

Racism in Canada: Elementary lesson plans

These lessons are to be taught in a series. The intent of this sequence is to have students clearly understand the differences between racism, discrimination, and bullying, prior to teaching specifically about racism and black history in Canada.

Lesson one: Understanding racism

Learning outcomes

- To teach students the meaning of racism and how discrimination can manifest itself.
- To make students aware of racism towards black people in the past and present in Canada.
- To help students formulate personal action plans to ensure that racism does not continue.

Preparation and context

Make sure that you understand the difference between discrimination and racism so that you can explain it to your students. Have a variety of picture books and novels that portray the history of racism towards black people in Canada and the US.

Lesson plan

Divide your class into groups of four students each. Give each group a concept attainment sheet (see blackline master 1—Placemat chart). Some groups will have the word “discrimination” on their chart, some will have “bullying” and some will have “racism.” Ask the students to initially do a silent write in their quadrant of the chart about what that term means.

Then have students discuss the word with their group to arrive at consensus about what the term means to their group. Once a decision has been made, students will scribe the keywords and/or common meaning in the centre of their placemat chart. A reporter from each group reads this to the class. The remaining students in this group can also add additional comments. The teacher will scribe the key points on a Triple Venn Diagram at the front of the class so that students can see similarities and differences between these three concepts (see blackline master 2—Triple Venn Diagram).

Role plays (pre-assessment and post-assessment)

Give students the enclosed blackline master (see blackline master 3—Scenarios) of scenarios to write down their initial responses (gut instinct) as to whether or not they think this scenario is an example of racism, bullying, or discrimination.

Have triads of students practice and role-play these scenarios for the whole class to observe. After watching the role-play, if they want to change their answers they may do so. Collect these at the end of the lesson and use them as your guide to your students’ level of understanding of these three concepts. Additional teaching about bullying, discrimination, and racism may be required prior to the next lesson.

Scenarios

Sarah wants to go with Naseem cross-border shopping on Saturday. Her mom tells her “no” because “those terrorists will get hassled at the border and we’ll never get across.”

Victor likes to get to school early and play on the swings. Kim arrives early too so that she can push him off the swings. She does this every day.

John wants to play basketball with the other boys on the playground. They tell him no because he is too short and he will cause them to lose their game.

Heather is a special needs child who is in a wheel chair. Gloria plays with her every day. The other kids avoid Heather and Gloria.

Grade 6 and Grade 7 students are preventing younger students from using the soccer field. They claim that it is their field.

Ben's mom is driving him and Yuna on a class field trip. Another driver cuts her off and she says, "No wonder, it's another one of those Asian drivers who hasn't learned how to drive in Canada yet."

Lesson two: Lived experiences

Reorganize groups from lesson one into random groups using a numbered heads strategy. Give each group a picture book that illustrates one of the three concepts (racism, discrimination, bullying). Have them read it aloud once. Another person in the same group then rereads the book asking the group to specifically focus on the concept of racism, discrimination, or bullying and identify where the incident in the book occurs.

Show YouTube clip called:

Racism: Stop it—That Joke www.youtube.com/watch?gl=CA&hl=en&v=eaYMeNNuzto

The teacher then specifically teaches about the roles of the victim, offender, bystanders and active witnesses in responding to incidents of racism, discrimination and bullying (see blackline master 4—A witness centred training model).

Have the students collectively rewrite or role-play a new ending to the story where the victim or bystander stands up as an active witness to the bullying/racism/discrimination in a safe way.

When the group is ready to present to the class they will need to:

- a. briefly summarize the story they read to the rest of the class
- b. show where the offending incident occurred in the story
- c. act out the new ending.

(Make sure that each student in the group has a role.)

Assessment

To assess this lesson, create a fishbowl activity with a specific scenario that illustrates racism, discrimination, or bullying within the school or community context. (You may need to design

this yourself. Samples are provided below. You may need to do the talking circles a few times to explore all three concepts.)

One group of students sits in the middle of the room and discusses this scenario aloud while the rest of the class sits in a larger circle around them and listens. When each person in the middle finishes speaking, he or she can leave the group and tap someone else who is sitting on the outside circle to join in the conversation and move to the middle. Only the students in the middle can speak. The ones sitting on the outside must listen quietly until they are tapped and invited into conversation within the inner circle. Make sure that everyone who wishes to, gets a chance to speak. Record anecdotal notes on what is being said. You will know by their conversations whether they have clearly understood the concepts of racism, discrimination and bullying.

