

Learning objective and success criteria	Before the lesson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore stereotypes in fictional characters and think about how these might influence us • I understand how there are established stereotypes for both genders • I can identify fictional characters who reinforce gender stereotypes • I understand that stereotyped characters might influence children • I can explain the negative impact of stereotypes 	<p>Have ready</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of story books to prompt the childrens' thinking about characters
Attention grabber	
<p>Put the children into groups (include a mix of boys and girls). Ask the groups to write down as many characters as they can think of from books, films and TV programmes. They need to write the name of each character on a separate piece of paper or a sticky note. As they work go round the groups and give prompts such as characters from traditional tales, nursery rhymes, children's television and cartoons.</p> <p>At the end of the activity ask groups to share some of their characters. Other groups can add any they have forgotten.</p> <p>Key questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What characters are we aware of? 	
Main event	

Explain to the children that you are going to look at these characters during the lesson and they will be asked to sort them in different ways. Start off by asking the children to sort the characters into male, female and neither/unknown.

Explain that during the rest of the lesson they will be focussing on gender stereotypes. Check the children remember what a stereotype is i.e. making an assumption about a group of people based on a shared characteristic. Make sure they know what the word gender means i.e the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that society considers appropriate for men and women. For example, males like adventure, are brave and get into trouble and females look after others and are kind.

Ask the groups to consider these stereotypes and then look at their characters again. Ask them to now sort them into those which reinforce stereotypes for each gender and those who don't. They can also create a group if necessary where they are not sure.

When the children have sorted all or most of their characters stop them and discuss some of their findings as a class. As part of this discussion ask them to justify some of their decisions, allow them to challenge each other if necessary and give time to discuss any they were unsure of. Following the discussion ask the children to count up how many characters they had in each category and collate this on the board.

Ask the children to think about how they think this might influence children, particularly if the majority of characters they have discussed do reinforce stereotypes.

Some ideas might include limiting what someone thinks they can do because of their gender, might cause worry to those who feel they don't fit in with their gender, some people might get picked on if they don't fit the stereotype. You could also discuss some of the positives of the characters who do not fit stereotypes.

Key questions

- Which characters reinforce gender stereotypes?

Wrapping up

Reflect on some of the key learning from the activity. Explain to the children that they can enjoy any story but they need to remember that their gender does not limit them in any way and they can make their own decisions. You may wish to expand this discussion to consider how much choices are our own and how much we might have already been influenced by stereotypes.

Discuss if there is anything they think should be done in school to address stereotypes found in books for example could more books be purchased which show different characters, could a warning sticker be put on books which contain stereotypes or should some books not be used in school. If time allows you could debate some of these ideas with the children.

You might also want to look at some of the books on this list which challenge gender stereotypes 'Lifting Limits: books that challenge gender stereotypes'.

Key questions

- What can we do in school to overcome stereotypes in books?

Glossary

- Gender
- Stereotype
- Reinforce
- Character
- Negative

Pupils with secure understanding

indicated by: Recognising male and female stereotyped characters.

Pupils working at greater depth indicated

by: Understanding how stereotypes can be a negative influence on children.

Pupils needing extra support: May need help with understanding what a stereotype is and could benefit from books to help them with the activity.

Pupils working at greater depth: Can be challenged to consider if there are differences between characters from traditional stories and older books and more modern stories – have stereotypes lessened over time?