



Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

2.5 Identifying Euphemisms

Objectives

Increase ability to identify euphemisms.

Discuss how euphemisms can obscure oppression and distance agents (people or groups performing acts) from responsibility for their actions.

Materials needed

Copies of the handout

Time needed

Twenty to thirty minutes

Instructor directions

Ask your students to consider the euphemisms in each of the sentences.

Encourage them to discuss how the use of euphemisms can obscure acts or systems of oppression and remove agents from responsibility for their actions.

Have your students rewrite the sentences to express the euphemistic concept more directly.



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Directions

Identify the euphemisms in the following sentences.

Discuss how euphemisms can obscure meaning, perpetuate oppression, and distance agents (people or groups performing acts) from responsibility for their actions.

Compare the effects of using euphemisms to those of using the passive voice in language (see Putting the People Back Into Language). What are the similarities?

Rewrite the sentences to express the euphemistic concept more directly.

The Siletz Indians were relocated to reservations by the government.

He lost his virginity when he was 15.

This administration was left with no alternative but to send in a peacekeeping force.

At age eight she underwent female circumcision.

The new tax laws will primarily benefit high net worth individuals.

This agency adheres to the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” rule.

The country was embroiled in a period of ethnic cleansing.

The patient manifested an STD following an assault.

During World War II, the Japanese military made extensive use of comfort women.

They are in the class for special children.

Sometimes I purge to enhance my athletic performance.

This city saw a sharp increase in police activity last summer.

That little girl was careless and got herself pregnant.

The presence of industrial effluvia has been detected in the groundwater.

Military operations are imminent in the area.

They better not push us, or they are going to get themselves hurt.

We're sorry, but we're going to have to let you go.