

ELEMENTARY  
AND MIDDLE  
SCHOOL

# TOPIC SERIES ACTIVITY

Hallucinogens



# ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



## Hallucinogens

### Overview

Students will watch a brief video on the role hallucinogens play in impacting the brain and the body. After the video, the teacher will provide some deeper guiding information on hallucinogens and their different types. Students will identify a hallucinogen and use guided research to create an infographic poster that explains the impact of the drug on the brain and the body. Posters will also include misconceptions and other important information. Students may choose to complete their poster through a digital platform or by hand.

### Modifications

Please note that all activities can be adjusted to accommodate both a face to face and a virtual learning experience.

### Grade Level

Grades 3–8

### Activity Duration

30–45 minutes

### Objectives

Students will:

- Research hallucinogens and create an infographic poster highlighting the impact on the brain and the body.
- Synthesize informational text by using a close reading protocol.

### Materials

- Operation Prevention Topic Series  
Hallucinogens Video
- *Hallucinogens Paragraph Handout (Middle and Elementary School Versions)*
- *Hallucinogens Fact Sheet (Middle and Elementary School Versions)*
- *Hallucinogens Poster Guide Handout (Middle and Elementary School Versions)*

# HEALTH STANDARDS

## Standards

National Health Standards:

- 5.5.6: Describe the outcomes of a health-related decision.
- 7.5.1: Identify responsible personal health behaviors.
- 8.5.1: Express opinions and give accurate information about health issues.

## ELA Common Core State Standards

- SL.5.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.5.2: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- W.5.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

# ENGAGE

- Write or project the term “Hallucinate” on the board. Invite students to take a moment to write down what they think the term means. As students finish, encourage students to share their definitions with the class.
- After students have shared, provide students with the definition of what it means to hallucinate: “experience a seemingly real perception of something not actually present, typically as a result of a mental disorder or of taking drugs.”
- Next, explain to students that hallucinogens are types of drugs that can cause people to see things that are not there and that they come in many forms.

# INVESTIGATE AND VIEW

- Distribute the *Hallucinogens Paragraph* handout for students based on grade level. Explain to students that they are going to be investigating more about how hallucinogens impact the brain by developing their vocabulary and making connections with prior learning.
- Students will perform a quick activity called ‘Three Close Reads’ to help understand the paragraph.
  - **First Read:** Provide students with a chance to read through the short paragraph on their own. Circle any words that they do not know. When students are finished, ask them to share those words and define them as a class.
  - **Second Read:** Instruct students to read the paragraph a second time and this time write questions in margins of the document as they read through. Use the questions to build understanding as a whole class.
  - **Final Read:** During the final read, ask students to write a summary sentence of what they have learned through the process.
- Next, invite students to share their sentences with the class to synthesize what the class has learned as a whole about hallucinogens’ impact on the brain and the body.
  - NOTE:** for younger students, you may choose to scaffold with more information as necessary based on student questions or comments.
- To help connect understanding for students, play the Hallucinogens video for students.
- After viewing the video, ask students to compare the information they saw in the video with the information they learned from the reading.
  - NOTE:** for younger students, it may be helpful to use a visual like a T-Chart or Venn diagram.

# APPLY

- Now that students have investigated hallucinogens and developed an understanding of the drug and its impact, instruct students that they will now be creating informative posters about hallucinogens.
- To support students in the activity, provide them with the Hallucinogens Poster Guide Handout and the *Hallucinogens Fact Sheet* Handout.
- Explain that students will be creating informative posters that should be creative, appropriate, and call attention to the negative impacts of the drug on the brain and the body.  
**NOTE:** for older students, you may choose to place more detailed requirements such as specific factual information or appropriate style.
- When students are finished, decide as a class how the posters should be displayed in your room or hallway.

# HALLUCINOGENS PARAGRAPH

**First Read:** Circle unfamiliar words

**Second Read:** Write questions in the margins

**Third Read:** Complete summary sentence

Hallucinogens are a class of drugs that cause hallucinations—profound distortions in a person’s perceptions of reality. Hallucinogens can be found in some plants and mushrooms (or their extracts) or can be man-made. They are commonly divided into two broad categories: classic hallucinogens (such as LSD) and dissociative drugs (such as PCP). When under the influence of either type of drug, people often report experiencing rapid, intense emotional swings and seeing images, hearing sounds, and feeling sensations that seem real but are not.

While the exact mechanism by which hallucinogens and dissociative drugs cause their effects are not yet clearly understood, research suggests that they work, at least partially, by temporarily disrupting communication between neurotransmitter systems throughout the brain and spinal cord that regulate mood, sensory perception, sleep, hunger, body temperature, and muscle control.

