

Lesson Plan: Gender Identity and Pronouns

Grade: Adaptable for K-3 **Subject:** ELA / Social Studies / PHE

Suggested prior lesson: Expanding Notions of Gender in Early Primary (SOGleducation.org/sogi3)

Rationale

Storybooks are an excellent way to learn about ourselves as well as the world around us. By incorporating books with gender-diverse characters in the classroom, students will appreciate the gender spectrum, fluidity, and the use of gender pronouns. Students who do not identify within a rigid gender binary or with the gender they were assigned at birth may feel validated by seeing their lived experience respectfully represented in the classroom.

Everyone has a unique story to share. Stories help us learn about ourselves, our families, and other people. Curiosity and wonder leads us to new discoveries about ourselves and the world around us. By reading *10,000 Dresses*, we build personal and social competency, respect for difference and acknowledgement of gender diversity and gender identity.

Curriculum References

ELA K-3:

- Engage actively as listeners, viewers, and readers to develop understanding of self, identity, and community (K/1/2/3)
- Recognize the importance of story in personal, family, and community identity (K/1)
- Demonstrate awareness of (2) / Explain (3) the role that story plays in personal, family, and community identity
- Use personal experience and knowledge to connect to stories and other texts to make meaning (2/3)

Social Studies K-3:

- Explore the ways in which individuals differ and are the same (K)
- Explore different perspectives on people, places, issues, or events in their lives (1)
- Explain why people's beliefs, values, worldviews, experiences, and roles give them different perspectives on people, places, issues or events (2/3)

PHE K-3:

- Develop and demonstrate respectful behaviour when participating in activities with others (K/1/2)
- Identify caring behaviours among classmates and within families (K/1)
- Identify personal skills, interests, and preferences and describe how they influence self-identity (2)
- Describe factors that influence mental well-being and self-identity (3)
- Nature and consequences of bullying (3)

Student Objectives

Students will be able to comprehend and connect with the story through reading, listening, and viewing. Students will begin to develop an understanding of gender identity. Students will engage as listeners, viewers and readers to develop an understanding of the use of gender pronouns, "she", "he", and "they." Students will begin to appreciate that when we use a person's correct gender pronouns, we *respect* that person and validate their *gender identity*. Using the role-play activity, students will be able to draw connections based on prior knowledge, comprehend various elements within the story, and draw connections between the story and the world around them.

Materials Needed

The picture book, *10,000 Dresses* by Marcus Ewert
Whiteboard or chart paper.

Teacher Notes

- Discussions and role-play activity should take place during one lesson
- See part 2 for worksheet activities to take place on a separate day

Read-Aloud: 20 minutes

1. *Prior to reading the story*, ask students to make some predictions based on the cover and title of the story and to keep things in the back of their minds for discussion and worksheets afterwards
 - Ask students, “Based on the cover, what do we think we know about Bailey?” If the students make guesses about gender, ask what clues they are using.
2. Read the story as a class
 - a) *During the read-aloud* possible questions to ask students:
 - (At various points in the story) How do you think Bailey is feeling right now?
 - If you were Bailey’s friend, what would you say to her?
 - What do you think Bailey should do?

Discussion: 15-20 minutes

- 1) Have these sentences pre-written on the board or chart paper. “*Bailey loved the dress with all her heart.*” “*She went to find her mother.*” Show students the page, then show and read the sentences and ask what clues tell us that Bailey is a girl. Discuss how pronouns help us to talk without saying a person’s name over and over. Think of some other examples with students.
- 2) Turn to page 9. Explain to students that this is a really interesting page because Bailey’s mom says that Bailey is a boy. A little while later, Bailey’s father and brother also call her a boy. Ask students:
 - Why do you think they do that?
 - What do you think it means when Bailey says she “doesn’t feel like a boy”?

Possible teacher response: When babies are born, doctors and parents usually decide if the baby is a boy or girl. However, not everybody will grow up feeling like or *identifying* as a boy or a girl, just like Bailey.
- 3) Ask students, do you think Bailey will always feel this way?
Possible Teacher Response: For some people, these feelings are very strong and forever. Sometimes people who feel this way use the word Transgender to describe themselves. For other people, these feelings are not as strong and may change over time. What is important is for everyone to be respected and to be themselves.
- 4) Ask students, what does it mean to feel like a boy? Or feel like a girl? Do people ever feel like a bit of both?
Possible Teacher Response: If this feeling of being both is strong, people sometimes don’t like being called “he” or “she”. Often people who feel this way like us to use “they” or “them”, just like when we don’t know the gender of a person. Eg. “I’m not sure who my teacher will be next year, but I’m sure they will be great!” It is important to respect and use the names and pronouns that people want us to use.
- 5) Ask students, how do you think Bailey feels when her mother, father, and brother all call her a boy? What do you think Bailey’s family should do instead?
- 6) Turn to the last page of the book. Ask students, how does Bailey feel when Laurel says, “you’re the coolest girl I’ve ever met, Bailey!”?

