Literature Instruction: Using a Critical and Social Lens

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## Abstract

Social change depends on the actions of the citizens of tomorrow. Without creating changes to the curriculum and to the perspectives from which we teach, the likelihood of producing social change is lessened. The main objective of developing this resource guide is to help educators to teach with a critical lens and encourage students to think beyond the surface of the texts they read. Critical literacy addresses contemporary issues and challenges students to consider the perspectives and rights of various groups of people. The purpose is to understand that texts portray different biases and perspectives and to gain perspective on others' experiences An example of this "is critical literacy perspective which, although rooted in language and literacy education, has the potential for application across the school curriculum and in research more broadly " (Janks, 2013, p. 227). Janks provides an excellent example of how this lens can expand into other portions of the curriculum besides language arts. Using theoretical perspectives of social justice and critical literacy, this guide provides an outline of activities spanning 5 to 10 weeks that could be adopted or expanded by teachers who are unfamiliar with these two perspectives to support grade 5 and 6 teachers to begin to integrate critical literacy and social justice into their classrooms in ways that are accessible to the interests of grade 5 and 6 students.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

**"How will developing a critical literacy lens help students understand social justice and help teachers to support students to become active members of society?"**

Throughout my journey as an educator, it has been evident that the Ontario Public school curricula is geared towards traditional political ideologies which favor a Eurocentric worldview that privileges white, male voices. The purpose of this portfolio is to utilize an equity-based lens to examine the various issues of power and privilege entrenched within our society. It is important that junior grade educators understand that modern education still supports the dominant culture and should be changed to provide more opportunities for all students to succeed. Another implication in this work is to show students and educators how issues such as gender representation are reflected in culture. Especially in the media which may reinforce the traditional status quo of Western society. This issue ties to social justice topics that could be addressed in the classroom, and built upon to connect to race, cultural ideas, gender and sexuality, etc. Moreover, a social justice perspective in teaching understands that people's identities cross between these different areas, also known as intersectionality and social issues affect different identities in different ways. Although it is vital to apply intersectionality to the overall purpose of social justice, for the purpose of this portfolio the focus will be more specific on gender in the curriculum. Minor connections to culture and different conceptions of gender within cultures since, as mentioned previously, all of these various concepts are intertwined.

**Key Definitions**

In this section, a brief definition of *critical literacy* and *social justice are* provided in order to orient the reader to my understanding of these concepts and their relationship to classroom teaching. The focus of this portfolio will look into the Ontario Ministry curriculum, specifically

in the public board for grades five and six.

### *Critical Literacy*

I define critical literacy as: A cross-curricular, embedded pedagogical approach to literacy that teaches children to critically examine bias and power in the texts they read and communicate. I arrived at this definition through reviewing critical literacy scholars such as Hinrichsen and Coombs (2014), Freebody and Luke (1997), and Janks (2013) which are reviewed next.

Hinrichsen and Coombs (2014) outline a key element of critical literacy, stating, "Its focus on learner processes rather than syllabus specification made it an excellent candidate for the approach we wanted to develop" (p. 5) to direct the teaching process toward student development instead of trying to check off all curriculum expectations. This approach does not take away from the curriculum standards but shifts the emphasis to the way students learn. Janks (2013) explains, "if students want to read and write, they have to discover that they can use literacy for their purposes and to follow their interests" (p. 237). The authors express the importance of the students' interests, understanding how literacy can be used to discover more about the students' interests and enabling them to communicate effectively. This lens can be so successful because it can be applied in several categories, not just literacy. Further, "although rooted in language and literacy education, it has the potential for application across the school curriculum and in research more broadly" (Janks, 2013, p. 227). Janks expresses the overall significance of introducing a critical literacy mindset from an early age for the students since it applies to many topics in society and helps them to critically examine ideas with which they are presented.

Further, in connection to the media and online consumption, it is important to understand

how to apply this critical lens. The literacy connection to media is expressed as, "internet and 'Web2.0' practices can create multi-authored, rhizomatically developed texts in which there may not be a clear, internal consistency to the narratives" (Hinrichsen & Coombs, 2013, p. 7). The main idea is that there are always multiple perspectives, sometimes conflicting (Freebody and Luke 1997; Luke, 2000), to each written text that the students encounter. The importance of this is asking students to critically evaluate what is on the surface and not accepting everything they see online. This is more prevalent in the media or online since typically there are various authors sharing various sides on one given topic.

### Social Justice

Historically in Western society, in the Ontario Public Boards, social justice is using a critical framework first outlined by the New London Group (NLG; Cazden et al., 1996) to understand greater social issues such as equity, fairness, and social action. The NLG defines critical framing as understanding "... the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological, and value-centered relations of particular systems of knowledge and social practice…. The teacher must help learners to denaturalize and make strange again what they have learned and mastered" (p. 86). Social justice concepts are explored through the use of several different media types (Cazden et al., 1996), such as printed texts, illustrations, websites, videos, and social media. Behizadeh et al (2019) express that social justice pedagogy,

> use[s] real-world issues and struggles of marginalized peoples as curriculum; provide[s] opportunities for students to analyze sociopolitical systems and power relations and to openly discuss, debate, and compose on topics related to race, gender, class, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, and intersectionality and explore how certain markers of identity are privileged in society". (p. 60)

Social justice has a strong link to colonization and decolonizing practices. Fanon (2001) expresses a key quote by stating, "I wanted quite simply to be man among men. I would have liked to enter our world young and sleek, a world we could build together"(p. 92). Fanon illustrates the challenges the Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) face once they step outside of their homes. Expressing Western society ideologies have entrenched White dominance throughout the various institutions that create the mindset of "others". Paulo *Freire (2001)* expands on Fanon's argument by stating, "The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not marginals, are not people living 'outside' society. They have always been 'inside'—inside the structure which made them beings for others." Pallas expands on Fanon's argument by stating" (p. 74). by controlling the upper class, using violence as a medium to eliminate any outside thinking about how things can change. "A colonised person must alter their behaviour under colonial rule to ensure that they can live in peace without excessive repression from the colonisers" (Pallas, 2016). Essentially, Fanon realized that, through violence, the colonists were able to eliminate critical thinking by ensuring that colonised subjects would not discover the potential for equality. Fanon describes a way to surpass this by stating, "so revolutionary violence is not just cathartic, but it also allows the colonial subjects to recreate themselves or restore the way that they were prior to colonialism" (Pallas, 2016). His solution was to help the citizens become critical thinkers again by restoring the balance of power and giving them more freedom.

These are just a few examples of important societal topics that should be introduced into all classrooms, in this case focusing on Ontario public junior classes, allowing students opportunities to be exposed to real life situations that can inspire social action. Although there are many topics related to equity that are relevant to social justice teaching, this portfolio

addresses equity and representation of gender roles within popular media texts. Students in grades 5 and 6 consume media that affects their understanding of the world and relations within it. Learning about the role that concepts of gender play in the community is important because social justice pedagogy goes beyond the classroom and expands to the community: "We argue that teaching for social justice, or what we title 'good and just teaching,' reflects an essential purpose of teaching in a democratic society in which the teacher is an advocate for students whose work supports larger efforts for social change" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009, p. 347). A social justice mindset encourages students to become active citizens in their communities and bring benefit to any place they live.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

My general research question is: *How will developing a critical literacy lens help students understand social justice, especially gender equity, and help teachers to support students to become active members of Western society?*

My original research questions were:

- What are teachers' understandings of critical literacy and social justice?

- What do teachers identify as key qualities students need in order to develop a critical lens?

- What critical literacy strategies do teachers use to help students learn about social justice content?

- How do students interact with and respond to social justice content taught with a critical literacy lens?

*My Porfolio Research Question is:* What tools and resources would teachers need in the classroom in order to teach students about diverse gender representation and gender equity

through the use of popular media platforms/texts?

My portfolio research questions are:

- How do we move beyond the curriculum to address gender equality that moves beyond the written articles?

