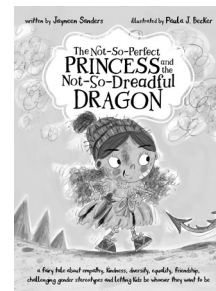


3 Lessons in Gender Equality and Respect



FOCUS TEXT: *The Not-So-Perfect Princess and the Not-So-Dreadful Dragon*
(ages 4–10 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.

Pre-note:

The focus text is introduced in lesson 2. For the lesson sequence to work as intended, **do not show the text to the class or have it on display in the classroom during or prior to lesson 1**. The sequence is intended to break down the traditional stereotypical views of society; but for this to be effective, students need to see how society has placed ideas of what is ‘normal’ and ‘acceptable’ without them even realizing. Not everyone fits into the neat box of normality as our social constructs would like them to — uniqueness should be celebrated and encouraged!

KEY OBJECTIVES

Children will understand that:

- social constructs provide very narrow gender stereotypes for what is expected for a girl or a boy
- there is more the same between genders than there is different
- gender does not dictate our personalities, the things we like or the games we play
- it's important to be true to yourself and be happy with who you are.

In these lessons children will:

- recognize that social constructs of gender exist, and have shaped the way we think and view the world

- break down the ideas within gendered social constructs
- realize that the things we like and the way we act are unrelated to gender
- understand that we are all equal — we have more in common than our differences.

For the lessons you will need:

- *The Not-So-Perfect Princess and the Not-So-Dreadful Dragon* (book)
- markers, whiteboard marker, coloured pencils
- A4/A3 paper
- poster paper
- 6-sided dice (large if possible)
- resource master: ‘About Girls and Boys Cards’

Lesson 1: Traditional Fairy Tales

Tuning In: A Typical Fairy Tale

You will need: an open space where students can sit and/or lay down comfortably

Have students sit or lay down on the floor in a comfortable position and close their eyes. Tell them that you are going to read them a story which may be similar to one they have heard before, and while you read, they are to visualize the story like a movie inside their minds. Read the following script to the students:

‘Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess. She lived in a castle with her mum and dad, who were the king and queen of all the land. Every day, right after breakfast, the princess liked to leave the palace grounds for a walk through the village and out to the mountains that bordered her kingdom. She loved nothing more than to walk to the top of the tallest mountain and look down at the kingdom. It was a wonderful view, and she felt like she could see the whole world from up there — her castle, the marketplace, the houses in the village and the fields of fruit and vegetables. The king and queen often told her to be careful in her travels and to not go too far on her own, for there were rumours of a fierce, fire-breathing dragon who lived in the darkest cave in the tallest mountain. But in all the days she had walked, the princess had never seen a dragon, nor seen any sign of a dragon. She had spotted other animals in her travels; like birds, rabbits, deer and even baby bears, but never a dragon. On this particular day, as she turned the last corner before she arrived at the top of the mountain, she heard a strange sound. It was a sound she had never heard before. She turned to where the sound was coming from, and she couldn’t believe what she saw! She was staring right at a huge green dragon, with golden scales and red spikes running all the way down its back, with the largest and sharpest spike on the tip of its tail. The princess was close enough to see its large, sharp teeth and a plume of smoke escaping its huge green nostrils. “This must be the fire-breathing dragon my parents warned me about!” thought the princess. Then she took a deep breath and ...’

Say, ‘I’m going to stop there. Take a minute to imagine what happens next in your story. When you are ready, open your eyes and we will all come together as a group.’ Provide students with no longer than a minute to visualize their own ending. Do not allow too much discussion over endings or characters at this stage to keep each student’s ideas as true to themselves as possible.

Independent Task: The Princess and the Dragon

You will need: A3 paper, coloured pencils

Have students draw a picture of their two main characters — the princess and the dragon — from their imaginary story. Tell them to include as much detail as they can and colour their work.

