how difference impacts daily life 	5	
<p><u>Analysis: Elements of Art</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artwork includes various elements of art: Lines, forms, shapes, color, texture, space 	5	
<p><u>Design: Interpretation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artist created a focal point • Elements are used to create a sense of unity in the piece 	5	
<p><u>Writing: Artist Statement</u></p> <p>Included name, date, medium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Described the difference highlighted in the artwork • Expressed the theme: “The things that make me different make me Me!” 	5	



Name _____

Date _____

Rubric: Flaunting Differences in Writing

ESSAY CRITERIA	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS EARNED
<p><u>Introduction: Getting to Know Me</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caught the reader's attention • Described yourself • Chose a difference to highlight • Described how your difference makes you unique 	5	
<p><u>Body: How My Difference Impacts My Life</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included ways the difference impacts your life • Included specific examples to help the reader understand the difference in your daily life 	5	
<p><u>Conclusion: Flaunt It!</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarized ideas • Described how you are celebrating your difference • Described how you are learning to flaunt your difference • Left the reader with a message to remember 	5	
<p><u>Expressed the theme:</u> “The things that make me different make me ME!”</p>	5	