Suggested fishbowl scenarios

1. Angela is having a birthday party next week. She has handed out invitations to many of the children in her class. When Jessica comes in to the cloakroom, she notices that many of her classmates have invitations to Angela's party. She asks Angela if she can come to her party. Angela says that her dad told her that he doesn't think it is proper to have any brown people over to their house.

How do you respond as an active witness? How can you challenge this belief without damaging your friendships with Angela and Jessica?

2. At lunchtime, Mohammad is sitting and reading a book. Avneet begins to hassle him because he has no lunch. Mohammad explains that he is fasting for Ramadan. Avneet sneers and says, "Why do you Muslims have all these weird ideas of praying so much and not eating?"

How do you respond as an active witness? What could be done to prevent this from occurring?

3. When Gurpreet arrives in the schoolyard with a kirpan, the other kids stare at him and ask why he's bringing a weapon to school. He tells them that it is part of his religion and that he is allowed to wear it. Then Jake says, "We can't bring knives to school so why should all you Hindus be allowed to?"

How do you respond as an active witness? What could you do to safely intervene?

Lesson three: Segregation

Experiential activity and debrief

Randomly give each child a playing card as they enter the room (use aces to fives). Tell the students who are aces that they can play anywhere they want to at recess. Tell the twos, threes and fours that they need to plan one cooperative game to play together prior to going outside. Tell the fives that they are banned from using all playground equipment at recess.

Give all groups 10 minutes to talk in their groups about what they plan to do at recess. After they have had their planning time, ask them how they feel about your decision, and discuss personal reactions and responses as a class. Using a secret ballot, ask them to vote on your arbitrary rule or decision. Conduct a secret ballot on whether or not your decision to assign or ban games was inclusive or discriminatory? (You may need to review or explain the meaning of these two words.) Collect ballots, post results, and discuss the impact of potentially having been segregated at recess. It is recommended that you do this before recess and don't actually send them out in these groupings.

Extension

To really reinforce concepts of overt racism, spread these four books over a few lessons and have the students do written responses or journal entries to the racist incidents within these books.

1. Matt Faulkner, *A Taste of Coloured Water*, ISBN# 978-1-4169-1629-1
Segregated water fountains and public spaces. During group discussion ask the class: What surprised you about this story?
2. Jody Nyasha-Warner, *Viola Desmond Won't be Budged*, ISBN# 978-08899-779-1
The first Canadian black woman to refuse to sit in the black only section of a theatre. During group discussion ask the class: What would you do if you were in the theatre?
3. Madeline Donaldson, *Ruby Bridges*, ISBN# 9780761342205
The first black girl to go to a non-segregated school in the USA. During group discussion ask the class: What challenges do you think Ruby faced during the rest of her time in elementary school? How do you think overcoming school segregation impacted Ruby's life?
4. Jacqueline Woodson, *Show Way*, ISBN # 0-399-23749-6
A mother passes on the tradition of making quilts, or "show ways", that serve as secret maps for freedom seeking slaves.

Lesson four: Slavery

Begin by asking students "What does the word slavery mean to you?" Have a group discussion about what they already know about this topic. This will help you get a sense of their prior knowledge about slavery.

Teacher can read out the ad for the sale of the Negro girl on the BCTF's *Racism in Canada* poster. Then give some background knowledge on the underground railway in Canada.

Mind Mapping (see blackline master 5—Mind Mapping page)

Alan Schroeder, *Minty, a Story of Young Harriet Tubman*, ISBN# 0803718888

Note: You may need to model this strategy for students in advance of reading this story.

As the teacher reads, students create a mind map of keywords that jump out at them in bubbles on a blank 11 by 17 sized page. After reading, ask students to draw connecting lines between

specific words that naturally fit together for them. Ask students to write their ideas on those lines to retell part of the story in their own words or explain how those two words are related.

Individual research projects and actions

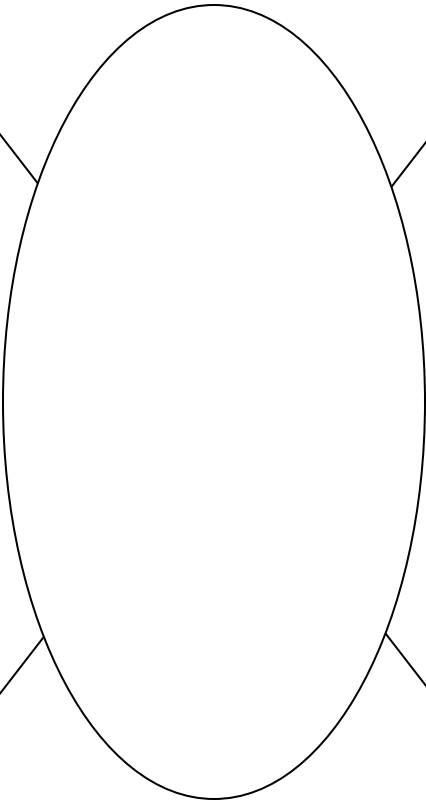
Choose one of the real life characters from the stories in lesson three. Research some information about their lives and what life was like during that time period. Compare it to your life today. Write about a time when you felt either targeted by racism or were a witness to it. How did you respond? Was it effective or ineffective? Looking back, what might you do differently? What can you do now in your everyday life to stop racism? Who might your allies be? How can you respond together?