Whole Class Focus: Character Think Map

You will need: 2 large pieces of poster/butcher's paper and markers

Have students bring their drawing onto the floor with them. Provide each student with a short amount of time to share their work with the person next to them. Encourage students to share information about their characters, e.g. *What they are like. What they wear. What they like to do.* Next, ask, 'Are the characters you and your partner created similar or different? In what ways?' Discuss. It is expected that most students will present similar ideas on their characters, based on traditional fairy tales they have experienced. If any stand out as being different or going against these traditional views, discuss briefly with the class, praise them for their different thinking and explain that we'll be talking more about this in the next session; then move back to focussing on the traditional idea of a 'princess' and a 'dragon'.

Next, use a piece of poster paper to create a class 'Character Think Map' for the princess, based on the class drawings and ideas. Ask, 'What are some words you might use to describe your princess's personality?' Then, ask, 'How does she look? What kinds of things does she like doing? What games does she play? What does she like to wear?' Record ideas on the class 'Character Think Map'. Make the list as comprehensive as possible, building and expanding ideas as required. Repeat the process for the dragon on another piece of poster paper.

Note: these 'Character Think Maps' will be referred to in lesson 2, so keep them in a safe place (or on display).

Reflection

Have students sit in a circle and ask, 'Is the dragon a boy or a girl? Why do you say that? Could the dragon be a girl dragon? Why/Why not?' Discuss. Then, 'How about the princess — if we changed her to a prince, could we keep the same description? Why/Why not?' Discuss.

Lesson 2: Princess Petal and the Dragon

Tuning In: Hand Up If ...

Have students sit on the floor in a circle. When they hear a statement that applies to them, have them raise their hand/s — one hand up if they agree and two hands up if they strongly agree. Then it's hands down and everyone waits for the next statement.

Use the examples on page 4 or use the 'Character Think Maps' from lesson 1 to generate statements based on students' ideas, using the ideas on page 4 as a guide. The first statement is based on the idea that princesses wear nice dresses, and so on.

Stand up if ...

- you sometimes like to dress up in nice ‘party’ clothes
- you sometimes like to wear a comfy tracksuit or leggings
- you sometimes like to wear jewellery, like necklaces or earrings
- you sometimes like to be loud
- you sometimes like to be quiet
- you can think of a time where you have been brave
- you can think of a time where you have been scared
- you sometimes like to play ball games
- you sometimes like to sit and read a book

Whole Class Activity: *The Not-So-Perfect Princess and the Not-So-Dreadful Dragon*

You will need: *The Not-So-Perfect Princess and the Not-So-Dreadful Dragon* by Jayneen Sanders

Read *The Not-So-Perfect Princess and the Not-So-Dreadful Dragon* to the class. Discuss as necessary. Discussion questions are located on pages 36–37; select questions relevant to the class and the time available.

Whole Class Activity: Character Think Map

You will need: 2 large pieces of poster/butcher’s paper and markers

Repeat the ‘Character Think Map’ activity from lesson 1; this time using the characters from the focus text, i.e. Princess Petal and the dragon. As before, ask, ‘What are some words you would use to describe Princess Petal’s personality? How does she look? What kinds of things does she like doing? What games does she play? What does she like to wear?’ Repeat for the dragon.

Reflection

Display the four ‘Character Think Maps’ with the princesses side by side and the dragons side by side. Ask some or all of the following questions; these will be expanded on in lesson 3:

- How is Princess Petal different to the princess we imagined? Is it okay for a princess to act like Petal? Why/Why not?
- How is the dragon in the book different to the dragon we imagined? Is it okay for a dragon to act like the one in the book? Why/Why not?
- Does Princess Petal have anything in common with the dragon we imagined? Is this okay?

Lesson 3: Just Be Yourself!