- What are some resources that use a critical lens to address issues of gender representation?

- What are some approaches needed to address social issues with students that maintain a certain level of discretion?

- How can we use social media to help students promote gender equality?

**Purpose and Significance of the Research**

The main purpose of this portfolio is to develop a better understanding of critical literacy and social justice pedagogy for educators in Ontario for the Public boards. With this new advancement in the classroom, the lessons will become more student oriented and encourage them to think about topics beyond their surface value. For instance, a good start would be introducing students to richer topics that demand more in-depth thought and analysis beyond the surface meaning. Flint and Laman (2012) describe one such activity, "through a writing workshop poetry study, the teachers began to reposition children and curriculum, and in the process, built interest in navigating the terrain of more critical approaches to literacy instruction" (p. 12). The authors introduced deeper social issues in these poems and noticed that the students were inclined to provide well rounded responses (Flint & Laman, 2012). The issues that were presented to the students not only addressed social justice but were able to connect to their lives outside the classroom. This is crucial with many students' lives revolving around social media and the internet; current events are no longer based on national scales but are world wide.

Finally, the Ontario Ministry of Education suggests that educators can address critical literacy in the curriculum (C. Comprehension: Understanding and Responding to Texts; C3. Critical Thinking in Literacy, 2023) and that Reading expectations 3.1-3.8 are appropriate for this purpose for each grade.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Establishing an inclusive culture for schools with junior age students (grades 5-6) will help minimize the struggles for the students and create a safe place for them. The topic of gender equity, addressed in this portfolio, is focused on the interest of the students undergoing puberty, but also because of the way gender is addressed differently across social, cultural, and political contexts, especially with the growing awareness of the struggles of the 2S+LGBTQ community. Southern Ontario has a large student population and culturally or gender diverse students face challenges in many school settings, and so the social justice topics have wide applicability to many educational settings. One important implication of differential treatment of students by gender in education is future employment, and thus life opportunities. For example, "gender gaps in one dimension tend to lead to gender gaps in other dimensions, with the causality running in both directions…. gender gaps in education might automatically lead to gender gaps in employment, particularly in the formal sector, where employers will prefer educated workers and thus will not consider the applications of uneducated women" (Klasen, & Lamanna, 2009, p. 95-96).

Dover (2009) expresses some of the barriers that students face and links these to possible outcomes:

Educational inequity is a fundamental challenge facing contemporary educators. Students' academic achievement, attendance, access to challenging coursework, engagement, participation in extracurricular activities, behaviour, and even their likelihood of committing suicide have all been linked to their race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. (p. 385)

Thus, equity issues are implicated in academic achievement and overall mental health. When

students are not successful in school, this can have implications into adulthood by limiting access to higher education, jobs, and economic prosperity.

This is by no means a new problem: "In the 1980s, the language of school failure took hold, establishing a paradigm of crisis that would open the door for a range of policy solutions" (Hlavacik & Schneider, 2021, p. 631). The authors outline one of the main policy norms, popular with many in the general public, that is implemented within the school structure. Specifically, "in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the language of the 'back-to-basics' movement made high school exit exams and curricular standards appear diplomatic and sensible " (Hlavacik & Schneider, 2021, p. 631). With the policymakers creating these new social and policy norms into the education community, it creates a failure for anyone who is unable to meet the standards and often places the blame for failure on students or teachers.

In contrast, Behizadeh et al. (2019) expand past these negative ideologies by linking the classroom experiences to the bigger picture and connecting to Canada's national goals. The authors explain, "the consciousness of a classroom -if it's actually not bullshit - is the consciousness of the broader immediate community and then, by extension, our country's" (Behizadeh et al, 2019, p. 58). The idea that the classroom is an extension of the overall societal ideology is crucial when addressing the social issues that Canada is trying to overcome. The challenge faced is not only dealing with the constant changes to policy and practices, such as the growing use of educational technology, but also developing ways that can create a successful approach that reaches each student. In the chapter by the New London Group, *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures,* the authors describe this view by stating, "An authentically democratic view of schools must include a vision of meaningful success for all, a vision of success that is not defined exclusively in economic terms and that has embedded within

it a critique of hierarchy and economic injustice " (Cazden et al, 1996, p. 67). Cazden et al. illustrate the importance of economics in relationship to success, understanding that for each student this relationship will be different. The authors' approach to make this distinction is targeting hierarchy and economic status, discussing the problems with putting too much stress on these two things. In addition, the authors discuss how educators should approach these new strategies in the classroom. They outline the role of the educator, stating, "our job is not to produce docile, compliant workers. Students need to develop the capacity to speak up, to negotiate, and to be able to engage critically with the conditions of their working lives" (Cazden et al, 1996, p. 67). Taking this approach is intended to teach students to become active members of society and create changes that better the lives around them.

One of the barriers Ontarian educators face in spreading awareness of social justice is being criticized for trying to enact change. When critiques come from families and educators who have more traditional values from policymakers that are unaware of the potential bias. Cochran-Smith et al (2009) describe an example of criticism leveled against social justice teaching: "that teacher education programs with a social justice agenda ... neglect students' learning while imposing a particular political ideology" (p. 348). Opponents link this style of instruction to negative messages and shifting away from the overall purpose of education. However, Behizadeh et al. (2019) address the critiques by arguing that we could achieve a mindset that does not accept meaning on the surface and encourages to consider perspectives. They propose this approach because "our work as educators could be noble in these varying times if we could share that work with a broader citizenry equally dedicated to re-educating its thinking about race, class access" (p. 58). Thus, the overall message from the critics is to maintain the ideologies that have been entrenched in social institutions and educators should

reinforce social norms, whether progressive or not.

**Critical Literacy and Social Justice Teaching and Curriculum**

Pedagogy is a key factor that is connected to the curriculum based on how the teachers view the best ways to give instruction to the students. The connection between pedagogy and critical literacy can be defined as, "these socioculturally relevant materials stimulated the students' critical thinking skills and provided them with opportunities for the development of "emergent critical consciousness" (Stevenson, p. 246). Stevenson (2017) illustrates how applying a cultural pedagogy promotes the students to take a critical lens in the classroom towards various subjects. Critical Literacy has several ideological and practical origins, one being Multiliteracies Pedagogy, where teachers are encouraged to teach students using print and digital resources to examine the authors' message from multiple perspectives. Cazden et al (1996), define multiliteracies by stating, "available designs, designing, and the redesign. Together, these three elements emphasize the fact that meaning making is an active and dynamic process, and not something governed by static rule" (p. 74). The authors illustrate the three key elements of how their activities should be looked at, understanding that each step along the way has specific elements to complete this process. Cazden et al (1996), through this definition, describe the overall purpose of pedagogy in the classroom in relation to the curriculum. Taking into consideration the purpose, it is evident that there needs to be a way in which the educators can use this concept in the classroom. Specifically, there are four key parts of multiliteracies pedagogy (Cazden et al, 1996):

*Situated practice* based on the world of learners Designed and Designing experiences;

*Overt instruction* through which students shape for themselves an explicit metalanguage of design; *Critical framing*, which relates meanings to their social contexts and purposes,

and *Transformed practice* in which students transfer and recreate designs of meaning

from one context to another. (p. 83; italics added for emphasis)

These four elements are the foundation of a successful critical literacy lesson that encourages students to think beyond the meaning on the surface. Most important to the critical literacy approach is critical framing - or relating what is read to their social contexts and understanding the various purposes for the text. As educators, another important practice to implement into their instruction is the transformed practice since it encourages the students to revisit their work and reflect on it. Educators cannot teach Critical Literacy without understanding position or power - because without understanding power structures and the effects these have on society and societal discourse, it may be impossible for teachers and students to recognize their own relationship to the power structures, whether privileged or marginalized. This step encourages children to become reflective learners, not only with them discussing what could be adjusted, it also gives them time to reflect on what they have done successfully.

