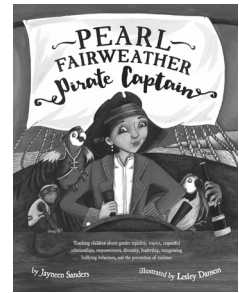


3 Lessons in Gender Equality and Respect



FOCUS TEXT: *Pearl Fairweather, Pirate Captain* (ages 5–12 years)

Depending on the age of the children, the following lessons will take place over three sessions. Please adapt the lessons to suit the needs and ages of the children.

KEY OBJECTIVES

Children will understand that:

- everyone has strengths
- everyone is different and this is what makes us all interesting and unique
- everyone deserves to be respected
- gender does not affect our ability to lead
- gender does not dictate what we can and can't do
- there are many different kinds of leaders
- the best leaders use their strengths and the strengths of those around them to optimise their leadership.

In these lessons children will:

- discuss their own strengths and the strengths of their peers
- define 'respect' and give examples of ways to demonstrate respectful behaviour
- understand that gender stereotypes are social constructs which we need to actively break down
- examine the traits of a good leader
- challenge gender stereotypes in leadership.

For the lessons you will need:

- whiteboard, markers
- A4/A3 paper
- coloured pencils, textas
- resource master: 'Strength Cards'

Lesson 1: Valuing Yourself and Others

Tuning In: I Am Strong

You will need: resource master 'Strength Cards' (2 copies enlarged to A3, laminated and cut out)

Prior to the class, lay the individual 'Strength Cards' face up on a table. Have students think about what they are good at, and then look at the cards and select the card that best suits them. If any student cannot find a card to suit them or their selection has been taken, write their customised strength on a Post-it note or something similar. Have students sit in a circle with their card, and take turns to discuss which card they chose and why.

Whole Class Discussion: What Is Respect?

Have students brainstorm what ‘respect’ means; this could include definitions of respect and examples of how to be respectful. Record students’ responses on the whiteboard.

Independent Task: R-E-S-P-E-C-T Acrostic Poem

Have students create an acrostic poem using the word ‘respect’ and the ideas from the brainstorm activity. Students may choose to begin their sentences with the letters in ‘respect’ or have these in the middle of their sentences, e.g.

Everyone has equal **R** ights
As we strive towards **E** quality for all
Acknowledging our **S** trengths and weaknesses
Helping other **P** eople when they need it
Setting an **E** xample to those around us
Regardless of gender, **C** reed or race
We are **T** hankful for what we have

Partner Activity: Assessing Others’ Strengths

Have students select a partner that is not one of their closest friends. Have pairs sit, facing each other. Provide a short amount of time for them think about their partner’s strengths — using ideas from the ‘Strength Cards’ (featured in the Tuning In activity) as required. Have students take turns (around 30 seconds each) to tell each other their perceived strengths and examples of times where they have seen that person demonstrate a strength, i.e. a time when one student has seen their partner be kind or helpful to someone else.

Reflection

Discuss the following: Did your partner say anything that surprised you? Do we see ourselves in the same way that others see us? Does everyone share the same strengths? Why do you think it’s important for people to have different strengths and weaknesses? Encourage students to further explain their responses.

Lesson 2: Introducing Pearl and Challenging Gender Stereotypes

Tuning In: Always, Sometimes, Never!

You will need: an open space in the classroom

Have students stand in the middle of the open space. Say, 'I am going to read out a series of statements, and you need to decide whether each one is true for you always, sometimes or never. Try to think carefully and be as honest as you can.' Make one side of the room 'always', the middle as 'sometimes' and the other side as 'never'. Select options from the list below, or develop new options to better suit the needs of your students.

- I like to relax by watching a movie.
- One of my favourite things to do is read a good book.
- If I'm feeling angry or sad, playing sport or going for a run helps me.
- I have someone in my life that I can talk to about anything.
- If I see someone is upset, I will go over and try to help them.
- I am good at working as part of a team.
- I really prefer to work on my own.
- I treat others with respect.
- I'm good at standing up to people who are being rude or mean.
- I think girls and boys are better at different things.

Whole Class Activity: In-depth Reading

You will need: Pearl Fairweather, Pirate Captain by Jayneen Sanders

Read *Pearl Fairweather, Pirate Captain* to the class. Use the discussion questions for each page of the book; these are located on pp. 36–38. It is useful to keep these in mind while reading; stopping for discussion where relevant, as/if required. Targeted questions could be written on Post-it notes and attached to the pages.

After reading, discuss the following:

- Why do you think the author chose to have a female as the main character?
- Would the story have changed if the lead role had been a male? How?
- Could/Would a male captain have acted in the same way as Pearl? Explain.
- Would the story have changed if Sandy McCross had been female? How?
- Could/Would a female have acted in the same way as Sandy McCross? Explain.

Partner Task: Brainstorm — Gender Differences

You will need: A4 paper

In pairs, have students draw a line down the middle of a piece of paper. In one column, they can write 'male' and in the other column they can write 'female'. Say, 'I'd like you to list down all the differences between males and females. You may think about what they can do, what they are like, how they act, and so on.'

