**Item / Resource Description**

This is learning object teaches students why certain characteristics are chosen to represent particular character traits. After learning about the stereotyping of body shape, head shape and size, clothing and accessories, students select the appropriate shapes and items to match a given description and provide a clear message about the character to the audience.

**Summary of Activity**

Students are introduced to the concept of stereotyping and then explore how cartoonists and animators build on commonly held stereotypes to create their characters. They create a cartoon of themselves and compare the result to both their looks and their character.

**Media Element**

Still Image

**Core Understanding**

Authorship: Authors of digital media make choices as to how they communicate their messages.

**Curriculum Links**

VELS – English, Writing level 4
VELS – ICT, ICT for creating, level 4
Focus Questions
• What is a stereotype?
• What are some commonly held stereotypes?
• How are our judgements shaped by our first impressions?
• Are stereotypes fair?
• Are you a stereotype?

Activity Detail
Collect a number of images of popular cartoon characters and give each group one to analyse.
• What can you learn about this character by examining their
  o body shape
  o head shape
  o head size
  o facial features
  o clothes
  o accessories?

Have each group share their analysis and reasons for it. Discuss how we make assumptions about people based on their appearance and introduce the concept of stereotypes. List stereotypes students are familiar with, for example the witch with an evil laugh and a long, hooked nose with a wart on the end.

Ask students to work through Character maker: visual attributes (SL54LT) to learn how and why animators make the choices they do.

Have students turn themselves into a cartoon character using what they have learned about stereotype characteristics and the drawing features of an application such as MS Paint or Tuxpaint.
• Does the drawing look like you or express who you are?
• Was it difficult to match who you are with the stereotypical shapes and items?
• Is it a true representation of you?
• Is there a connection between your looks and your character?
• How do digital technologies allow us to do this easily?

Extension Activities
• Explore the concept of stereotypes further to discover if they have any truth. Have the students draw their interpretations of a variety of characters and examine the drawings for elements of stereotyping.
  o Are all cooks short, round and jolly?
  o Do all kings and queens wear a crown?
  o How and why are these stereotypes perpetuated?

• Display a selection of books, at least one per student and preferably ones they are unfamiliar with, and have each student select one based only on its title and front-cover illustration. Have them write their reasons for choosing the book, then have them read it.
  o Did it measure up to expectations? Why?
○ What is meant by ‘Never judge a book by its cover’?
○ Examine the books for examples of character stereotyping.

• Discuss how first impressions often shape our judgements.
  ○ Are these always accurate or fair?
  ○ When do you believe you have been unfairly judged because of your appearance?
  ○ Why do principals and employers insist on a dress code?

• Discuss the use of avatars to represent ourselves online so we protect our privacy. Have students create their own avatar using an application such as Otaku Avatar Maker www.moeruavatar.com, DoppelMe www.doppelme.com/ or Build Your Wild Self www.buildyourwildself.com/