Extensions

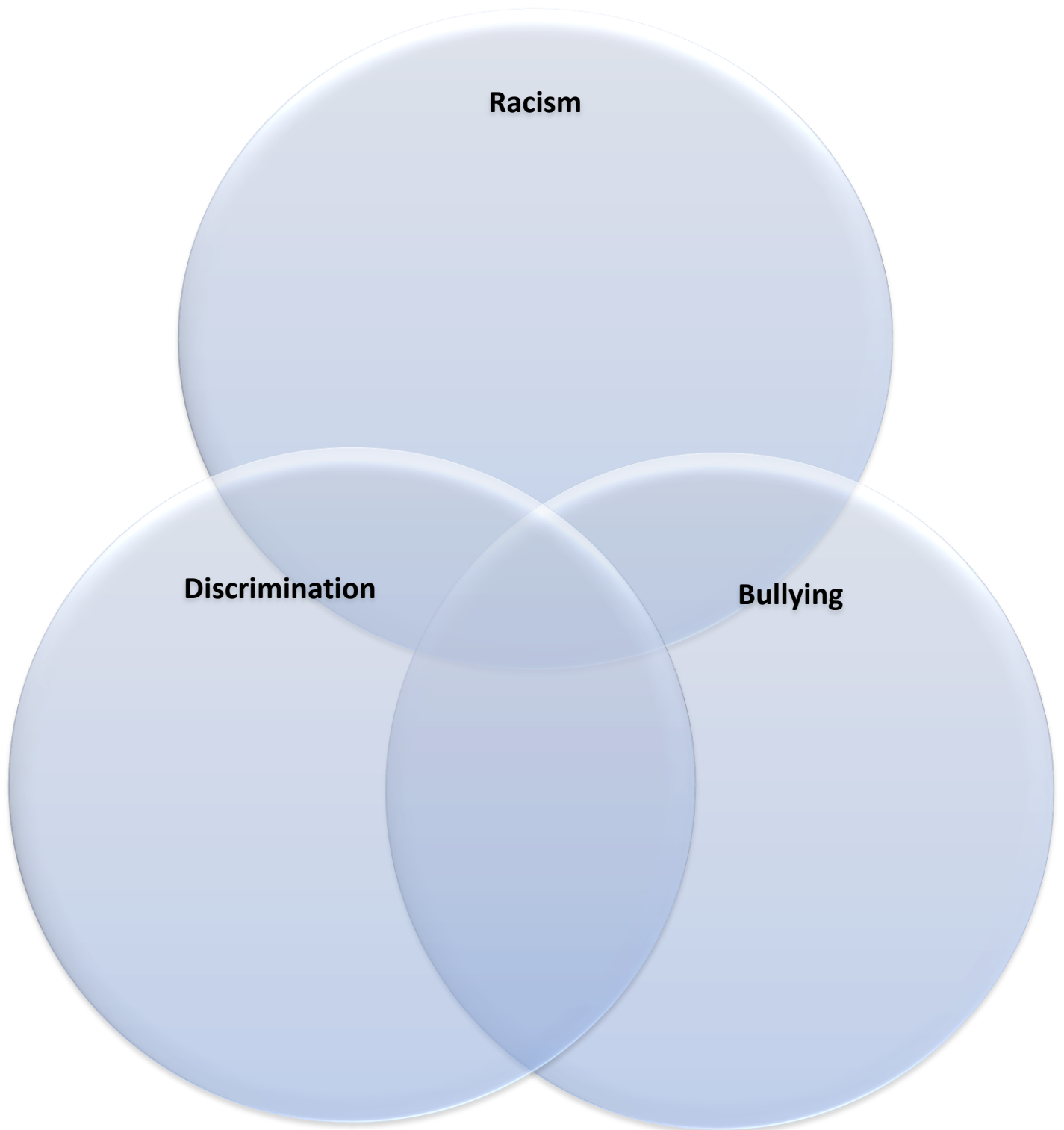
By standing up against racism, all of these characters paved the way for a better world for all of us.