**Summary Sentence:**

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# HALLUCINOGENS PARAGRAPH

**First Read:** Circle unfamiliar words

**Second Read:** Write questions in the margins

**Third Read:** Complete summary sentence

Hallucinogens are a category of drugs that cause hallucinations, or seeing things that are not really there. Hallucinogens can be found in some plants and mushrooms, they can even be made by people in laboratories. There are usually two categories: classic hallucinogens (one example is LSD) and dissociative drugs (one example is PCP).

When under the influence of either type of drug, people often report experiencing rapid, strong emotional feelings and seeing images, hearing sounds, and feeling sensations that seem real but are not.

Scientists do not yet really understand how hallucinogens cause their impact on the brain. Scientists think that they temporarily disrupt communication throughout the brain and spinal cord, and this can affect mood, senses, sleep, hunger, body temperature, and muscle control.

**Summary Sentence:**

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# HALLUCINOGENS FACT SHEET

MIDDLE  
SCHOOL  
HANDOUT

## **What are hallucinogens?**

Hallucinogens are found in plants and fungi or are produced in laboratories. They are among the oldest known group of drugs used for their ability to alter human perception and mood.

## **What is their origin?**

Hallucinogens can be produced in illegal laboratories or are found in plants.

## **What do they look like?**

Hallucinogens come in a variety of forms. MDMA or ecstasy tablets are sold in many colors with a variety of logos to attract youth. LSD is sold in the form of saturated paper (blotter paper), typically imprinted with colorful graphic designs.

## **What are the most commonly used hallucinogens?**

The most commonly abused hallucinogens are hallucinogenic mushrooms, LSD, and MDMA (ecstasy). Hallucinogens are typically taken orally or can be smoked.

## **What is their effect on the mind?**

Sensory effects include perceptual distortions that vary with dose, setting, and mood. Perceptual distortions include changes to the way the mind processes objects and light. Psychic effects include distortions of thought associated with time and space. Time may appear to stand still, and forms of LSD powder and capsules' colors seem to change and take on new significance. Weeks or even months after some hallucinogens have been taken, the user may develop an uncommon disorder called Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder (HPPD) or experience "flashbacks." HPPD can include fragmentary recurrences of certain aspects of the drug experience in the absence of actually taking the drug. The occurrence of HPPD is unpredictable but may be more likely to occur during times of stress. It seems to occur more frequently in younger individuals.

## **What is their effect on the body?**

Physiological effects include elevated heart rate, increased blood pressure, dilated pupils, and often can induce nausea and vomiting.

<https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Hallucinogens-2020.pdf>

# HALLUCINOGENS FACT SHEET

ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL  
HANDOUT

## **What are hallucinogens?**

Hallucinogens are found in plants and mushrooms or are produced in laboratories. They are among the oldest known group of drugs used for their ability to change a person's ability to see things that are not really there.

## **What do they look like?**

Hallucinogens come in many forms. MDMA or ecstasy tablets are sold in many colors with a variety of designs to attract youth. LSD is sold in the form of a paper saturated with the drug.

## **What are the most commonly used hallucinogens?**

The most commonly abused hallucinogens are hallucinogenic mushrooms, LSD, and MDMA (ecstasy). Hallucinogens are typically swallowed or smoked.

## **What is their effect on the mind?**

Hallucinogens cause the brain to see things that are not really there, these changes can be different depending on the amount taken, mood, and setting. Weeks or even months after some hallucinogens have been taken, a person may develop an uncommon disorder called Hallucinogen Persisting Perception Disorder (HPPD) or experience "flashbacks." HPPD can include experiencing the effects of the drug a second time. The occurrence of HPPD is unpredictable but it seems to occur more frequently in younger individuals.

## **What is their effect on the body?**

Effects on the body include increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, dilated pupils, and can sometimes make you sick.

<https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Hallucinogens-2020.pdf>

# HALLUCINOGENS POSTER GUIDE

**Directions:** To help your classmates understand hallucinogens, you will make a poster that you can hang up at school to help people learn about how hallucinogens affect the brain and body

## What to Include?

- Include a title for your poster that everyone can read
- Include two to three important facts you learned. These could be short and long-term impacts or anything that you think is important for you classmates to know about the drug.
- Include one misconception about the drug.

## Helpful Tools

- **Symbols:** Use simple objects to stand for something
- **Exaggeration:** Overdo or exaggerate the physical characteristics of people or things to make a point.
- **Labels:** Label objects to make it clear exactly what they stand for.
- **Analogy:** An analogy is a comparison between two, unlike things. By comparing a complex situation to a more familiar one can help readers see a situation in a different light.

## Brainstorm Questions:

- How can you design this poster to be eye-catching but informative?
- How do you want to inform your audience? (Colors, photos, phrases, etc.).