



Beautiful or Ugly? Student Contributions



Classroom Discussion: The Beautiful and the Ugly

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In two Seattle elementary school classes, one fourth grade and one fifth, the students participated in the following activity, based on a lesson plan created by Michelle You, a University of Washington undergraduate student:

The students were each handed one index card, and asked to think of something beautiful and something ugly, and write these down on the index cards, along with the reasons they believed these things were beautiful and ugly.

The facilitator created two columns on the board—“Beautiful” and “Ugly”—and then two columns underneath these, “Adds to Beauty” and “Adds to Ugliness.”

The students then shared some of their beautiful and ugly things and their reasons, and the facilitator wrote them on the board, combining similar reasons.

The class was then asked to decide which reasons were most important. In the ensuing discussion and as part of a writing prompt at the end (“What is the relationship between beauty and ugliness? What makes some things beautiful and some things ugly?”), these are some of the ways students responded:

If there were no beauty in anything, you’d never be interested in anything. —Harbor Marshak-Fragoli, 4th grade student, Whittier Elementary School

I think the relationship between beauty and ugliness is that everything has two different sides. For example, the world can be ugly because some people harm and hurt the world. And I think the world is beautiful because the Earth is green and blue. That just makes me happy. —Kaleb Tuccori, 4th grade student, Whittier Elementary School

Beauty is when the wind and the river both move in certain ways that give me goosebumps for scaring me and chills for fun, and ugly is the way mud bubbles when it rains and how people snarl and do things just to make someone else happy. —Ava McCallum, 5th grade student, John Muir Elementary School

Music is beautiful. I believe it is the soundtrack to our souls, and racial discrimination is ugly because everyone should be able to be themselves. —Mazzy Fagerlund, 4th grade student, Whittier Elementary School

I think anger is ugly because it always ends badly, and I think our planet is beautiful because it is amazing how the universe created this one planet with over 100,000 species. —Alice Berman, 4th grade student, Whittier Elementary School

Abstract art is beautiful because it expresses true feeling, and racism is ugly because it is a twisted state of being. —Harbor Marshak-Fragoli, 4th grade student, Whittier Elementary School

Ugliness is when someone is selfish or mean to another. —Audrey Kinsky, 5th grade student, John Muir Elementary School

Nothing in the world is ugly. Everything is unique in its own way. —Sofia Volpe, 4th grade student, Whittier Elementary School

I think mountains are beautiful because they are so majestic and if you look down from one, you can see the world, and I think that hate and anger are ugly because what do they really do, they lead to war and corrupt society and make the world live in fear. —Munir Abshir, 5th grade student, John Muir Elementary School

In my vast imagination, I think one thing is the most beautiful. Mistakes. You cannot learn if there are no mistakes. —Kimilo Jahn, 5th grade student, John Muir Elementary School

This issue contains artwork on this theme by kindergarten and fourth-grade students.