

EXPLORING GENDER



DOES GENDER MATTER TODAY?

IMPORTANT NOTES TO TEACHERS:

Purpose: This unit is designed to get young children to examine the roll gender plays in their daily lives. It examines the various forms of sexism, and allows children to questions decisions they make on a daily basis due to their assigned gender. The unit explore gender roles in traditional fairy tales, and even gets children to be sensitively to children who do not fit neatly into the gender binary.

How to use this unit: This unit is broken up into several lessons. The cover page can be copied along with the post lesson reflection pages to create a booklet for the students to work in as the unit progresses.

There are several links in this unit to other YouTube videos featured in this unit. Some of the books are read on YouTube, which is convenient if a copy can not be obtained.

EXPLORING GENDER

DOES GENDER MATTER TODAY?



NAME: _____

LESSON ONE: THE CHANGING ROLE OF GENDER IN SOCIETY

Objectives: Students will be able to describe the ways gender roles have changed by comparing Richard Scarry's 1963 and 1991 editions of *Best Word Book Ever*.

Materials: If possible it would be very powerful to compare the two books side by side. If both copies are unavailable then this website highlighting the comparisons could be used.

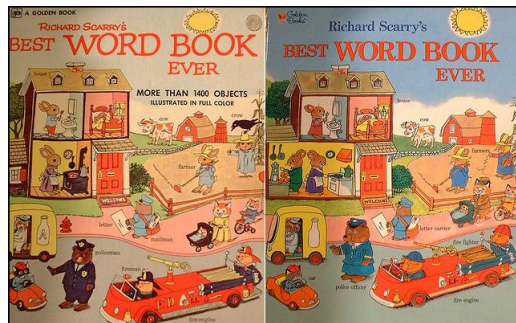
http://distractify.com/trending/2015/11/13/mariam-rich-scarry-bb?ts_pid=386&utm_content=inf_10_53_2

Introduction: This unit should begin by defining gender. To keep this simple for the students they can be told gender is the way people treat someone as either a boy or a girl. Explain to them that what it means to act like a boy and act like a girl depends on when and where you live. At this point it would be important to reference a timeline. (In my classroom I have a timeline that we add to throughout the year. If the class does not already have one this would be a powerful time to create one.) Show the students the class picture from 1961 and ask them what they notice about the children. Compare this to your classes class photo. Discuss changes or similarities in clothing and hairstyles.

Activity: Provide side by side versions of Richard Scarry's book for the students. Explain to the class that this book was originally written in 1961. Explain that in 1961 men and women, and therefore boys and girls, had different lifestyles. Explain that most middleclass women did not work outside the home and those who did had limited options. See if the students can notice the changes the illustrator/author made and discuss why he felt the need to make those changes.

Conclusion/Assessment: Have the students fill out an exit ticket, focusing on the changes in society reflected in the two editions.

Importance of this lesson: This lesson sets the stage for the rest of the learning that follows. It provides a definition of gender and lets the students begin to explore that that means in various contexts or time. In this way they understand that the social construction of gender is fluid.





James Buchanan Elementary in Levittown, Pennsylvania May 1961

Image source: [http://www.shorpy.com/node/20026?size= original#caption](http://www.shorpy.com/node/20026?size=original#caption)

LESSON TWO: HOW ARE TOYS GENDERED?

Objectives: Students will be able to explore the ways that toys are gendered today and consider how that impacts their play options and their identities.

Approximate Lesson Length: If the children have web access and can explore toy companies websites on their own this might be a multiple day activity.

Materials: Toy catalogues, web access, Venn diagram, and reflection sheet

Introduction: Tell the students that today we are going to explore the way gender impacts them. Have the students turn to a partner and have them share their three favorite toys to play with. Then, have the class share some of their favorite and create a list. Ask the class if they see any patterns in who likes what kind of toys.

Activity: Provide the students with Venn Diagrams and explain that it is their job to take a page from the toy catalogue and classify if each toy is designed for boys, girls or if it is gender neutral. Explain to them that gender neutral means it is for boys and girls and that anyone can enjoy it. Have the children discuss their sorting and ask questions that problematize the gender binary. For example: What if a girl really wants to build a Lego Star Wars battleship? What about a boy who is interested in being a chef? Can a boy play with Barbie? Can a girl play with wrestlers?

This lesson can be extended by allowing children to search for toys online. I would be powerful for children to realize most websites categorize toys and clothing by gender. (Toys R Us, Target, Disney Store)

Conclusion: Ask the children if they think limiting toys based on gender is fair.