### Social Justice

The multiliteracies pedagogical lens (Cazden et al, 1996) works not only for critical thinking but also a social justice approach. Behizadeh et al (2019) elaborate on this idea by expressing "student diversity also supported a critical approach because students presented diverse experiences, perspectives, and practices, which contributed to rich discussion and writing" (p. 60). Understanding that each student comes to class with a different approach to learning can either cause problems, or in this case, can provide critical learning experiences. Also, the authors provided examples of what a social justice approach to the curriculum would look like. They recommend that educators (Behizadeh et al, 2019):

use real-world issues and struggles of marginalized peoples as curriculum; provide

opportunities for students to analyze sociopolitical systems and power relations and to

openly discuss, debate, and compose on topics related to race, gender, class, (dis)ability,

sexual orientation, and intersectionality and explore how certain markers of identity are

privileged in society. (p. 60)

Giving the students these opportunities not only encourages them to explore all the sides to each

story but also gives them a chance to decipher the meaning for themselves.

The challenges with parts of the Ontario Language curriculum that is already established,

such as a provincially standardized curriculum, can result in struggles for some children to

connect with the curriculum, especially for children who face different barriers than the majority.

Behizadeh et al (2019) explain how one educator, "also experienced how school structures and

curriculum did not work for many historically underserved students" (Behizadeh et al, 2019, p.

63). This problem is often found in schools in lower-income areas that serve marginalized

people. The authors explain, "curriculum represents a form of intellectual property…that more

rigorous, critical coursework and associated resources are more common in predominantly White

schools than predominantly Black schools" (Behizadeh et al, 2019, p. 65). Therefore, from an

equity perspective, the importance of making connections to all students, instead of only

reaching a certain population, is vital for not only student success but also engagement.

### *Critical Literacy*

Overall, previous research has brought forth that the approach to the curriculum that is in

place now has the wrong approach. Behizadeh et al. (2019) provide an example by stating,

"[effective] curriculum does not rely on testing and textbooks but uses a hands-on, project-based

approach that promotes individualization" (p 64). Also, having this approach brings out problems

in other areas of the classroom. For example, "issues with staff engagement, an overburdened

curriculum, shortage of resources and variability in student digital profile" (Hinrichsen & Coombs, 2014, p. 1). Hinrichsen and Coombs provide a strong example of a substantial barrier, the lack of staff engagement. This is a massive issue in education; children are excellent at reading situations. If the educator is not passionate about the topic, the children will realize this and lose interest quickly.

To make a shift, it is important to develop a curriculum that is more focused on the students' learning instead of evaluation scores. "Basing important decisions on limited and imperfect information can lead to bad decisions—decisions that can do harm to students and teachers and that sometimes have unfortunate legal and economic consequences for the schools" (Ransom et al, 1999). Especially when schools have based policies on outdated ideas about social norms using outdated resources. "In general, teachers need information specific to the content and strategies they are teaching, and they can best get that information through assessments built around their daily educational tasks" (Ransom et al, 1999). The authors express the importance of understanding that the curriculum is not the only way to determine success, rather accepting that there are various ways to learn. In describing one such program, Hinrichsen and Coombs (2014) state, "Its focus on learner processes rather than syllabus specification made the program an excellent candidate for the approach we wanted to develop" (p. 5). The authors illustrate the need to create a curriculum that fosters students' learning and interests above test scores. Janks (2013) provides an example of this stance when talking about language arts. The author expresses, "if students want to read and write, they have to discover that they can use literacy for their purposes and to follow their interests" (Janks, 2013, p. 237). Introducing this mindset to the children will not provide them with a purpose behind the lessons but may allow them to make connections to the outside world. Janks (2013) illustrates this idea by stating "the

programme makes space in the curriculum for the discourses that these students inhabit, the school was no longer an alienating experience" (p. 229). Last, to further the curriculum, we must be teaching students to question what is on the surface and try to move beyond it. An example of this "is critical literacy perspective which, although rooted in language and literacy education, has the potential for application across the school curriculum and in research more broadly " (Janks, 2013, p. 227). Janks provides an excellent example of how this lens can expand into other portions of the curriculum besides language arts.

Critical literacy addresses contemporary issues and challenges students to consider the perspectives and rights of various groups of people. The purpose is to understand that texts portray different biases and perspectives and to gain perspective on others' experiences. For example, in the news report, *Why Black Lives Matter in Education, Too* (Quick, 2016)*,* the author discusses the different examples of student experiences depending on their race. The author explains, "Racial segregation and marginalization are often foundational, and breaking that foundation necessarily causes fear, instability, and discomfort to those for whom it lifted up". Quick outlines the struggles of bettering the Ontario curriculum by expressing the previous social norms and stereotypes that have been implemented into society, outlining that one of the fears with creating this new change is that the white male dominant roles will be disrupted and distributed equitably, and that is uncomfortable for some people.

**Maintaining the Status Quo: Barriers to Equity**

In this section, I address key barriers to social justice work in the form of societal pressure to maintain the status quo, or the "way things have always been". Those in favour of keeping the status quo advocate for addressing the foundations that are already in place to ensure that changes do not occur and the ideologies stay intact, often because they directly or indirectly

benefit. Society is becoming increasingly diverse and it is important that all Canadians have the opportunity to flourish and be treated equitably. Unfortunately, this means confronting sometimes uncomfortable topics such as social norms around gender identity, class, race, and lack of diverse representation which are barriers to inclusive societies. It is important that students are educated about various cultures, mindsets, and contexts to support the growth that has occurred in Canada. Understanding that some of these topics are difficult to discuss but are needed to expand the students' knowledge on social advocacy, addressing barriers to equity may be uncomfortable work for educators, but it is necessary. An example of this importance is demonstrated in the book *Policing black lives. State violence in Canada from slavery to the present, (2017)* by Robyn Maynard, the author provides this example by stating "In the eyes of white society and state institutions, BIPOC are not conceived of as children at all, and are attributed with supernatural, dangerous abilities far beyond their age, size and physical capabilities" (p. 142). Further, Maynard suggests that education should be used to create social development in the younger generation. Maynard defines this by stating, "legislated as a fundamental social good, it is intended to provide both socialization and opportunities to develop youth's minds and relationships, and to help them build their futures (p.4346). The example provided by Maynard demonstrates the problems that are still within the school institutions. Focusing on these social issues are meant not only to spread awareness, but to help develop well rounded individuals.

Although I have focused on representation of BIPOC in the media in the previous example because it is so vivid and shocking, the representation of gender and gender roles in media texts is also problematic. Yet, it can sometimes be a hidden issue because "traditional" gender roles and representations are commonplace in media and even affect the types of media

that are consumed by children. One example, used in this portfolio is the genre of comic books, which have traditionally been marketed to male readers.

### *Reinforcing Social Norms*

Social norms are various ideologies that have been entrenched into different institutions that distinguish people from one another. For example, one of the main institutions of society that has these social norms entrenched within it is the education system. In the article, *Disciplined to access the general education curriculum: Girls of color, disabilities, and specialized education programming*, Boveda (2019) urges educators and policy makers to "disrupt the white master narrative through the curricular history of communities of Color and argue[s] for the field of curriculum studies to challenge its own institutional racism" (p. 407). The authors discuss the problem with some curriculum developers who may have severe biases or seek to reinforce inequitable social norms. Further, students who are outside these norms are at higher risk of experiencing abuse, violence, psychological trauma, and suicide. Teaching about inclusion and equity can help mitigate some social barriers and reduce harm such as bullying. Also, the authors express what the curriculum should focus on: "curriculum studies as an interdisciplinary examination of experiences involving "the everyday practices of schools and class " (Boveda et al, 2019, p. 407). Boveda et al. express that the overall curriculum should encompass ideologies that will help all students succeed inside and outside of the classroom setting.

