TITLE: Getting Inked
RELEVANT H.S. SUBJECT AREAS: Advisory, Health, Social Studies, English
GRADE LEVELS: 9-12
SP TAB/CONTENT AREA: Safety & Health

GOALS:
• Students will think critically and provide reasons for opinions.
• Students will become aware of the opinions of others.
• Students will engage in a respectful discussion, share opinions, and consider opinions of others.

ASCA STANDARDS ADDRESSED:
• PS:A1.5 Identify and express feelings
• PS:A1.9 Demonstrate cooperative behavior in groups

COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED:
• Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.
• Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.
• Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:
It would be helpful, but not necessary, to have knowledge of tattoos. The lesson is intended for instructors with no prior knowledge of tattoos. Wikipedia provides general information on tattoos: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tattoo

MATERIALS:
• Reading handout: Getting Inked — From Student Paths Winter 2013 issue or Reproducible A
• Reflective questions after reading — Reproducible B

LESSON OVERVIEW:
The lesson is intended to encourage students to think critically about tattoos and share what they think in a respectful discussion. The lesson contains three parts:

1. Independent reading assignment and reflective questions (15-20 minutes)
2. Large- or small-group discussion on tattoos (20-30 minutes)
3. Feedback on the value of the activity (2 minutes)

ASSESSMENT:
The instructor should observe three things during the activity:
• The different kinds of reasons students share
• How students show respect during the discussion
• Whether or not students engaged in critical thought and discussion
The first two observed behaviors are informal and ongoing. For an indication whether students engaged in critical thought and discussion, the instructor verbally asks two questions at the end of the lesson, for a thumbs-up-or-down response.

- Did you think critically today? Thumbs-up for yes, thumbs-down for no.
- Did we have a respectful discussion and share our opinions today?

**LESSON PROCEDURE:**

1. **Independent reading and reflective questions (15 minutes)**

   Introduce the reading activity to students as an opportunity to think critically about a subject matter. Distribute the reproducible and instruct students to complete the reflective questions along with the reading. Remind them that the importance of the reflective questions is in giving them a chance to think critically about the subject before having to express their opinions to others. Students should focus on the explanations why in the reflective questions.

2. **Large-Group Discussion about reading and reflection (5-10 minutes)**

   This is an opportunity for students to volunteer responses to the reflective questions. Ask students what questions were easiest to answer, and begin with a brief discussion of their responses to the easy ones. Progress toward the difficult questions and adapt accordingly for time. This discussion should focus on the reasons and explanations why students give for the responses to the reflective questions, and sharing these opinions in a respectful way. The instructor can highlight the kinds of reasons students use during critical thought, and talk about what makes certain questions easier to answer than others.

3. **Small- or Large-Group Discussion (about 20-30 minutes)**

   This discussion about tattoos provides the subject matter for the instructor to teach students to share their opinions in a respectful manner. The instructor can encourage respectful disagreement through critical thought and help students understand the opinions of others. The instructor may not have knowledge of tattoos, and may need to leave questions unanswered at the end of discussion, but the instructor should find the answer for the students before the next meeting. There are four general topics for discussion that can be modified to meet time constraints.

   **Establish ground rules for the discussion**

   Say to students, “Our group may have different opinions and experiences with tattoos. We have shared some of these in the previous discussion, but now let us talk about how we respect one another. What are a few general rules we should follow to maintain respect for all students during our discussion of tattoo?”

   Write down the main points of their responses and ask, “Does everyone understand the ground rules? Is there anyone who does not think they can follow these rules?”

   **Imagine a nonsensical law for our school**

   - Imagine the principal required every homeroom (or class) to get a tattoo that would distinguish the group from the all others at school. What kind of tattoo do you think our group should get?
   - Can we brainstorm a list of more than 25 possible tattoos?
   - Can everyone in the group suggest one idea, even if it is crazy, because our group is not really going to get tattoos, but can have fun considering it.
   - Should the tattoo mean something special for our class or just be nonsense?
   - What would other classes think if we all had tattoos?

   **True, false, or “we’ll have to look that one up”**

   You may have heard many things about tattoos, and now is an opportunity to share any of these things.