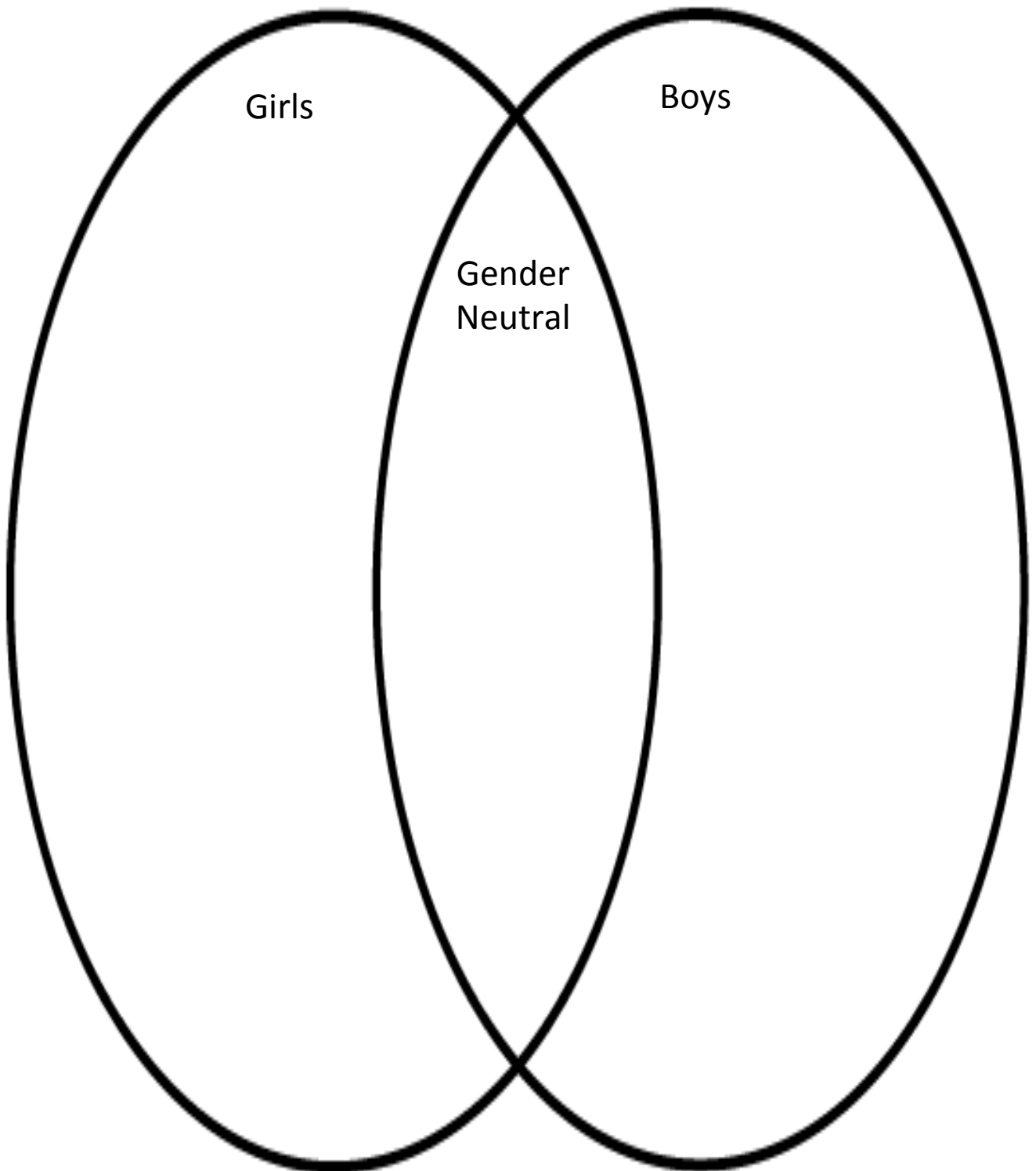
Assessment: Children should fill out the post lesson reflection sheet.

Importance of this lesson: This lesson is designed to expose children to the male/female gender binary that exists in society and it reinforced by toy manufacturers.



Name: _____

HOW ARE TOYS GENDERED?



WHAT IMPACT DOES IT HAVE ON ME?

Things to write about:

- Has this lesson on toys made you think about toys differently?
- Do you think this will impact the way you play with toys in the future?

