



Toys and gender

Lesson plan for primary schools

Ages 4 to 6 (Reception & Y1/ Early level)

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Curriculum

England and Northern Ireland

Reception / Y1: Understanding the World: People and Communities
Year 1: PSHE

Wales:

Reception and Year 1: Understanding the World: People and Communities

Scotland:

Early level / Primary 1: Health and Wellbeing

Learning objectives

Development Matters

- Knows some of the things that make them unique, and can talk about some of the similarities and differences in relation to friends or family.

Early Learning Goals

- Children know that other children don't always enjoy the same things, and are sensitive to this. They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others.

PSHE, Health and Wellbeing (From SEAL Materials)

- 1d) to think about themselves and
- 1a) to recognise what they like and dislike.
- 4c) to identify and respect the differences and similarities between people.

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 difference, talk about toys

Whole class or two smaller groups 10 minutes**

Pass a special object (e.g. a shell) around a circle – ask the children to describe their hair – give some examples first (short and brown, long and blonde with hair clips, on my shoulders and brown-black, black and soft and in a ponytail, curly and reddish golden brown etc).

- Ask 'do we all have the same hair?' Would it be boring if we all had the same hair? (You might want to draw or show two very simple pictures with two very simple hair styles on the board. Imagine if we all had to choose between just these two...).

Show either a range of pictures of different toys or place a range of real toys in the middle of the circle.

- Ask the children 'who is this toy for?' If they respond with 'for girls' or 'for boys' ask them why.
- Talk about how there are so many different toys in the world for us to enjoy – there is no such thing as 'boys' things' and 'girls' things' – just as we are all different, the toys we all like are different. It's OK to like some toys instead of others – but they can always pick any toys that they like regardless of the colour, what they are made of, whether they look 'boyish' or 'girly' etc. Is it fun/interesting – is all that matters!

H&S note: you could mention to older children that toys have age recommendations on, e.g. toys with small parts – we should think about that when choosing toys for ourselves or when having toys around younger children they know.

Activity 2:

Whole class in pairs or individually ** 10 minutes each

- Draw or paint a picture of a favourite toy. While child is drawing, talk about how we all like different toys. Give some examples of toys that you liked as a child, that your siblings liked or that your own children like.
- Cut out pictures of toys that you like from a selection, stick these on a piece of card (note: try not to use toy catalogues for this as they are often overtly or discreetly stereotyped– Screen capture images or use clip art images or online images which are more generic (e.g. no obvious colour backgrounds). Incorporate some of the key questions from the draw/paint activity.

Can be incorporated into Reception continuous provision.

Year 1 can be as a follow-on from the whole class input; more able Y1's could write underneath the first two activities about which toys they like and why.

Activity 3: 'Provocation' box

Whole class ** 20 minutes

Create a 'provocation box' – a small selection of toys for the class. Choose either to present the toys as one collection of 'non-stereotypical' toys or two collections of 'girls' toys' and 'boys' toys.

Children can simply explore these and look at them, or have some sorting rings or boxes for them to look at sorting the toys in different ways (soft, wooden, electronic, animals/not animals etc). Smaller toys work best.

Adult can ask:

- which toys do you like in this box – why
- what colours are on the toys
- does it matter what colour the toy is
- is it OK for us all to like different toys
- which toy would you choose for X to play with and why (another child or adult)
- what do you like and how do they make you feel?

Trace out large outlines of simple toys – a teddy, doll, car, ball. Children can help to paint or collage these in contrasting colours e.g. a purple car with yellow spots, a green bear with a pink bow tie, a blue doll etc). Incorporate some of the key questions from the 'provocation box' activity.

- Use some of the work produced above for a class display titled 'we all enjoy lots of different toys!' or similar.

Note: those children who make choices which we might think are 'stereotypical' are equally valid and, at this young age, adults can add their own ideas and ask further questions about their choices but be cautious of obviously or discreetly 'approving' or 'disapproving' of any of the children's comments (from your words, tone of voice, facial expression) throughout all of the above activities.

Ideally this lesson should be a starting point rather than a standalone. Each activity could be done on one day a week over a few weeks and then returned to at different times in the term or year. Encourage parents, staff and older pupils to note how younger children can be less gendered.

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