Tuning In: My Favourite Things — Quick Response

You will need: a 6-sided dice (large if possible), whiteboard, whiteboard markers

Have students sit on the floor in a circle. List the following on the whiteboard:

1. Favourite sport
2. Favourite thing to do at home
3. Favourite thing to do at school
4. Favourite food
5. Favourite TV show (or book)
6. Favourite song or artist

In turn, have students roll the dice and respond according to the number rolled. The activity should be fast-paced and students should say the first idea that comes into their head. Let students know that there are no right or wrong answers, and if they have more than one favourite, tell them to just state one and next time the game is played they can say another.

If time allows, you may like to stop now and then and ask the class to show hands if they share the same favourite, e.g. if a couple of students land on 1 and say ‘basketball’ for their favourite sport, you may say, ‘I’ve heard basketball a couple of times now, who else has basketball as one of their favourite sports?’ Or, if someone gives a unique response, such as ‘archery’ you may say, ‘That’s a really interesting favourite; hands up if you’ve tried archery before. Hands up if you think it’s something you’d like to try in the future’, and so on. There is no need to stop and discuss every response, as you want the game to move quickly. You may have time to go around the circle again, or to repeat the activity at the end of the session.

Small Group Activity: About Girls and Boys

You will need: resource master ‘About Girls and Boys Cards’ (one sheet per 4 to 5 students, ideally copied to A3, laminated and cut out prior to class; these may be reused for subsequent classes)

Have students work in groups of 4 to 5 students. Provide each group with a set of cut up cards from resource master ‘About Girls and Boys Cards’. Have them locate the three heading cards (‘Boys only’, ‘Girls only’ and ‘Both girls and boys’). Now have them allocate all the other cards under these headings. While they complete the task, circulate the room asking questions on why they have placed the cards in given categories, to promote discussion within each group.

Whole Class Discussion: About Girls and Boys

You will need: one set of 'About Girls and Boys Cards' cut out and ready to stick on the board with either magnetic tape or Blu-tack.

Note: this task will depend on the class's response to the previous Small Group Activity. If all groups have already placed all cards in the 'Both girls and boys' category, a brief discussion will suffice, then move on to the next section of the lesson.

On the whiteboard, attach 'Boys only', 'Girls only' and 'Both girls and boys' cards. Have one student from each group (from the Small Group Activity) come up to the whiteboard and place their cards in the category that their group decided on. Discuss the allocation of the cards. Ask groups why they agree or disagree with the placement of other group's cards. The resulting conclusion by students should be that all the cards belong to the 'Both girls and boys' category. Our personalities, likes, emotional responses and abilities are not defined by our gender.

Note: if students aren't coming around to the idea, ask questions such as, 'Raise your hand if you can think of a time where you enjoyed playing dress-ups? Maybe for a party, a school dress-up day or a play?' Discuss that it doesn't mean that they want to dress up every day, but that it is something that boys and girls can, and do, both enjoy. And that's really very okay.

Independent Task: All About Me

You will need: A3 paper, coloured pencils

Have students draw a 'Character Think Map' of themselves. They may either draw a picture of themselves, or write their name in the middle of the page, then write about themselves around the outside. Use the same prompts as with the princess and dragon character maps, such as *What are some words you used to describe you personality? What do you look like? What kinds of things do you like doing? What games do you play? What do you like to wear?*, and so on. Students may draw ideas from any of the character maps or think of their own responses.

Reflection

Have students sit in a circle and ask, 'Does being a girl or a boy predict ... what your personality will be? ... the sports you like? ... the things you like to do?' Discuss. Then, ask, 'What have you learnt from this story and these lessons?' Discuss.

Teaching notes written by Yale Mercieca

About Girls and Boys Cards

Girls only	Boys only	Both girls and boys	Can be sensitive
Like to play dress-ups	Like to play sport	Like to climb trees	Can be loud
Can be brave	Can be shy	Can be strong	Can be scared
Can be quiet	Like to read books	Like to do craft	Like to play chasey
Like to get dirty	Like to stay clean	Like to wrestle	Cry when they're sad
Like to help others	Like dancing	Can be smart	Can be funny