



Toys and gender

Lesson plan for primary schools

Ages 7-9 (Lower KS2 / Curriculum for Excellence 1st level)

www.lettoysbetoys.org.uk/lesson-plans/

Curriculum

England, Wales and Northern Ireland:

PSHE, including media literacy, Design and Technology

Scotland:

Health and Wellbeing, Expressive Arts (including art and design), Technologies

Learning objectives

Children will learn to:

- challenge gender stereotypes
- start to understand influence of the media, news and advertising

Who can do this?

Most children in this age range will be able to understand the ideas in this lesson plan.

Activity 1: Talk about toys

Whole class ** 10 minutes

- Ask the class what their favourite toys are and why. What common ground is there between the genders in their answers?
- If there is time, arrange an anonymous poll the previous day or lesson: ask each child to write down their favourite toy and why they like it on a piece of paper and put it in a box. Collate the answers in a chart. Create another chart during the lesson of the children's favourite toys and see how that second chart compares to the first anonymous chart.
- Choose a selection of toys: a doll, a car, a pink toy, a board game, loom bands or another topical toy.
- Show to the class and ask them 'Who is this toy for?'
- Wait to see if the children respond with ideas of gender.
- If so, ask why they think it's a girl toy or a boy toy.

Activity 2: Watch film clip on toy stereotypes

Whole class ** 20 minutes

- Watch Newsround report on toys, children and stereotypes
www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/24211824
- Read some of the comments underneath the film

Ask the class:

- What did you think of the film? Do you agree that shops shouldn't have signs? Why or why not?
- Does labelling toys 'for boys' or 'for girls' put you off playing with them?
- Write your own comment for the Newsround website. What would you like to say?

Activity 3: Toys and advertising

Whole class ** 30 minutes

Explain what an advert is and how they can be on TV, in magazines, on billboards or on the internet. Ask the children to brainstorm what adverts they've watched or seen recently. Watch an advert at www.youtube.com/user/RemixingGender or choose a (current) printed advert. How does this advert let us know that this toy is aimed at a boy or a girl?

Ask the class to consider:

- colour
- gender of child in the picture
- words used eg. strong / pretty / adventurer etc

Toys in history: compare old and new adverts at
uk.pinterest.com/lettoysbetoys/challenging-gender-stereotypes-in-the-classroom/.

Were toys always as gendered as they are now?

- 1981 Lego ad 'What it is, is beautiful'
- 1976 Fisher Price toy ad

Get a plain cardboard box – one per table – and design packaging or a poster to appeal to both boys and girls. Do a brainstorm of how toys might appeal to boys and girls simultaneously. Introduce the words 'unisex' and 'gender-neutral'. Ask the children for suggestions which they can then implement when they create their designs. Look at:

- colours
- showing both boys and girls playing with the toy
- what adjectives could be used to describe the toy

Cross-curricular suggestions

Maths

Data handling for Activity 1. Count up how many children in the class like different toys, survey other classes and present the information back in a table or a graph. Could include the anonymous voting at the very beginning about favourite toys.

You could also ask children to research the toys that younger classes or younger brothers and sisters actually play with versus what they are 'supposed' to play with and use that as a data collection exercise.

Design and Technology / Technologies

Design, make and evaluate cycle for Activity 3. Plan the packaging design first, make notes about elements to include, or make a mood-board and then get feedback on it, and reflect on how effective it is.

History / Social Studies

Verbal discussion in Activity 3 about old and new adverts would connect to the topic on toys through the ages.

Literacy

Connect Activity 2 and Activity 3 to persuasive writing, speaking and listening. Watch the Newsround report and make notes on the arguments used as a preparation for holding their own debate. Examine the advertisements as a preliminary to persuasive writing and write down all the adjectives used.

This lesson plan has been developed by Let Toys Be Toys as part of our work to help challenge gender stereotypes. Many thanks to the teachers who helped with their advice and feedback. If you have any feedback or additional ideas, please contact us at lettoysbetoys@gmail.com