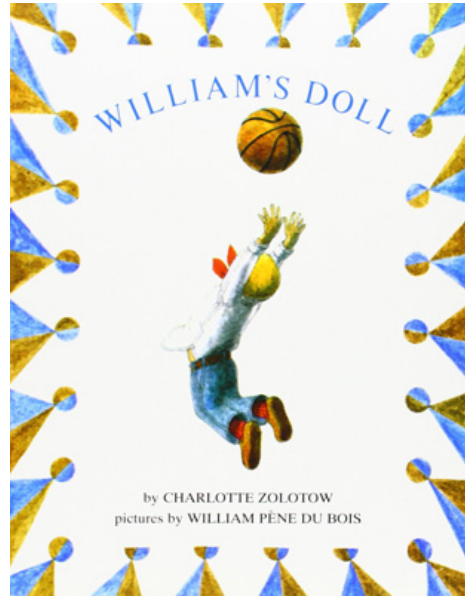
Name: _____

LESSON FIVE: MASCULINITIES

Objectives: Students will be able to consider the role toys play in creating their gender identities.

Materials: *William's Doll*

Introduction: Ask the children to take a stand on a line based on whether or not they think little boys should play with dolls. On one side of the line should be the word yes and on the other side no. Explain to the students where they should stand based on their answer to the question, Should boys play with dolls? Ask children to justify the spot they selected.



Activity: Read the students the book *William's Doll*. Ask the students to again take a stand on the line, and explain that it is ok if the book and the discussion caused them to change their position on the continuum.

Conclusion: Ask the children about the grandmother's justification for William having a doll to practice being a dad. Ask the children to consider the roll the toys they play with might play in their futures.

Importance of this lesson: Children are given the power to voice their opinions and justify their thoughts. They will take turns listening to their classmates and respecting their views. This is an important skill for citizenship.

LESSON THREE: THE CHANGING ROLE OF PRINCESSES AND PRINCES(PART ONE)

Objectives: Students will be able to compare character traits of the female and male protagonist from classic fairy tales with characters they are see today (Disney's Elsa, Anna, Tiana, Rapunzel, Merida, ect.)

Materials: classic Rumpelstiltskin book (most versions are appropriate for this lesson, the Paul O Zelinsky version is recommended because has beautiful illustrations and sticks to the classic plot.

Introduction: Explain to the children that today we are going to explore the role gender plays in fairy tales. Have each student take a minute to draw the first thing that comes to their head when they imagine a prince or princess. After the class draws, have them create a list of character traits that describe that royal person. Discuss their answers as a class and note similarities and differences. Question the role race plays in their ideal images. Also, ask the children to pay attention to the idea of attractiveness and kindness in their ideal version and in the tales they are about to read. Who displays these traits and how?

Activity: Read Paul O Zelinsky version of Rumpelstiltskin. Ask the class what they thought of the characters in the story. Have them fill out the graphic organizer for a character of their choice (The king, the daughter (Her name changes depending on the version you read, or Rumpelstiltskin)

Conclusion: Compare those character traits to the traits the students are used to seeing in modern day fairy tales.

Extending the lesson: This lesson could be repeated with students independently reading additional classic fairy takes and compare the male and/or female protagonists with modern day renditions. Some good examples include the NON Disney versions of: Rapunzel, The Little Mermaid, Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp, The Princess and the Frog). Ask the children if they believe there is a connection between how children act and the characters they see in movies, on TV, and in video games.

Importance of this lesson: This lesson allows students to consider the character traits they have come to expect from main characters they have been exposed to. It also allows them to problematize some of the princess stereotypes, such as the race and beauty of these characters.



DRAWING ROYALTY

1. Draw what you think of when you imagine a princess, queen, king, or prince.
2. List some character traits for the person you drew.

Name: _____

CHARACTER TRAITS

Character

Trait

Evidence from text

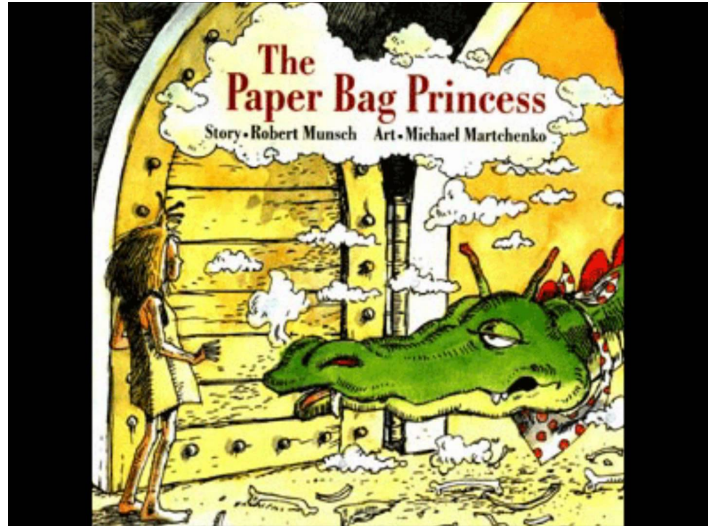
Evidence from text

LESSON FOUR: THE CHANGING ROLE OF PRINCESSES AND PRINCES (PART TWO)

Objectives: Students will be able to : Students will be able to compare character traits of the female and male protagonist from classic fairy tales with characters they are see today (Disney’s Elsa, Anna, Tiana, Rapunzel, Merida, ect.)

