

## Overview:

Retellings of conventional stories from the viewpoints of villains (such as *Wicked* or *Maleficent*) have become a popular trend in media. Beyond their entertainment value, these narratives also allow us to shift our perspectives and see a story from a different angle. This activity asks participants to create their own retelling of a popular movie, comic, novel, or historical event and reflect on their experience of shifting perspectives.

## Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Analyze multiple perspectives of characters/people in a piece of media or an historical event.
2. Reflect on how your values influence which characters/people you admire or dislike.
3. Shift perspectives to understand the viewpoint of a character/person you don't identify with.

## Time:

1 hour

## Group Size:

Entire group

## Materials:

Turning the Tables Participant Instructions (in [Downloads](#))

## Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

### Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

### Openness:

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

## Empathy

- To interpret intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview.
- To demonstrate ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.

### Activity Instructions:

1. First, participants should choose a movie, comic, novel, event they experienced, or historical event in which there's a clear dichotomy of characters that they like and characters they hate, i.e., one where there's "good guys and bad guys." They should take a moment to reflect on the characters or people involved in that piece of media or event:
  - Whose perspective is highlighted the most in that piece of media or event? Why?
  - Who gets pushed to the background? Which perspectives might get downplayed, or which perspectives might be misunderstood? Why?
  - Which characters or people involved in the piece of media or event do you identify with the most? Why?
  - Which ones do you identify with the least? Why?
  - How might your values influence which characters you respect/admire and which that you dislike?
2. Based on their answers to the above questions, they should pick a character or person whose perspective is not the central focus AND who they don't naturally identify with. Then, they should retell the central narrative of their chosen piece of media or event from that character's perspective. They might draw inspiration from stories—such as *Wicked*; *Maleficent*; *Joker*; *Cruella*; *Confessions of an Ugly Step Sister*; *Mirror, Mirror*; or *Twilight*—that take on the perspectives of the traditional villains in popular media. They can choose to either write their narrative or record themselves telling the story they came up with. If they choose to create a recording, they should create an outline first to stay on track. They can use the following questions to help them generate ideas and begin to understand that character's perspective:
  - What do you know about this character's or person's background?
    - Where are they from?
    - Who do they consider their family or friends?
    - What are some characteristics associated with their identity?
    - Did they experience any significant life events that might have shaped who they are?
  - What would you need to know about them to make them more human or likable?
  - Think more deeply about that person's perspective:
    - What do you think motivated this character or person throughout the narrative or event? What do you think they wanted to accomplish?
    - How do you think this character or person felt throughout the narrative or event?
  - How do other characters or people interact with them? How might those interactions influence or shape their thoughts, feelings, and/or behaviors? Is there a history between them and the "hero" or the group to which the hero belongs?
  - If you were that character, can you see yourself making some of the same choices or feeling similar ways? *Note:* Ensure that participants know that you are not asking them to say that the way the character is behaving is ethically right, but they should try to imagine how they might have made those choices.



3. Then, the facilitator can choose to have participants write answers to the following reflection prompts, or they can do a synchronous debrief with the entire group:
  - How did you feel taking on a perspective so different from your own?
  - What did you find most difficult about this activity?
  - What did you learn about perspective-taking?
  - How can you use what you learned in a real-life situation?
4. Once they are finished, participants should upload their written story or recording to the submission link on the learning management system (LMS).