- 7) Ask students, if Bailey was a student in our class what could we do to make her feel good about who she is?"

Possible teacher response: call Bailey "she", do not call Bailey a boy, invite her to play a game, etc.

Role Play Extension

Explain role-play pronoun activity with students as a group. Each student will get a piece of paper with a person's name and pronoun. As students walk around the classroom, everyone will take turns introducing themselves and asking each other what their name and pronouns are (based on their cards). To demonstrate, the teacher will choose a student volunteer and each take a name/pronoun card.

Teacher: Hi, what is your name?

Student (reading from card): My name is Alex (for example).

Teacher: Nice to meet you, Alex. Do you want me to call you he, she, or they?

Student: Please call me they.

Take this opportunity to see if students have any questions.

Student Activity: 5 minutes

Hand out name/pronoun cards (try not to use familiar student names) to students and ask everybody to walk around the classroom and introduce themselves/ask each other what their names are and what pronouns they should use (based on the cards). Remind them that in this game we're pretending to be other people and not ourselves. If students start to get silly or act out gender stereotypes (based on their card) take this as an opportunity to discuss this – for example, explaining how acting out a specific group of people or particular person in an exaggerated way isn't real and can be hurtful.

Follow-Up

Please see part 2 for additional related activities and worksheets.

Follow-up discussions over time are encouraged to solidify the information presented in this lesson. It is important to model respect for pronouns and gender identity throughout the year– this could take place by asking a volunteer in the classroom what their name is and if we should call them "he", "she", or "they", or bringing up the discussion when reading another storybook.

Adaptations

Students who may need more time with the book directly (i.e. if they couldn't hear the reading of the story, see the pictures, or simply require more time) are encouraged to work in smaller groups with the teacher or teacher's aide to go over the story again. The book may also be kept at the front of the classroom or on the teacher's desk for students to look through as needed. For younger grades, the role-play activity may need to be done as a group where the teacher models the name/pronoun cards with students.

Lesson Plan: Gender Identity and Pronouns – Part 2 Lesson Plan for Worksheet Activities

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Materials Needed

The picture book, *10,000 Dresses* by Marcus Ewert
Colouring material
Printed worksheets

Teacher Notes

- Part 2 should take place on a separate day from part 1 so as to not overwhelm students with information
- Re-read *10,000 Dresses* a second time and then assign the worksheets. Re-reading the story may also provide students more time to think about the plot and characters
- Allocate enough time for students to begin work on the worksheets, however these may be continued over multiple days
- Use worksheets adaptable for grade K-3. For example, kindergarten students may focus on the “Story Retelling” worksheet, while grades 1-3 may focus more on writing and comprehension

Read-Aloud and Discussion: 15-20 minutes

- Tell students that you are going to re-read *10,000 Dresses*
- Allow time for any comments or questions that come up during the read-aloud
- This is a great opportunity to revisit some previous discussions on gender and pronoun use from previous lesson

Teacher Modelling: 5 minutes

Explain various elements of the worksheet(s) with students as a group. Ask if there are any questions. Teachers may provide examples for filling in the worksheets. For instance, “Bailey feels happy that she has a friend who can help her make dresses”, “Bailey feels respected when people call her ‘she’”, “Bailey feels sad when people call her a boy”.

Student Activity: 30 minutes

After reading the story, ask students to work on worksheet(s). Worksheets may be spread out over many lessons or used as teacher sees fit:

Ask students to design (using crayons or pencil crayons) a dress for Bailey, using elements from the story and other outside knowledge. Discourage students from drastically altering Bailey’s appearance (i.e. do not “make her into a boy” or overtly change her hair or physical appearance). Should this occur, begin a group discussion on respecting Bailey by designing a dress that *she* would like. Discussion may also lead to gender fluidity – boys and girls do not look, behave, or feel just one certain way. “Bailey is/can/feels”, “I see, I think, I wonder...” and “Predicting character feelings” asks students to draw upon their predictions prior to reading the story, thoughts and curiosities while reading the story, and any conclusions, lingering thoughts, or future predictions after the story.

Follow-Up

Depending on which worksheets the teacher decides to use, work may be continued over a few lessons. Students may hand work in for assessment (elements of story, story comprehension, letter formation, sentence structure, conventions). A follow-up discussion is encouraged, should anything come up in student responses on the worksheets (for example, homophobia or transphobia).

Adaptations

Students who may need more time with the book directly (i.e. if they couldn't hear the reading of the story, see the pictures, or simply require more time) are encouraged to work in smaller groups with the teacher or teacher's aide to go over the story again. The book may also be kept at the front of the classroom or on the teacher's desk for students to look through as needed. More time (or fewer worksheets) may be allocated to students who need more time to complete tasks.