### **Social Justice.**

As stated earlier, the biggest challenge with advancing social justice pedagogy is the resistance that educators face from administration, caregivers at home, and the overall content that they will be teaching. There are so many critiques of social justice because when the

educators are implementing social justice ideologies into the curriculum, it is challenging established norms in education and the idea that education is objective or unrelated to wider society. In addition, it is important to mention the lack of opportunities that males and people of colour have in some parts of the educational sector. For example, in one of their studies about social justice pedagogy, Dover (2009) outlines that although the participants varied in teaching experience from little to several years, the vast majority of the teachers were white women, essentially at the time covering the vast majority (p. 92). The author illustrates the lack of diversity among the faculty and staff in the education system, which may lead to a lack of diversity in voices and experiences when it comes to examining social norms about gender, especially in the context of race.

One of the consequences about teaching social justice seen by citizens can be explained as the argument that a social justice approach diminishes the fundamental teaching skills from the educators. Cochran-Smith (2009) elaborates, "this ambiguity critique of social justice in teacher education is important in part because it is attached to many different agendas and because it is often the prelude to more damning criticisms" (p. 348). This relates back to gender as well in the sense that the topics that are shared typically are male dominant, most of the main characters in literacy are male. Or in history or social studies the books are normally stories about how all the founders of the new world are white males, while women and diverse genders were not given the same opportunities. This still continues today in the curriculum; the privilege hinders some and makes it easier on others. The main challenge is developing a curriculum that captures the interests of everyone as a whole, not just dominant groups which have historically been privileged, while the education sector faces critiques when they are trying to improve instructional approaches to align with progressive pedagogy and social ideals. The authors

expand on this by stating, "some critics charge that when teacher preparation programs focus on social justice, the reading articles ...ignore traditional educational goals related to subject matter knowledge" (Cochran-Smith et al., 2008, p. 348), thus arguing that students are not learning necessary foundational skills and knowledge.

### Literacy.

The challenge with literacy and social norms is the content that the students are reading and its connection back to the real-world setting. "Reading the word is simultaneously about reading the world and that our reading of any text is mediated through our day-to-day experience and the places and spaces that we encounter and occupy" (Vasquez et al, 2019, p. 301). The authors point out the significance put towards the topics that the students are reading. However, the problem arises when the material for the curriculum is selected based on what the political or educational leaders want instead of incorporating all aspects of life, and the choice to include or exclude topics can be very subtle. Vasquez et al (2019) express the options that the students should have when it comes down to their lessons and stress that it is important students "produce texts that matter to them in different formats and for different audiences and purposes" (p. 302). For example, to social norms, it is important to understand and challenge the norms of gender. For one educator, the class examined how "Mother's Day advertisements worked to position readers of such texts in particular ways, thus helping her students probe the representation of women and setting them purposeful reading, writing, and talking tasks" (Vasquez et al, 2019, p. 304). This educator's approach contrasts other educators whose lessons reinforced social norms of gender roles for women. Vasquez expresses the problems with accepting social norms and understanding that there are various ways to live life. Essentially, supporting students who may have mothers who work or do not work, may not have a mother or may have more than one

mother. If educators do not help their students to question how social norms about gender are reinforced through advertising, they risk reinforcing these norms and ideologies that are not inclusive of all mothers or people who identify as women.

### *Gender Identity and Gendered Stereotypes*

Gender plays a big role in education with various qualities established for each gender on how they are supposed to act. For this portfolio, gender is distinct from sex, which can be defined biologically. Specifically, "Society views sex as binary and interacts with individuals based on stereotypes typically assigned to physical characteristics associated with male or female" (Palmer, & Clegg, 2020, p. 2235). In contrast, gender can be expressed as a personal and social construct. Specifically, "Gender identity is a term used to refer to a person's sense of being male, female, neither, or a combination of both" (Palmer, & Clegg, 2020, p. 2236). Students can become alienated if they do not live up to these expectations. In the article, *Looking back, looking forward: a short introduction from the new editorial team of Gender and Education,* the authors explain*,* "there is increasing recognition of the importance of [gender] equality and the role of education in pursuit of this goal" (Dillabough et al, 2012, p. 575). These issues are present on the surface but the potential for progress can face challenges from previous policy to truly have any effect. One of the current issues in education is gender neutral bathrooms creating an environment in which everyone feels safe. This is just one of the many issues that students face in education, there are several in relation to the overall education of the students. Dillabough et al (2012) expands on this by stating, "conflict, austerity and a loss of faith in major institutions, especially banking and finance, create scarcity of resources and indeed sometimes a lack of hope and imagination about how to promote equality" (p. 575). This is very important when discussing gender roles in education because it is not only the institution of formal

education that has these specific inequitable qualities or beliefs entrenched within it. The approaches and effects may vary from each sector of society but at the same time, they often support only the interests of traditionally privileged groups such as white males.

**Social Justice.**

For students to become more aware of the stereotypes and gender issues, it is important to address education. Dallacqua and Low (2021) expand on this idea, "we must ask: what can these texts that are at once both ubiquitous and contested offer our understanding of gender in education" (p. 69). Gaining more insight on this topic will not only increase the knowledge on the topic but will allow educators to find the most effective materials for the students. Further, it will give educators better opportunities to guide them on their literacy journey. The authors "explore students' responses to (re)presentations of gender in superhero texts (which include graphic novels, comic books, films, and objects identified as superhero texts by young readers), and examine how they reproduce and/or challenge assumptions about gender identity" (Dallacqua & Low, 2021, p. 69). The authors illustrate that using the students to gain an understanding of where they should take that specific unit, to meet students' interests and connect back to the curriculum.

It is important to mention the connection between the curriculum and the world outside the classroom for optimal learning experiences. Dallacqua and Low (2021) relate gender to society: "gender … influences both how we are seen by society and how we see ourselves" (p. 70). Dallacqua and Low express the importance of gender and the potential stereotypes that arise due to gender, expressing the challenges that students face with trying to find their own identity. Further, the authors express the consequences of continuing to enforce these stereotypes into social institutions, especially traditional dichotomous views of gender: "maintaining gender

dichotomies 'produce[s] and reproduce[s]' definitions and hierarchies that are limiting and damaging in educational settings" (Dallacqua & Low, p. 70). Speaking to the genre of superhero texts which are popular with young people, "one of the genre's other dominant (if unheralded) features throughout its history has been its regressive portrayals of gender and sexuality" (Dallacqua & Low, p. 70). Thus, this will be a vital topic of consideration for educators to pursue to find ways to minimize or eliminate stereotypes surrounding gender.

**Literacy.**

It is important to discuss literature and representations of gender in literature by making the connections back to critical analysis and understanding of text. Banks (2018) expands on this idea by stating, "Critical readers interrogate these positions to see whose interests they serve and who is disadvantaged. In other words, they combine text analysis with an analysis of power. Ideal readers read with the text; critical readers read against the text" (p. 3). Many authors have utilized Luke and Freebody's (1997a, 1997b) Four Resources Model in a variety of educational contexts (Banks, 2018; Firkins, 2015) showing that even though the original framework is dated, it is still relevant today. Firkins describes a four step process, "1. Code-Breaker: How do I access the semiotic system of construction? 2. Text Participant: How do I understand this text? 3. Text User: How do I use this text? 4. Text Analyst: How is the text positioning me as a user"? Firkins illustrates how educators can use Banks' mindset about critical literacy by dividing it into four sections based on the various skills that the students need to learn to become critical learners. A great example of this strategy is how the students interpret the characters in the texts of their choosing; especially by thinking critically about the characteristics that are attached to each gender and understanding what is portrayed as normal (behaviour, thinking, appearance, etc.) for each gender. Dallacqua and Low (2021) list an example of a genre common for children

concerning gendered expectations; that is, superhero stories. "In neither case does it feel as if superheroes are expected or permitted to transcend the restrictive definitions of gender and sexuality allotted to them; masculine and feminine thus become the only logical options" (Dallacqua & Low, 2021, p. 70). The article provides an excellent discussion of how the genre creates these stereotypes of males and females and how they are supposed to look or act. By enforcing traditional gender structures and stereotypes, the implication is that anyone else that does not match up these characteristics is considered different, and this is especially true for people who do not identify as either gender. Dallacqua and Low expand on the lack of support for diverse expressions of gender, stating, "in addition to gender norm restrictiveness, there have been relatively few transgender, agender, pangender, or genderfluid characters to complicate the man/woman binary construct" (Dallacqua & Low, 2021, p. 70). Lack of representation of gender diversity is common in comics, with minimal gender neutral that are welcoming to all. The significance of reinforcing these stereotypes establishes limitations on how persons expressing different genders are supposed to act and enforces these stereotypes as social norms.