   - What have you heard about tattoos?
   - Who did you hear it from?
   - Do you think these things are true?
   - Where can we go for answers to questions like these?
Changing a law

- Do you think the state should legalize tattoos for younger people?
- How young?
- Why does the state set an age requirement for tattoos?
- How should the state enforce these laws?
- At what age should the state consider people mature and capable of making their own decisions?
- How could a state know if someone really is mature and can make a decision on her own?
- If someone in the class were passionate about changing the law, such as tattoos or others, where should he start?
Be smart about body art — by Taylor Engler

Whether a fad or a phase, tattoos are forever

In 1991, scientists discovered the oldest tattoo known to man on the remains of an Iceman discovered on the Italian-Austrian border. At approximately 5,200 years old, the find confirmed the history of tattoos as an ancient form of expression of feelings—from love to religion to anger.

“Tattoos have been around for thousands of years and in many cultures were once a rite of passage signifying you had passed into manhood or womanhood,” says Linda Lebelle, director of Focus Adolescent Services. “In the United States, historically, it was usually the sailors on leave who would get tattoos, or bikers and gang members to signify they were part of a group.”

Throughout time, body art has remained a form of self-expression and/or group identification. Though tattoos and piercings have sometimes been seen as indicating a rebellious personality or the marking of an outcast, in recent years they have become increasingly popular among the mainstream adolescent crowd.

Moving into the mainstream

While tattoos historically indicated a group affiliation or belief in a specific set of philosophies, today they are often considered a decoration. They are quickly on their way to becoming as traditional as a simple set of pierced ears, Lebelle says.

Studies show tattooing moving into the mainstream. In the mid-1990s, only 4.5% of teens reported being tattooed. That number rose to 14% in the space of just 10 years, according to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health.

“Teens really want to be liked and loved,” Lebelle says. “At this age, the way to feel that is to go along with the crowd.”

When teens aren’t getting tattoos to fit in, they are using body art to stand out, Lebelle says. As you enter your teen years and seek to develop a personal identity, it’s easy to feel like all eyes are on you. This feeling may motivate you to find ways you can make yourself unique to feel like you’re living up to expectations.

Tat artist tells minors to wait

Time and experience is something most teens don’t have, which is likely the reason behind most states’ laws against tattooing anyone under age 18 without parental permission; in many other states it is illegal altogether until age 18.

Carlos, a tattoo artist at Body Marks Tattoo in San Diego, Calif., where it is illegal to get a tattoo before 18 with or without parental permission, says he more than supports the law. Even if the state allowed teens to get tattoos with their parents’ sign-off, he wouldn’t tattoo anyone under 18, he says.

“Why can’t you wait until you’re 18 if it’s something that’s going to be on you for the rest of your life?” Carlos said.

Lebelle echoed this idea, cautioning young people, “Tattoos may be the fad of the day, but … you may not like it as much when you are 50 or 60 years old.”

Health and safety concerns, long-term consequences

Laws against adolescent tattooing exist to keep teens from making rash decisions they may regret later in life. They also help teens avoid the health risks that can be associated with unsafe tattooing or improper care of body art.

As teens may not have the money to go to a great tattoo artist, Lebelle says, they may end up at a shop that costs less but will ink them with something they’ll one day want removed. There are also health risks such as viral infections if a parlor doesn’t sterilize equipment properly. Such conditions even put tattoo customers at a risk of contracting HIV or hepatitis.

Most tattoo parlors take precautions to avoid such complications, and the largest concern teens should consider is the permanence of their decision. Laser removal, while available, is painful and expensive. Getting inked may seem fun at 18, but embarrassing just a few years later.

Carlos recommends that if you do decide to get a tattoo, choose a discreet place. Even so, he says, some tattoos just shouldn’t be done. “If an 18-year-old comes into my parlor and wants something like ‘Thug Life’ tattooed across his arm, I’ll tell him to sleep on it and then blow him off,” Carlos says.

Take it from Carlos, someone who makes his living inking others’ skin: When it comes to tattoos, it’s best to think hard and consider the long-term consequences—even last one.
Reflective questions to complete after reading

• Do you think tattoos are “mainstream”? Explain.

• Do you think tattooing will stay mainstream, become more popular, or less popular in 50 years? Explain.

• How old do you need to be in California to get a tattoo?

• If you were to get a tattoo, what would you get? Why? What do you think other people in your life would think?

• What does the author say a person could contract from a needle that is not sterile?

• What does Carlos believe about people younger than 18 getting tattoos? Do you agree with Carlos? Explain.

• Why does Linda Lebelle say many people get tattoos? Do you agree with her?