Materials: Robert Munsch’s *The Paper Bag Princess*. There is a cartoon video available on you tube. The YouTube version is a little more elaborate than the book, but still useful for this lesson.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phsR0mWuB7M>



Introduction: Review the lessons from yesterday about character traits and royalty.

Activity: Share the story of *The Paper Bag Princess*. Have children do the character traits worksheet for Roland or Elizabeth.

Conclusion: Compare the students results and discuss the findings.

Importance of this lesson: This lesson extends the examination of traits the students ascribe to specific genders.

CHARACTER TRAITS

Character

Trait

Evidence from text

Evidence from text

LESSON SIX: DOES SOMEBODY HAVE TO BE ONE GENDER OR THE OTHER?

Objectives: Students will be able to consider the fluidity of gender and build empathy for transgender children.

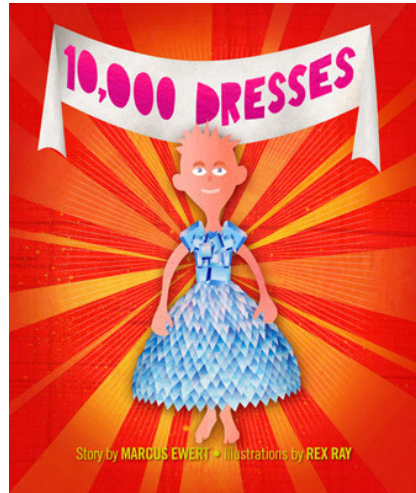
Materials: *10,000 Dresses* by Marcus Ewert

Introduction: Explain to the class that today we are going to read a special book. Discuss how you selected this book because you want the children to think about what it means to be a boy or a girl. Ask them if somebody has to be either one gender or the other? Tell them after the story we are going to talk about how to treat people who do not act how they personally believe a boy or girl “should” act.

Activity: Read and discuss *10,000 Dresses*. The key to this book is the discussions the children engage in before, during, and after reading it. The teacher should bring up how being transgender can be very scary and confusing for some children. Have the children point to examples from the text where Bailey might have been sad or scared. What could be done to help Bailey feel better?

Conclusion: This book will most likely stir up some interesting conversations. When I have read this book students usually start to question what makes a boy a boy and a girl a girl. They wonder who or what gets to determine gender. The conversation also steers towards gay relationships, and the teacher should be prepared to discuss the difference between transgender and sexuality. In the past I have simply explained that gay means when a man loves another man or a woman loves another woman, but transgender is when someone feels like they are not the gender they were told they were when they were a baby. Children appreciate these simple straightforward definitions.

Importance of this lesson: This topic will likely be very unfamiliar to the majority of the students. Some children might find the idea of a boy wearing dresses to be comical. It is vital that the teacher sensitively explains that the boy in this story is not trying to be funny, but that he feels like his most true self when he is wearing a dress and making dresses. I have tried teaching this lesson “outside the binary” and refused to say if Bailey “truly” was a boy or a girl. This is NOT recommended, because it frustrates the students and become an issue they fixate on, rather than hearing the message of accepting gender non-conformity. It is recommended to explain that Bailey was born a boy, but would rather be known as a girl.



OTHER USEFUL BOOKS FOR THIS UNIT

Getting children to question the gender binary and problematize gender stereotypes could become a year long study. The following is a list of other useful books that might be include in this exploration.

Parental Same Sex Relationships

- *The New Goldilocks and the Three Bears: Mama Bear, Mommy Bear, and Baby Bear* by Beth McMurray
- *Daddy, Papa, and Me* by Leslea Newman and Carol Thompson
- *Antonio's Card/ La Tarjetade Antonio* by Rigoberto Gonzalez
- *The Different Dragon* by Jennifer Bryan

Transgender Characters

- *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall
- *I am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- *My Princess Boy* by Cheryl Kilodavis and Suzanne DeSimone

Problematizing Gender Roles

- *Just Like Josh Gibson* by Angela Johnson and Beth Peck
- *A Girl Named Dan* by Dandi Daley Mackall
- *Oliver Button is a Sissy* by Tomie dePaola