 **Social Justice.**

 Race is another topic that is typically only seen as a two-sided topic but really with the increasing diversity in society, there are several sides to the story. Lafferty (2014) explains that those who do not identify as part of racialized groups often fail to see the complexity in the dynamics that exist between racialized persons and members of the ethnic majority; "they pointed out that race is always presented as a 'Black and White' issue from the perspective of a White narrator" (p. 203). The author makes the point that typically many stories about race are written by a white author, which can lead to tokenism and to replicating misinformation and stereotypes. In relation to Lafferty's study about textbooks, the author expresses, "the textbook

circulation data revealed minimal usage of the multicultural adoptions" (p. 203). If material given to the students is restricted to the upper-class representations, it can also promote white supremacist, classist views of society. Dover (2013) explains how the school system itself works to reinforce traditional norms about race and class; "specifically, participants highlighted restrictive curricular and school-level policies, pressure to teach to the test, misunderstanding or censure from administrators, and students' active and passive resistance to content and pedagogy that challenge their preexisting beliefs" (p. 94).

From an educator standpoint, it becomes challenging when the material is not being effectively absorbed by the students. To introduce a social justice curriculum, Dover (2013), mentions teachers, "need … additional planning time, professional development, and curricular materials related to teaching for social justice" (p. 94). This is one of the main reasons for the barriers to social justice education to continue: lack of materials and support threaten teachers' ability to implement social justice curriculum effectively and inappropriate assessment measures used for "accountability" such as high stakes testing that disproportionately affects students from racial and ethnic minorities (Dover, 2013). One unit plan presented by Lafferty (2014) takes a social justice approach and there has been great progress in students' understanding around various social justice issues. Lafferty (2014) "found that when she exposed students to culturally relevant texts, they were eager to make connections between the books and their own lives, which resulted in improved academic performance" (p. 204). This is a small sample size but it demonstrates that it is possible to make beneficial changes to the curriculum in response to the new diversity that schools are encountering throughout North America.

Cunningham expands on Dover's thoughts on national tests and connects them back to race by stating, "I conclude that such tests have marginalized low-income students and students

of color, and will continue to do so as long as they are heavily relied upon as measures of intelligence and success " (Cunningham, 2019, p. 111). In the article, *Test-based accountability, standardized testing and minority/racialized students' perspectives in urban schools in Canada and Australia,* the authors expand on this thought by stating, "While there has been increasing attention to closing the racial achievement gap and some minority students' underachievement in education, there are limited studies that center the voices of students and their experiences with provincial and nationally mandated testing" (Rezai-Rashtai & Lingard, 2020, p. 716). Rezai-Rashtai and Lingard illustrate the lack of attention that is being brought forward towards students of various cultures; further, illustrating the need to move away from standard testing, since each school in Canada is given different resources. Each student has various strengths and weaknesses, these various forms of testing do not offer a true acknowledgement of their grasp of the material.

**Teaching Social Justice through Critical Literacy**

Social justice researchers have highlighted that externally imposed, standardized curricula lack diversity, focusing predominantly around white, male perspectives and histories and that there is also an inequitable lack of access to quality of education for children from some cultural backgrounds. There are two main concepts to focus on to promote social change (Navarro, 2018) to improve diverse representation in curriculum. The first concept is *equity*, which the author describes as, "... the demand for the highest possible educational experience for all students, specifically for those who have been historically marginalized" (Navarro, 2018, p. 336). The second concept is *social literacy* which Navarro defines as "... an education that works to fully understand the workings of social injustice and provides a nourishing awareness of our identities and our connection with others to fight for justice" (Navarro, 2018, p. 336). Key

frameworks that guide my efforts to develop an inclusive social justice curriculum.

The Ontario curriculum must take into account that the students need exercises where they feel safe and comfortable sharing their opinions. There are a number of strategies that can be used to express students' thinking. For example, Driessens and Parr (2020) explain, "quick writes promote student thinking, allowing students to get their ideas down in a low-risk, non-threatening way" (p. 415). Even if quick writing is not always used for social justice teaching, it gives students the chance to express themselves in a judgment-free manner. Further, Driessens and Parr (2020) express the final objective of social justice education: "within these conditions, students grow to become lifelong practitioners of critical literacy who question and transform social justice in our world" (p. 417). Using a social justice lens will not only help educators guide students to examine the issues that are occurring today, but will also help society become more inclusive and equitable.

### *Critical Literacy: Literacy Instruction*

Traditionally, teachers work with an externally developed, predetermined curriculum. Although there are sections within the curriculum that can address critical literacy skills, it is only a portion of the overall language section. Freebody et al expand on this idea by stating, "we stress that what counts as authorized reading is part of a selective tradition in elementary and secondary classrooms and that this public accounting is enacted through class" (Freebody et al., 1991, p. 435). The authors provide an excellent account of how the government (of Australia in this case) is not only controlling the material that is being brought forward through the curriculum but also the meanings (ie., values and attitudes) that are being expressed in these articles. Without a critical literacy lens, students typically accept the meanings of the material they read on a literary level, rather than a critical level, because "readers' senses of literary

quality are culturally constructed and framed by criteria available" (Freebody et al, 1991, p. 437). The authors suggest that readers' identities are culturally constructed throughout their education journey by the texts and ideas to which they are exposed.

To truly take advantage of this power and help develop a curriculum that is more relevant to students' interests, it is important to focus on critical literacy. Banks (2003) expands on this by expressing, "literacy education that focuses on social justice can make a major contribution to preparing students to be thoughtful and active citizens of their nation and the world" (Banks, 2003, p. 18). McLaughlin and De Voogd (2004), expand on Banks' ideas on critical literacy: "Reading from a critical stance requires not only reading and understanding the words but reading the world and understanding a text's purpose so readers will not be manipulated by it " (p. 53). Giving students chances to develop these skills throughout their educational journeys will encourage them to become active members of society. Further, this encourages the children to look at all sides of the story and ensures that everyone's voices are being heard (Muspratt et al, 1997). The authors elaborate on this concept by stating, "readers are always making choices about their thinking, focusing on both stances and sometimes more on one than the other" (McLaughlin & De Voogd, 2004, p. 52 ) and by implication, no text is experienced as value neutral or objective. This critical lens teaches students that in every story there is more than one perspective and encourages them to assess whether all perspectives are told fairly, or at all.

***Writing as a Method for Promoting Critical Thinking***

Kovalik (2007) describes how the goal of writing instruction is "to create educated thinkers, that is, individuals that not only make sense of the world but also think about their thinking, thus clarifying it and improving it" (Kovalik, 2007, p. 310). Some of the topics students might address are "complex and often taboo issues, such as interrogating racial profiling, using

popular culture to define beauty, examining race through children's literature, creating well-researched activists, and taking social action[.] The vignettes masterfully illustrate[d] how teachers connect curriculum mastery with real-world activism" (Vanderburg, 2015, p. 447). This goal represents a shift from the previous ideologies and represents a movement from trying to teach for evaluation and to absorb externally presented ideas towards activism. Seely Flint and Tropp Laman (2012) expand on the negative impacts of testing by expressing, "with such pressure to increase student achievement, teachers often find themselves offering a prescribed curriculum that focuses on the very skills being tested" (Seely Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012, p. 12). The authors provide an approach to minimize the emphasis on testing; "they implemented a writer's workshop approach encouraging students to choose their topics, teaching mini-lessons, conferring with students, and publishing student work" (Seely Flint & Tropp Laman, 2012, p. 13). Seely Flint and Tropp Laman express, "personally significant topics were common, but so too were important social issues such as divorce, bullying, homelessness, war, and natural disaster" (p. 13). Therefore, it is evident that some research has already been done proving that writing to teach about critical literacy and social justice is useful.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

This portfolio explores the social justice and critical literacy pedagogies for Grade 5 and 6 teachers in Ontario. The focus of this portfolio is on gender representation and how there is a lack of equity in the resources that is presented to the students. In this portfolio, the resources will give educators the tools to integrate new resources into the classroom that support equality. Further, at several issues that relate back to students on a personal level, encouraging students to take an inquiry with their work.