1. Pretend that they are still alive today and write a letter to one of these people. As a pre-writing activity, the teacher may wish to brainstorm possible ideas with the class for the content of this letter.
2. Create an antiracism poster for your school to encourage classmates to stop racism.
3. Create a class book of snapshots of life then and now. Students can work in partners to create a page together.
4. Create and film a short antiracism public service announcement. Celebrate student films and play these at a school assembly.

Placemat chart



Triple Venn Diagram



Scenarios for discussion

Is this racism, bullying or discrimination? Write your initial response in each box.

Sarah wants to go with Naseem cross-border shopping on Saturday. Her mom tells her “no” because “those terrorists will get hassled at the border and we’ll never get across.”

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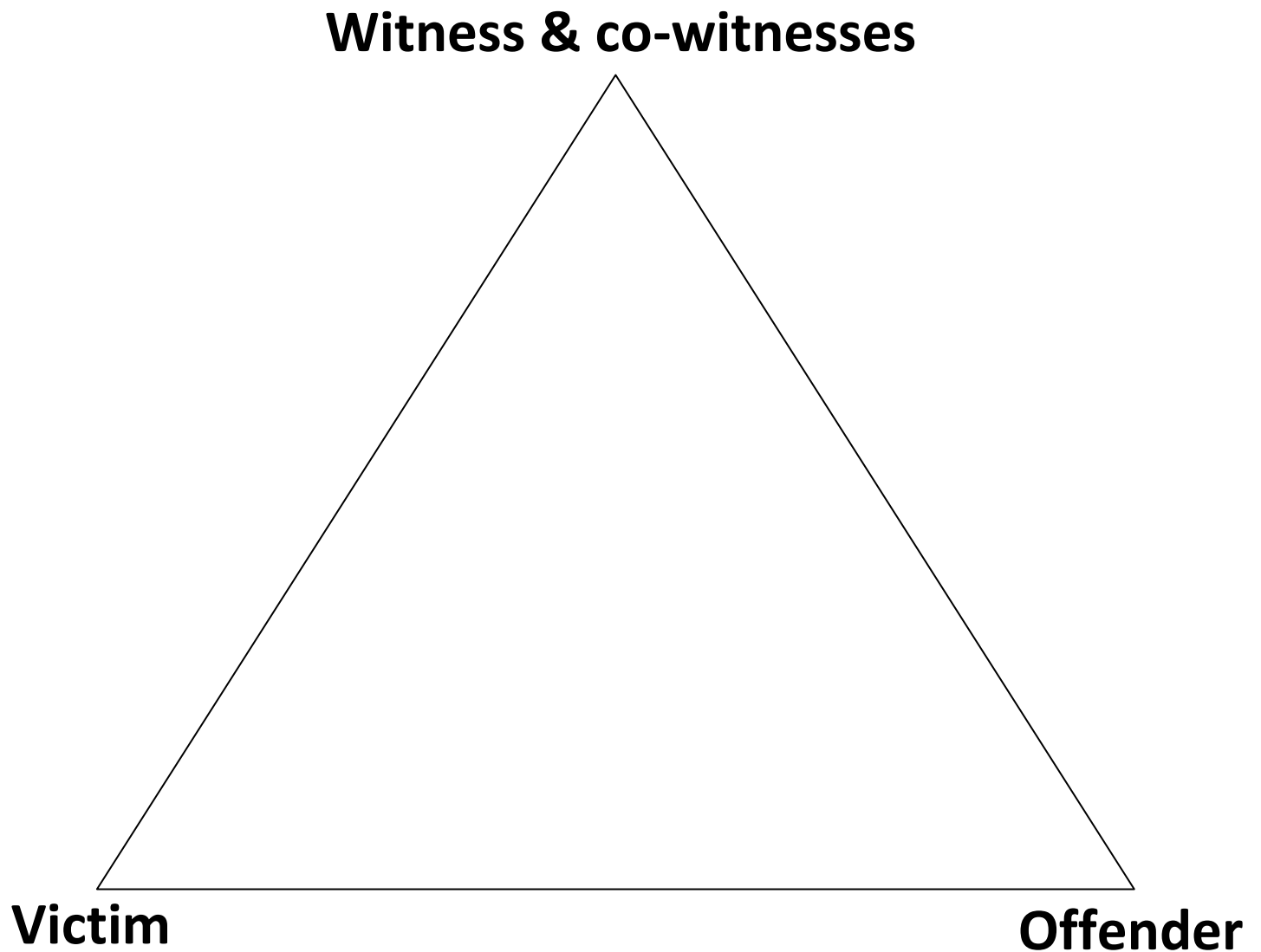
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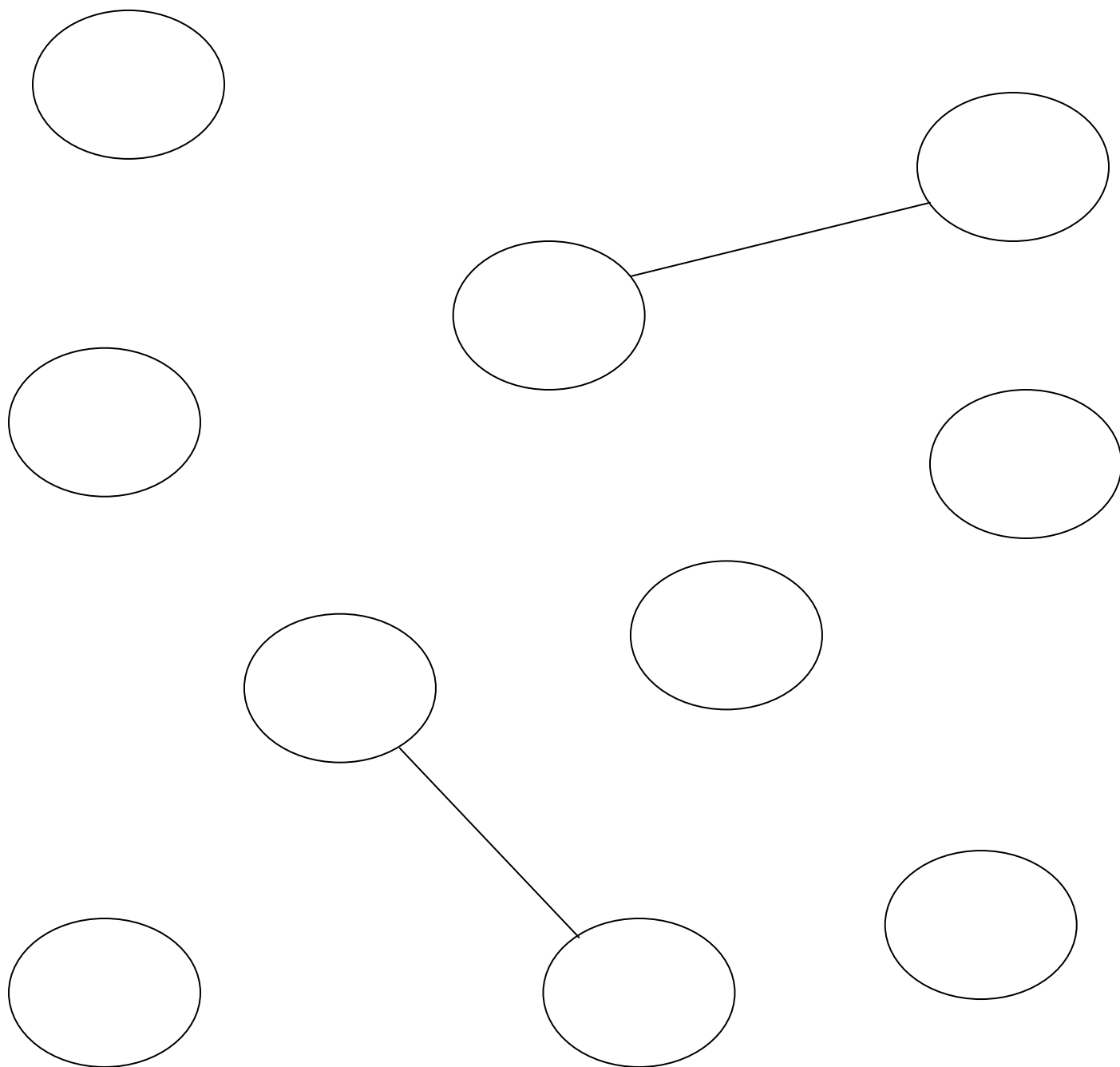
Grade 6 and 7 students are preventing younger students from using the soccer field. They claim that it is their field.

Ben’s mom is driving him and Yuna on a class field trip. Another driver cuts her off and she says, “No wonder, it’s another one of those Asian drivers who hasn’t learned how to drive in Canada yet.”

A witness centred training model



Mind Mapping page



Directions: Students list keywords in circles and connect relevant words with lines and explanations.