Whole Class Activity: Challenging Stereotypes

You will need: whiteboard, markers

The idea of this lesson is to challenge children's beliefs about male and female stereotyping, and to create a collective 'class chat' regarding the differences between males and females. Allow each pair to share their ideas from the previous partner task, with no discussion or comments. Then, look through the list and read out some of the statements as they are written. For example, if students have written 'good at football' in the male category, read it out, at first, in the positive sense, 'Males are good at football.' Ask, 'Does everyone agree with this?' Discuss. Say, 'Perhaps not all males are good at football, but most people would agree that males can be good at football. So, if this is written on this chart as a difference between males and females, you would also agree that females cannot be good at football? Is it ok for us to assume that is a truth?' Discuss the concept with the class. Repeat with other statements, ensuring to alternate between male positive and female positive statements.

Note: use this activity to challenge student opinions and empower them with a new way of thinking, but not to place blame or guilt as these are stereotypes set up by our society; they are social constructs and the students have not created them but rather they have unwittingly absorbed what has been modelled around them. Use 'we' statements rather than 'you' statements. For example, 'We have created these constructs, and we have the power to change them.' Ask, 'Why do we think this?' rather than 'Why do you think this?'

On completion of the activity, the only differences between males and females should be physical, e.g. 'males have facial hair' and/or 'females can have babies'.

Note: if genitals are mentioned, refer to them as 'female genitals/private parts' or 'male genitals/private parts' and/or by their correct names. Do not encourage the use of slang names. See this article for the reasons why: <https://e2epublishing.info/blog/2015/10/20/8-reasons-not-to-call-your-childs-genitals-these-pet-names>

Reflection

Ask students, 'Is there really any difference between males and females in the ways that really matter?' Discuss the need for us all to be inclusive and respectful of all people, regardless of gender, and to set the example to others in our lives. Inclusion can be extended further to being inclusive of all races, cultures, disabilities and those who identify as a different gender than the one assigned to them at birth.

Lesson 3: Equality in Leadership

Tuning In: Follow the Leader

Have students sit in a circle. Ask one student, ‘the detective’, to leave the room while a leader is chosen. Select a leader from the remaining students; this person’s job is to perform an action, such as clapping, stomping, wriggling fingers, etc., and the other students follow their lead. The leader should change their action every 10 seconds, or so. The detective observes the class, and has three attempts to guess the leader. Change student roles and play again, as time permits.

Whole Class Focus: Pearl the Leader

You will need: whiteboard, markers

Ask students, ‘What makes Pearl a good leader?’ Record responses on the whiteboard; these may reflect many of the strengths from lesson one. Ask, ‘How do you know she is a good leader?’ Discuss. Students should come to realise the link between good leadership and a happy crew who are treated fairly and will do what Pearl asks through respect, not fear.

Independent Task: Leaders in My Life

You will need: whiteboard, markers, A4 paper, coloured pencils

Ask students, ‘What is a leader?’ Discuss. Have them think about the leaders in their lives — these may include teachers, sporting coaches, family members, peers, older students, and so on. Have students draw a portrait of their chosen leader, and write their strengths and character traits around the outside. They may refer to the list of Pearl’s strengths for ideas.

Optional Activity: Guest Speaker

If there is a member of the community who is a leader within a role that challenges gender stereotypes, e.g. a female soccer coach, a male dance instructor, etc. invite them in to talk to the class about their role and responsibilities as a leader, how they came to find their passion in this area, and how they became a leader.

Reflection

Ask students, 'What makes a good leader? Do all good leaders lead in the same way? Does gender impact on leadership?' Discuss the idea that a good leader needs to be aware of their strengths and use these to their advantage; because of this, all leaders are different because our strengths are different. Everyone also has weaknesses and a good leader will recognise their own weaknesses, but see how others' strengths can help them overcome these. Gender does not affect leadership — the world has seen many excellent leaders and many poor leaders — both male and female.

Extension: Leadership Project

Have students complete a project on a leader of their choice. Students can devise research questions relevant to the lesson content, conduct research on their chosen leader and provide an evaluation on their leadership style.

Teaching notes written by Yale Mercieca

Strength Cards

Copy, laminate and cut out for classroom use.

I am good at helping others.	I am good at working on my own.	I am good at working in a team.	I get along well with others.
I am good at asking for help when I need it.	I can see when someone is upset and I will offer to help them.	I am good at finding different ways to solve a problem.	I am good at making others laugh.
People often say that I have good ideas.	I am good with thinking of new ideas.	I am kind and caring.	I love reading books.
I am good at solving problems.	I am good at sport.	I am good at science.	I often help others to complete their work.
I love being creative.	I am good at music.	People often join in with games I've thought of.	If I see someone is alone, I will offer to play with them.
I am good at maths.	I am good at cooking.	I am fair.	I always treat others with respect.
I set a good example to other students.	I am fun.	I am good at dancing.	I love taking care of animals.