Research Questions

My original general research question was: *How will developing a critical literacy lens help students understand social justice and help teachers to support students to become active members of society?* Since the focus of this project changed to resource development, my portfolio research question is: *What tools and resources would teachers need in the classroom to teach students about diverse gender representation and gender equity through the use of popular media platforms/texts?*

Four specific questions guide the development of the portfolio:

- How do we move beyond the curriculum to address gender equality that moves beyond the written articles?

- What are some resources that use a critical lens to address issues of gender representation?

- What are some approaches needed to address social issues with students that maintain a certain level of discretion?

- How can we use social media to help students promote gender equality?

**Procedures for Developing the Resource**

To develop this portfolio, it was vital to use various research articles to develop a baseline of the previous research. I used the data collected to understand the main issues that occur in the classroom, along with examining the lack of attention placed on social justice issues. Further, I dove a bit deeper into social justice and strictly looked at resources that promoted gender equity and tried to make connections to students' lives outside the classroom. Although, it may be a minor consideration, looking into common resources that most students will have already come across should allow them to bring their relevant prior knowledge to the various lessons. Finally, the biggest consideration when vetting the resources was organizing the weeks accordingly by ensuring that the beginning was and throughout the resource package it continued to develop.

**Anticipated Limitations**

Overall the research and resources reflect my experiences in the classroom and the research articles or journals related to the various topics identified throughout this portfolio. The challenge with the development of a portfolio like this is the lack of primary research with understanding other participants' ideas behind social justice and critical literacy. There were challenges without being able to do observations or interviews with several participants. Further, in relation to gender equity and diverse gender representation, there may be some bias because the author is a white male with a middle-class background, although he has focused much of his graduate coursework on equity and social justice.

**Chapter 4: Critical Literacy and Social Justice Education Teacher Guide (Grades 5-6)**

Language arts is at a new crossroad with an updated version of the curriculum being implemented in the 2023 school year with a new focus on centrally defined, skills-based overall objectives and specific outcomes, rather than more generalized understandings that can be implemented in multiple ways. The recently developed curriculum presents expectations more explicitly, with having critical thinking as one of the overall skills being learned (**C3. Critical Thinking in Literacy)** Second, there is a specific identified focus on using the various forms of media to look at social issues in order to see different perspectives in society **(D3. Publishing, Presenting, and Reflecting)**. It is vital for teachers and students to have easy access to instructional materials to address these important concepts, in addition to investigating the intricacy of critical literacy and social justice through language arts. It provides guidance and resources for educators to implement the new Ontario language curriculum with a focus on social justice education.

**Introduction to the Teacher Resource Guide**

This *Critical and Social Justice Guide* presents a five-week plan that is designed to help teachers in the upper junior grades (five and six) to expand their knowledge on these two topics to benefit their students and provide some suggested activities and scope of instruction to support teachers to implement the curriculum expectations in a relevant way for their students. This guide is meant to support educators who are just starting out on their journey towards critical literacy and social justice teaching and is designed to be expandable and adaptable. It is also intended as a basic introduction for students who are not familiar. On this basis, the resource primarily addresses traditional conceptions and stereotypes about gender and gender representation. Educators know their students the best and can build on this base to address wider

conceptions of gender and especially LGBTQ+ identities and the intersection of gender, ethnic background, class, and culture, for example. One place that would make sense to introduce this is in the discussion of sports in week 2, where the debate surrounding the inclusion (or exclusion) of trans athletes would fit with the discussion. It is important to outline that the suggested time frame is a guide; although the design suggests that it should be five weeks, each portion could take up to two weeks to complete depending on the interests and needs of the students. For students to understand the topic at a deeper level, it is vital students do not feel rushed, and that educators allow the lessons to adjust to the learning process of their students. The overall purpose of this guide is to help students begin to develop a critical lens, moving beyond accepting first ideas, and that there are to every story.

Social justice as a framework is introduced into the lessons and each week there will be a different theme or genre addressed. The themes are comics, sports, movie and tv shows, social media, and, for the final project, the students will be researching their own social issue that catches their attention. Each theme will be accompanied by either physical print resources or media clippings, and it is important for educators to supplement these resources and to select several types of media to reach all audiences in their classroom. The overall curriculum goal for this unit is **C.3: *Critical Thinking in Literacy*** in addition to the specific expectations met with each lesson throughout the five weeks of the unit. A resource page at the end of the guide provides links to several books, articles, and other forms of media to assist throughout the five-week process for teachers who are implementing the unit for the first time. The guide is flexible, and teachers are encouraged to add their own resources or have students provide examples of themes and texts from their own lives to supplement the learning.

# Week 1: Gender Representation in Comics

**Relevance**
Students will be exploring the social ideologies that have been assigned to each gender, and further, how each gender is portrayed throughout the comics. The students will gain a better understanding of the social norms promoted in these comics and how there is more meaning than just the surface context.

**Big Idea**
Students will discover characteristics that are assigned to males and females based on traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Also, students will explore some of the problems that may stem from enforcing these perspectives on children.

**Time**
Approximately one to two weeks

**Curriculum Expectations:**

**Overall Expectations**

Language Arts C3: Critical Thinking in Literacy: apply critical thinking skills to deepen understanding of texts, and analyze how various perspectives and topics are communicated and addressed in a variety of texts, including digital, media, and cultural texts

**Specific Expectations:**

Day 1:

Language Arts: C3.5: identify explicit and implicit perspectives communicated in various texts, explain how these perspectives are conveyed, give some evidence of any biases the texts may contain, and suggest how such biases could influence an audience

Day 2:

Language Arts: C.3.3: C3.3 analyze various texts, including literary and informational texts, by identifying main and supporting ideas, sequencing the events of multiple plots, recording relevant information, and explaining cause and effect

Day 3:

Language Arts: C3.6: explain how various topics, such as diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, are addressed in texts, and describe what insights or messages are conveyed

Day 4:

Language Arts: C3.8: identify the critical thinking skills they used to analyze and evaluate various texts, and explain how these skills have helped them better understand the texts

Day 5:

Language Arts: C3.8: identify the critical thinking skills they used to analyze and evaluate various texts, and explain how these skills have helped them better understand the texts

**Overall Lessons**

**Day 1**

As a whole group, have a discussion to understand what previous knowledge the students have. Using a KWL chart will help promote involvement from the students but also establish a basis for the unit. Use questions provided below to guide the discussion if the student's understanding or engagement with the topic is minimal.

Guiding Questions
- Who might the main characters be?
- What are their roles in the comic?
- Are there certain roles that male characters have in this comic? What about female characters?
- Do these genders have more roles? Which gender's/character's roles seem more interesting or exciting to you? Why?
  - Is there any representation in this comic for characters who might not fit traditional gender stereotypes or roles?
- Which characters share similar personalities? Is there a difference between the personalities of the different characters? What words describe the male characters? The female characters? What about characters who might not identify as male or female?

Upon gathering information, after completion the educator will read the comic to the class as a whole. The comic is *LI'L Gotham*, listed in the resource section.

Questions
- Did any of your ideas change after reading the comic?
- What are the three personality traits of the main character(s)? Are these traits presented as favorable (good) or unfavorable (bad)?
- Were girls allowed to be superheroes in this comic? What words describe the roles of female characters in this comic? Are these the same as the male characters? Do you think this is a fair way to represent male and female characters?
  - Do these comics talk about superheroes that might not be male or female? Do you think this is fair representation?

