SOGI 123

2/3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & PHE

FAIRY TALES AND GENDER ROLES

RATIONALE

This lesson will allow students to explore factors that influence self-identity, including gender roles and identity. Fairy Tales are a wonderful genre to explore how gender has been portrayed historically and in current times. Traditional fairy tales and fractured ones (modern day ones with a twist) allow primary students to think critically about how men and women are portrayed and compare these portrayals to themselves, their families and communities.

CURRICULUM REFERENCES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, 2

- **Big Ideas:** Everyone has a unique story to share.
- **Curricular Competencies:** Demonstrate awareness of the role that story plays in personal, family, and community identity, create stories and other age-appropriate texts to deepen awareness of self, family, and community.
- **Content:** Elements of story.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, 3

- **Big Ideas:** Stories and other texts help us learn about ourselves, our families, and our communities.
- **Curricular Competencies:** Explain the role that story plays in personal, family, and community identity, create stories and other texts to deepen awareness of self, family, and community.
- **Content:** Elements of story.

PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION, 2/3

- **Big Ideas:** Our physical, emotional, and mental health are interconnected.
- **Curricular Competencies:** Identify personal skills, interests, and preferences and describe how they influence self-identity.
- **Content:** Factors that influence self-identity.

DOWNLOAD LESSON PLAN

BACK TO INDEX

(THE BELOW IS COPIED FROM ABOVE FOR EASY-TO-READ VERSION)

RATIONALE

This lesson will allow students to explore factors that influence self-identity, including gender roles and identity. Fairy Tales are a wonderful genre to explore how gender has

www.SOGIeducation.org

been portrayed historically and in current times. Traditional fairy tales and fractured ones (modern day ones with a twist) allow primary students to think critically about how men and women are portrayed and compare these portrayals to themselves, their families and communities.

CURRICULUM REFERENCES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, 2

- **Big Ideas:** Everyone has a unique story to share.
- **Curricular Competencies:** Demonstrate awareness of the role that story plays in personal, family, and community identity, create stories and other age-appropriate texts to deepen awareness of self, family, and community.
- **Content:** Elements of story.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, 3

- **Big Ideas:** Stories and other texts help us learn about ourselves, our families, and our communities.
- **Curricular Competencies:** Explain the role that story plays in personal, family, and community identity, create stories and other texts to deepen awareness of self, family, and community.
- **Content:** Elements of story.

PHYSICAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION, 2/3

- **Big Ideas:** Our physical, emotional, and mental health are interconnected.
- **Curricular Competencies:** Identify personal skills, interests, and preferences and describe how they influence self-identity.
- **Content:** Factors that influence self-identity.

Lesson Plan: Fairy Tales and Gender Roles
(based on content from *the Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know*)

Grade/subject(s): ELA 2/3 & PHE 2/3
Big Ideas:
- Stories and other texts help us learn about ourselves, our families, and our communities.
- Our physical, emotional, and mental health are interconnected

Competencies:
- Demonstrate awareness and explain the role that story plays in personal, family, and community identity (ELA)
- Identify personal skills, interests, and preferences and describe how they influence self-identity (PHE)

www.SOGIeducation.org

Content:
- Factors that influence self-identity

Core Competencies:
- Communication – Acquire, interpret and present information (includes inquiries)
- Creative Thinking – Generating ideas
- Critical Thinking – Analyze and critique
- Personal and Cultural Identity – Relationships and cultural contexts
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility – Self-determination
- Social Responsibility – Valuing Diversity

First Peoples Principles of Learning:
- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place)
- Learning is embedded in memory, history and story
- Learning requires exploration of one's identity

Rationale

Fairy Tales are a wonderful genre to explore how gender has been portrayed historically and in current times. Traditional fairy tales and fractured ones (modern day ones with a twist) allow primary students to think critically about how men and women are portrayed and compare these portrayals to their own families and communities. This instructional sample allows students to explore relationship dynamics, and factors that influence self-identity, through a gender-based lens.

Teaching Strategies and Questions

Read a traditional (gendered) fairy tale (see list below for examples), and ask students what they notice about how the princesses and princes are being portrayed in the story. You might ask some open-ended questions like the following:
- How are princesses usually portrayed at the start of a story? (i.e. Cinderella, Rapunzel)
- Is the princess waiting around for something or someone to come to her rescue or make her happy? If so, whom?
- Towards the end of the story, what makes the princess happy? Why do you think that might be?

