

SEEING LIFE IN STEREO?

Level: 2nd cycle of high school

Duration: 6 periods of 75 minutes + homework

Goal: To bring students to recognize the construction of gender as a binary system and the impacts of gender stereotypes.

Summary: After reflecting on gender stereotypes, students examine how these come about and what their impacts are. In order to learn more about these new concepts, students create a project which will show how one can become free of gender stereotypes.

LINKS WITH THE PROGRAMME	
Broad areas of learning	Citizenship and Community Life.
Educational Aim	To enable students to take part in the democratic life of the class or the school and develop an attitude of openness to the world and respect for diversity.
Focus of Development	Participation, cooperation and solidarity.
COMPETENCIES	
Interdisciplinary competencies	Reflects on ethical questions Engages in Dialogue
Programme theme	Tolerance
Concepts developed	Ethical choice, community life and recognition of others.

Acknowledgements: This Learning and evaluation situation (LES) was inspired by activities proposed on the following websites: pridenet.ca/wp-content/uploads/the-gender-spectrum.pdf and www.advocatesforyouth.org

STEP 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT

2 MIN

A respect for differences to improve our well-being and community life is at the heart of acceptance. In this LES, we will look at different ways we use to express ourselves as women or men, and the importance of respecting these different expressions.

STEP 2: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DISCUSSION RULES

15 MIN

The following rules must be agreed upon by the group in order to ensure a safe space for discussion:

Respect Others: You will hear ideas that may be different or new to you, and opinions with which you may disagree. As you participate and interact, try to take in new information without judgement and to keep an open mind. Make sure that your words and body language reflect a respectful attitude towards others. Learn by listening to others.

Speak from the "I": Speak from your own personal experiences and try not to judge the experiences of others. Use I-statements such as "I feel..." or "In my experience...". Avoid "You should..." or "You all think that..." statements and generalizations of any kind.


Ask Questions: Much of the information we will cover will be new to many of you. Feel free to ask any questions that come up for you – either during the activity or privately afterwards – without fear that they are too "silly." Make sure to phrase all questions in respectful and nonjudgmental ways.

Respect Confidentiality: Please make sure that everything said in the room stays in the room. When sharing personal anecdotes, make sure to avoid using the real names of other people.

Share "Air Time": While you are encouraged to express your ideas and opinions, please do not monopolize the group's time. Help create a safe space in which everyone can speak. No one, however, is obliged to speak. "Passing" is okay.

STEP 3: INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF STEREOTYPE

50 MIN

- A** Distribute the expressions document (which students must cut with scissors) and the feminine masculine document to pairs of students.
- B** Ask the students to sort the expressions into categories where they would fit best: feminine, mostly feminine, feminine or masculine, mostly masculine, and masculine.
- C** When pooling their answers, students must justify their choices.
- D** Ask the students which expressions apply to men only, and which apply to women only. If any expression should receive a unanimous vote, take the discussion further by questioning the students. *For example, if the students indicate that "this person is an auto mechanic" ought to be in the "men" category, ask them what would prevent a woman from being an auto mechanic.*
- E**  Certain expressions are linked to sexual orientation and not to identity or gender expression. Examples include: "this person wants to kiss a woman lovingly" or "this person wants to kiss a man lovingly." Yet, the valorisation of heterosexuality, homosexuality or bisexuality play an important role in defining "virility" or "femininity." This is why it is pertinent to propose these expressions in the context of this activity. When students pool their answers, it is important to establish this distinction with the students. In fact, gay men are often associated with femininity and lesbians with masculinity, while in reality gay men may also be considered very masculine (football players, for example) and lesbians may be considered very feminine (like certain movie stars).
- F** 5. Ask the students whether they know what we call characteristics which are abusively attributed to an entire group. (These are called "stereotypes.") *If the students propose the word "prejudice," explain that prejudice (judgements concerning a person or thing) emerge from stereotypes.*

STEP 3 (CONTINUED)

Etymology

The word **stereotype** is formed from the Greek word *stereos* which means *solid*, and the word *typos* which means *model*. Originally, it referred to a printing process which permitted the reproduction of an identical page by using a layout of typefaces (or cast letters).