Have the students finish out this portion of the lesson by writing a small paragraph or

sentences about one or two new things they learned and any questions or confusion that they may have.

**Day 2**

Gather the class as a whole and read one of the two comic books (*Batman* or *Spiderman*).

Key Questions
- What is a sidekick? What is the role of a sidekick? What traits would a good sidekick have?
- What does Damsel in Distress mean? What role does the damsel in distress play in the story? What traits describe a damsel in distress?
- Who has the most power in the relationship between a superhero, a sidekick, and a damsel in distress? Explain your position by providing examples.

Upon completion of reading the comic, use the board or chart paper to create a list of vocabulary for the students to focus on throughout the unit. You might also include the student-generated trait words and link them to the corresponding roles.

Key Words:
Hero
Sidekick
Damsel in Distress
Villain
Relationships

**Continuation of Day 2**

Instead of key questions, revisit key words and have the students give examples. Then read the other comic (*Spiderman* or *Batman)*, pausing to ask whether students have questions or comparisons from both comics. Add new words to the trait lists associated with each character type.

Have a group discussion and compare the two comics, trying to outline some similarities and differences using a Venn diagram to record students' ideas. Revisit and reinforce the role of gender in the types of characters and their traits and roles within comic books. Ask students whether they know of any other comic books where those roles and traits might be different or where the superheroes might be women and the damsels in distress might be men, for example.

Finally, have the students select one of the key words and generate a few sentences comparing the two comics that they read. If they are stuck, they could consult the Venn diagram and key word / trait lists for ideas.

**Day 3**

Quick meeting as a whole, briefly discuss the two different comics read previously and give the students the handout of the activity in relation to the comics. Encourage students to work with a partner or alone, whichever they prefer.

Student Handout: Comic Comparison Between Justice League and Black Widow (Appendix B)

**Continuation of Day 3**

Analyzing the two comics will be time consuming, so use two days to give the students more time. Upon completion, meet as a whole and as a class discuss the findings ensuring everyone's voice is heard. Make sure that teacher responses reinforce the key words during this time.

Finish the day upon completion of both comics, with a quick exit ticket, "name one thing you are confused about, something you enjoyed, and a new idea you learned". The expectation is that students will write two to three sentences maximum.

**Day 4**

Students will be tasked to generate their own comic book character (either a hero, sidekick, damsel in distress, or a villain), with a character profile that will consist of visual and written information. There are no restrictions on who the students need to pick, it is strictly up to them.

Written:
- Please list at three to five key qualities of your character
- Establish two or three relationships this character has. Why or how are these relationships important to your character (i.e., are they part of your character's origin story)?
- Also list which category your character fits under (villain, hero or sidekick, damsel in distress)

Visual:
- Use crayons or markers to draw your character. Think about the colours you might choose and the design of your character's outfit. What is your character's symbol?
- Take your time
- You could add a background or a setting that shows your character in action and what is important to them

Upon completion have the students write a few sentences describing their inspiration and where they learned this information from.

**Day 5**

As a final project for this unit, students will create a comic using their character that they created in the previous lesson. The comic will vary between 6-8 squares depending on what fits their story best.

Have the students complete a graphic organizer that helps to outline their ideas and create a baseline for the setting, characters, and plot.

Student Handout: Comic Strip Organizer (Appendix B)

**Continuation of Day 5**

Give the students the period to work on their comics, meet with students about comics. Consult with students using a writers' theater approach, discussing their organizer or the work they have started for their comic strip depending on progress. Another option is Book Creator https://bookcreator.com/ which the teacher can sign up for free and allows students to make comics (and other types of books) in ebook format.

**Continuation of Day 5**

Final day of the unit, students will be given the period to finish their comics, further the educator needs to be available for final questions or any confusions the students may have.

Assessment: Comic Strip Rubric (Appendix B)

**Questions to Generate Additional Discussion:**

- Did you find the characters convincing? Why or why not? Provide some examples from the comic books to support your position.
- What motivates the characters' actions? How do you know?
  - Do heroes and villains have the same motivations or are they different? Why are heroes heroes and why are villains villains?
  - What motivates sidekicks?
  - What motivates female characters? How do their motivations affect their actions? Why might the author or illustrator think female characters should think and act in this way?
  - What motivates male characters? How do their motivations affect their actions?
  - Which is more important to understanding a comic book character - their motivations, their role, or their gender or gender expression? Why might the author or illustrator think certain characters should think and act in this way?
- Is the story plot or character driven? Meaning: is there a lot of action or is there more focus on the lives and feelings of characters?

- Do the words and pictures work together to tell the story? Or is the story more in either the words or pictures?
  - How do the pictures portray heroes? Sidekicks? Damsels in distress? Villains?
  - Do the drawings portray characters realistically based on their gender or gender expression? Why or why not?
- Which characters do you especially like or dislike? What are their primary characteristics?
  - Which characters do you think the author or illustrator wants you to like or dislike? How can you tell?
- Is the plot well-developed? Does the story make sense? Did anything surprise you?
- Were there any similarities between the comics discussed in the unit?
- How many problems were in each comic? How were the problems resolved? Who resolved the problems? Were the solutions realistic? Might other characters have been able to resolve the problems in different ways using their skills and traits? If so, how?
- Who do the superheroes typically end up saving?
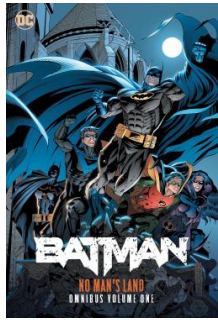
**Resources**

**Day 1: LI'L Gotham:** By Dustin Nguyen and Derek Fridolfs



**Day 2: Mighty Marvel Masterworks: The Amazing Spider-Man Vol. 1 - With Great Power:** By Stan Lee
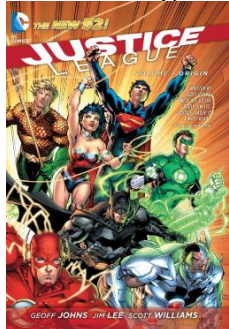


**Batman: No Man's Land Omnibus Vol. 1:** By Dennis O'Neil and Greg Rucka

**Day 3: Marvel Black Widow: Secrets of a Super-spy:** By Jim Lee



**Justice League Vol. 1: Origin (The New 52):** By Geoff Johns

# Week 2: Gender Representation in Sports

**Relevance**

Students will be inquiring into various sports and seeing the different attributes that are attached to male and female sports. They will be tasked to learn about sports beyond North America, making global connections, and seeing how they differ from their norms. At the end of the week, they will create solutions or ideas around a social sport that captures their attention.

**Big Idea**

Explore the struggles that some athletes experience every day and understand how it affects their daily lives. Understand how gender concepts affect what sports are seen as the norms based on the characteristics attached to each gender.

**Timeframe**

One to two weeks

**Curriculum Expectations:**

**Overall Expectations:**

Language Arts C2: apply comprehension strategies before, during, and after reading, listening to, and viewing a variety of texts, including digital and media texts, by creators with diverse identities, perspectives, and experience, in order to understand and clarify the meaning of texts

**Specific Expectations:**

Day 1

C2.1: Identify and explain prior knowledge from various sources, including personal experiences, that they can use to make connections and understand new texts

Day 2

C2.5: Describe how the ideas expressed in texts connect to their knowledge and lived experiences, the ideas in other texts, and the world around them.

Day 3

C2.4: Use strategies such as adjusting reading rate, visualizing, reading ahead, asking questions, and consulting references and other texts or sources of information, to monitor and

confirm their understanding of various texts.

Day 4

C2.6 Summarize the main idea of a text and the supporting details in sequence, and draw a well supported conclusion

Day 5

C2.7: Explain how strategies such as visualizing, making predictions, summarizing, and connecting to their experiences have helped them comprehend various texts

**Overall Lessons**

**Day 1**

Have a group discussion with the class and outline the five main sports that will be covered throughout the unit (basketball, hockey, football, cricket, soccer). Upon a quick discussion, the students will get to choose which sport they will be taking notes on.