Next, read a non-traditional fairy tale (see list below for examples), and ask students questions such as:
- In your world (i.e. modern times), which princesses and princes are more realistic characters? Why do you think that? Who does each princess or prince remind you of in real life?
- Can a prince or princess be single, live with or be married to someone of the same gender and live happily ever after? Why or why not? Do you know anyone who is happily single, lives with or is married to someone of the same gender?
- How might a princess or prince be treated by others in the kingdom if they don't look or act like they are expected to by many of the other princesses or princes?

You might hold a secret ballot on a particular question to have students record their thoughts without being influenced by peer pressure or gender bias. You can then discuss the results of the ballot and why someone might believe that one fairy tale character may be more representative of girls in today's times.

Here are some stories you might want to compare and contrast with students.
- **Traditional Fairy Tales (Gendered)**
  - *Cinderella*
  - *Capable*

- o *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
- o *The Ugly Duckling*
- o *Rapunzel*
- o *The Princess and the Pea*
- **Non-traditional Fairy Tales**
  - o *Prince Cinders*
  - o *Snow White in New York*
  - o *King and King*
  - o *The Sissy Duckling*
  - o *Princess Smarty Pants*
  - o *The Paper Bag Princess*
  - o *The Worst Princess*

Possible Extensions

Introduce students to the concept of *sexism* - the belief that male gender identities and masculine gender expressions are superior to female and/or feminine ones. Then read stories together and use any of the following strategies:

- Pick a traditional fairy tale and read it aloud. Ask students to stop you when they see or hear a sexist incident in the story. Students call out "Stop!" when they want you to cease reading. They must then identify the sexist incident before you can proceed with the story.
- Have students take a traditional fairy tale and work together in small groups to write a new ending for it. Ask them to create one where the princess and prince live in a more realistic, independent manner.
- Use the book, *King and King*, to prompt student thinking about marriage equality. Ask students if two princes or princesses can get married or not. Read the story and then debrief student reactions to the book. Ask students: What did you notice in this fairy tale that was unexpected? How did you react to the part of the story where the two princes got married? Why? What messages have you heard about who can or cannot marry?
- Ask students to write their own non-traditional fairy tale where the prince or princess is portrayed in a non-gender specific role. Tell them you are looking for non-sexist behaviour in at least one character.
- Brainstorm with the class or in small groups what a non-sexist or non-gender binary monarchy would look like. How would it be ruled? What would the laws be to prevent the bullying of queens or kings who weren't like some of the others?
- Have students make a T-chart of "Kingdoms vs. Genderless Monarchies". Ask them to compare and contrast this with how a typical monarchy is organized and ruled.
- Have students create written, visual or mixed media "Royal Decrees" on how they should treat each other in your classroom so that no one is bullied and can be true to themselves.

These short videos can also be used to extend the conversation:

#Like a Girl - 2014 (3:18) - Prim/Int/Sec
This "Always" ad compares our stereotypical ideas about the term "Like A Girl" to the ideas of young girls themselves.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs

#Like a Girl – Unstoppable 2015 (2:44) - Prim/Int/Sec
This "Always" ad continues the discussion about the messages society gives to girls which reduces confidence and often results in them quitting certain activities.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VhB3l1gCz2E

Inspire Her Mind - 2014 (1:02) - Int/Sec
This "Verizon" ad movingly demonstrates the negative impact of gender stereotypes on girls.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XP3cyRRAfX0

If We Used Childhood Gender Stereotypes on Adults - 2014 (1:47) - Int/Sec
This comical BuzzFeed video imagines what the workplace would look like if we subjected adults to the same gender messages we regularly send to children.
https://youtu.be/381belOZreA

Assessment
- Can students define sexism in their own words?
- Can students describe some simple negative effects of sexism?
- Are students able to identify one way in which sexism is portrayed in traditional fairy tales?
- Use formative assessment strategies to determine if students understand how monarchs are bound by tradition and societal expectations to live in a gender binary manner.
- Ask students to identify what events within their non-traditional Fairytales helped free the characters from their kingdom's expectations. Have them hypothesize how they might feel if they were that character before and after the event which granted them more personal freedom. Draw parallels to people lives within your school or community.

Full lesson plan available in: The Gender Spectrum: What Educators Need to Know (page 33)

Book Titles
- Bone, Jeffrey and Lisa Bone. Not Every Princess. 32p. Magination Press; $14.95. (978-1433816475). Grades Pre-K-3.(Anyone can be a princess, a pirate, a mermaid, or a superhero. Demonstrated through rhyming text and whimsical illustrations, whatever you can imagine, you can become)
- Cheryl Kilodavis and Suzanne DeSimone. My Princess Boy. 36p. Aladdin; $19.31 (9781442429888). Age 4-8. (Inspired by the author's son, and by her own initial struggles to understand, this is a heart-warming book about unconditional love and one remarkable family)