DEFINITIONS

A **stereotype** is a simplified generalization applied to an entire group of persons, with no consideration given to individual differences. Stereotypes are fixed images relating to a belief system and are simplifications of reality.

Examples:

- Everyone who lives in this neighbourhood is dangerous.
- All bosses are tyrannical.
- Poor people are lazy.

The word **prejudice** means to judge before. It involves making a value judgement.

To be prejudiced means to make an inconsiderate and definite judgement on a person or a group of persons without knowing them sufficiently. Prejudice is a preconceived idea on a person or a group of persons and is always based on a stereotype.

Examples:

- This student is good in Mathematics. It's normal! He's Chinese.
- Of course she spends Saturdays at the shopping centre; like all girls!
- This year I'm in a class with mostly boys. It will be chaos!

STEP 4 : HOW ARE DIFFERENT SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS MADE? AN INTRODUCTION TO GENDER.

75 MIN

- A** On the blackboard, write the quote by Simone de Beauvoir: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."
- B** Ask the students to write what they think on their **answer sheet**. Indicate that it is possible to extend this reflection to men. Students share their responses.
- C** Distribute the **documents package** and ask students to read the different documents and note what links them to the quote by Simone de Beauvoir (taking the time to extend this reflection to men).
- D** Students get together in groups of four and share their thoughts. They then write a 300-word text which summarizes their understanding of the construction and reinforcement of gender stereotypes relating to "feminine" and "masculine."
- E** The class pools its thoughts.
- F** You can now explain to students that the social constructs of "feminine" and "masculine" are called "gender" and that the stereotypes mentioned in Step 3 are called "gender stereotypes." These stereotypes are more powerful than we think, as their origin seems to be natural. The example of boys who hide their pleasure in playing with Barbie dolls shows that we are affected by the societal messages we integrate into our lives.

STEP 4 (CONTINUED)

DEFINITIONS

Gender: The state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones).

Gender Stereotypes: Gender stereotypes are simplistic generalizations about the gender attributes, differences, and roles of individuals and/or groups. They are fixed ideas about men's and women's traits and capabilities and how people should behave, based on their gender.

STEP 5: WHAT IMPACT DO STEREOTYPES HAVE?

40 MIN

- A** As we learned in Step III, stereotypes do exist and students are able to identify them after an in-depth discussion. Nevertheless, students may have integrated some stereotypes into their belief systems (you might want to name some examples of stereotypes which the many students agreed upon). Most of the time we tend to conform to the expectations of our group.
- B** Show the **video 'The Mask You Live In'**. Give students time to write their own reflections and questions concerning this video in their **impact** document.
- C** Show the **video 'Why Aren't Women Choosing Science Careers?'** and give students time to write their own reflections and questions concerning this video in their student document.
- D** Organize the class into teams made up of only boys and only girls. Ask the students to debate the content of the first video, and then the second.
- E** **The following questions may be used to guide the discussion:**
- According to the video, what stereotypes affect boys? Girls?
 - What impact do these stereotypes have?
 - Have you ever thought about this phenomenon before?
 - How did you feel when you watched the video?
 - Do gender stereotypes come from the exterior or the interior?
 - Have you already observed what is explained in the video?
- F** Pooling answers: Gender stereotypes limit people, who end up integrating them and conforming. And this, in turn, causes them to be reinforced.

STEP 6: GENDER IDENTITY, GENDER EXPRESSIONS, SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION: A CONTINUUM

35 MIN

- A** Cut out the **continuum** document into a series of cards and distribute the cards to the students in pairs.
- B** The students complete the exercise.
- C** After the students pool their answers, respond to their inquiries by using the **vocabulary** document.

STEP 7: FREE YOURSELF OF GENDER STEREOTYPES

150 MINUTES + HOMEWORK

Distribute the **Free yourself** document. In teams of four, and using one of the proposed story lines, students are asked to create a comic strip, a skit or a short film showing how one can become free of gender stereotypes to improve well-being and community life. Students will then present their works to the rest of the class.