

Gender Stereotypes and Me

(Years 5 & 6)



Classroom activity

Summary:

This activity provides students with an opportunity to reflect on gender stereotypes and how they inform our judgements of others as well as how they can limit our identities.

Duration:

30-40 minutes

Age group:

Key Stage 2 - Years 5 & 6

Learning objectives:

- Students understand what gender stereotypes are.
- Students can identify how gender stereotypes influence our thinking and the judgements that we make about others, which may be unfair or unkind.
- Students can recognise that gender stereotypes place expectations on all of us in terms of our behaviour and that they can narrow our interests, opportunities and how we express ourselves.

Materials required:

- List of characteristics (Appendix 1)

Instructions

Step 1: Making judgements based on gender stereotypes (10-15 minutes)

- Present a description of a person with a gender-neutral name (e.g. Sammy). Give out information about the person (see Appendix 1 for prompts or adapt).
- After each piece of information, ask the students to write down individually on a mini whiteboard if they think that Sammy is a boy or a girl and why. Students do not need to show their whiteboards and can change their mind at any point during the activity.
- At the end of the activity, ask students to show their whiteboards and explain their final choice. Write the key points on the board so that the class can see the reasons why Sammy might be a boy or girl. Once you have students' ideas written up on the board, explore each idea in turn, for example, does having long hair mean you are a girl? Does liking football mean you are a boy?
- Explain what is meant by the term 'gender stereotypes' and ask the class to come up with further examples – toys, games, hobbies, sports, appearance, clothes, emotions, behaviour, roles in family, jobs etc. Point out that we make assumptions and judgements about people based on these gender stereotypes.
- Returning to 'Sammy', ask the class if they have changed their mind about whether Sammy is a girl or boy? If so, why? Could Sammy be either a girl or a boy? Ask students to explain their thinking.

Step 2: Exploring the limits of gender stereotypes (10 minutes)

- Talk to students about the possibility of encountering people, for example online influencers, who try to tell us that boys/men and girls/women should act in certain ways and should be limited to certain activities and roles.
- Now ask the class to imagine that 'Sammy' is their friend and ask them to remove all the things that they think Sammy wouldn't be able to do if Sammy is a girl, according to so-called gender stereotypes rules. They could do it the other way round, if Sammy is a boy. What does this mean for Sammy and for all of us?

Step 3: Challenging gender stereotypes (10 minutes)

- Discuss with the class why gender stereotypes are harmful for boys and girls, men and women, in terms of limiting opportunities and roles. Overcoming gender stereotypes requires us to acknowledge that there are not hobbies, interests, toys, colours, sports, jobs etc. that are 'for girls' or 'for boys' and that we should question when we are told that we need to follow these gender stereotypes.
- Ask students for examples either from their personal experience or from media/famous people which break gender stereotype rules. Do they see this as a good/bad thing? Ask students to justify their ideas.



Appendix 1

Supporting information



Classroom
activity

Prompts for Step 1

This person...

- has a best friend called Amber
- has quite long hair
- can run really fast
- plays football at break and tennis on Saturdays
- is a really big Arsenal fan
- helps with the cooking at home
- has a favourite pink hoodie
- loves animals
- cries at sad films
- wants to help others when they are older, maybe as a vet or a doctor
- likes climbing trees
- likes Minecraft and FIFA on the Xbox