The students will be placed in groups of three and will discuss their previous knowledge of the sports (basketball, hockey, football, cricket, soccer). Depending on class sizes, one or two groups should work on each sport by writing their ideas on a chart.

Upon completion of the brainstorming activity, the class will work together to create five lists of characteristics and facts about each sport. This chart will represent the class's previous knowledge and will be hung throughout the room for the unit for reference.

As an exit ticket, have the student write three to five sentences about a sport that was not mentioned or something new they learned about one of the five sports discussed by the class.

**Day 2**

Read the two different stories to the class, *"Girls Can't Play Football"* David Waugh (2005) *and "No Girls Allowed*" Natalie Corbett Sampson (2020), prior to reading each discuss prompting questions.

Questions:
- What is the main problem of the story and who is affected by it the most?
  - Why is the problem a problem?
  - If the problem mostly affects girls, how does it also affect boys? If the problem mostly affects boys, how does it also affect girls?
    - Is there representation in these stories for characters who don't identify with traditional gender roles?
    - (This could also be a place to bring in the experiences of non-binary or

trans students, or to look at the effects of culture on deciding who can or cannot play a sport based on their gender.)
- Who is creating this problem? Why do they keep doing it? Is this a problem that needs resolving? How would you resolve the problem?
- Do the problems focus on the main characteristics of the sport itself? For example, in the football story, is there something about the sport that makes it wrong or unsafe for anyone to play football?

**Continuation of Day 2**

Revisit the two stories during a quick discussion between the whole class and generate some key ideas on the board. Try not to discuss the questions on the handout too much on the board.

Give the handout to the class and allow them to pick either story to analyze. Upon completion students can read quietly.

Student Handout: Sports Connections (Appendix B)

**Day 3**

Meet as a class, have five pieces of chart paper ready with the five sports that were discussed earlier in the week (basketball, football, cricket, hockey, soccer).

Students will work in five groups, to develop lists of key characteristics about the sport that they were given or about the athletes who play these sports. If they are unfamiliar, perhaps have them look up video clips of footage from different matches.

Example of Player Characteristics:
- Strength
- Speed
- Vertical jump

Upon completion of the charts, meet as a whole and discuss the different characteristics in the students' lists. Talk about the similarities and differences that each sport has with the others.

Key questions:
- Who plays this sport? Younger/older?
- Can this sport be played professionally? By whom? Is there a professional league for men? For women? Which gets paid more? Which has a larger fan base?
  - Probe here: About the experiences of trans or non-binary students, likely in the news, about which leagues they are able to belong to - and the controversy over biological sex vs implied physical advantages for trans women, for example.
- Do men or women ever play together in the same leagues for this sport? Is there space

for trans or non-binary players in the mixed leagues?
- Do all the sports for various genders have the same rules? (i.e., around contact in football, etc.)
- Look at the uniforms that players wear in male and female leagues within the same sport. Are they the same or different? Why might that be?

Extension Questions
- Which sports have higher visibility and status?
- Which sport's athletes are paid more? Which sports have more sponsorships? What does sponsorship say about which sports are seen as more important? Less important?

Exit ticket: List one or two characteristics that you share that have been outlined in today's lesson. Please explain why.


**Day 4**

Students will be tasked to choose a professional male and female athlete, researching a few different categories about each athlete. As handouts are given out please read through questions with class and discuss any confusion. Students can work together in pairs or alone.

Student Handout: [Comparing Professional Athletes](#) (Appendix B)


**Day 5**

The final project takes place over two or three days depending on time available.

Meet as a whole, explaining the project to the class. Allow them the period to develop their final project. The students will work individually or in pairs on researching a gender issue in sports, whether a national sport or a global sport. Before separating for individual work, distribute the hand out for the overall purpose of assignment.

By the end of the first day, students need to have a topic selected and have made progress on their research. Educators should meet with each group for a 5 minute status conference each class.

Student Handout: [Gender and Sports Social Issue Research](#) (Appendix B)


**Subsequent to Day 5**

Revisit the assignment instructions and give a brief time for the students to have a chance to ask questions that they may have. After day two, students should have the vast majority of the

questions completed.

Educator(s)will walk amongst the groups throughout the work period and assist with the students who may be a bit behind.

Meet with students and outline the presentation factor, they can express themselves in whatever way they feel the most comfortable. Just speaking or using visual aids.

**Final Day**

The final day is reserved for presenting their final products. Students should be given the opportunity to meet or prepare last minute fixes (maximum ten minutes).

Presentation can be done in several different ways: it can be done as a class and everyone comes to the front, or the students can share their projects in small groups and do rotations so they share with the class.

Assessment: Gender in Sports Rubric (Appendix B)

**Questions to Generate Additional Discussion:**

1. What are some differences between men and women in sports?
   ○ Are there differences between what sports are available for men and women? What about players who do not identify in this way? Provide examples.
   ○ Are there differences between how some sports are played by men and by women? Provide examples.
   ○ Are there differences in the characteristics of male and female athletes in these sports? Provide examples.
   ○ Is the division of sports into "male" and "female" fair to all athletes?
2. What are some similarities between men and women in sports?
3. How does one become a professional athlete?
4. How come the wage differences between male and female are so high?
5. Are there any sports specific for each gender?
6. Do some sports cater towards a specific gender?
7. How come males have more opportunities in sports?
8. Can we move beyond these problems in sports?
9. Do we have to focus on one or more sports?
10. How come male and females do not play sports together professionally?

**Resources**

*No Girls Allowed*: By Natalie Corbett Sampson (2020)
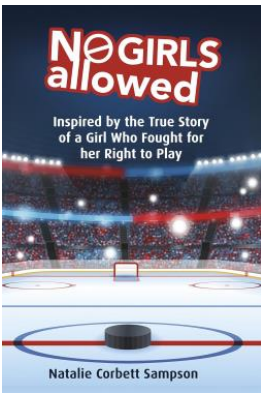
*Girls Can't Play Football*: By David Waugh (2005)
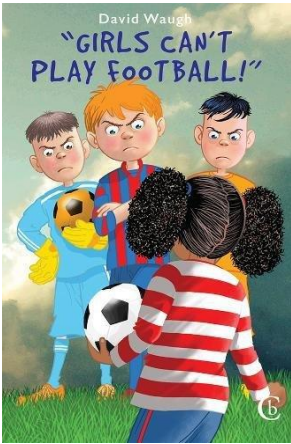
# Week 3: Gender Representation in Television Shows or Movies

**Relevance**

With today's advancement of technology, children have increased access to tv or movies across many different platforms (theaters, tv stations, streaming platforms, etc.) than in previous generations. Some of these platforms are more easily monitored than others and, increasingly, children are able to access viewing media that their parents or guardians may not be aware of. For example, platforms such as Netflix have resurrected many older or more obscure shows that might present problematic themes or norms related to gender representation and expression.

**Big Idea**

Students should critically consider before they accept the meaning that is being presented to them through these tv shows or movies. Accepting that specific characteristics assigned to genders in popular media does not mean they have to adapt to them.

**Time Frame**

One to two weeks

**Curriculum Expectations**

C1. Knowledge about Texts: apply foundational knowledge and skills to understand a variety of texts, including digital and media texts, by creators with diverse identities, perspectives, and experience, and demonstrate an understanding of the patterns, features, and elements of style associated with various text forms and genres.

**Specific Expectations**

Day 1

C1.4 explain how images, graphics, and visual design create, communicate, and contribute to meaning in a variety of texts

Day 2

C1.2 describe some characteristics of various text forms and genres, including cultural text forms, and explain how they help communicate meaning

Day 3.

C1.1 read and comprehend various texts, using knowledge of words, grammar, cohesive ties,

sentence structures, and background knowledge

Day 4

C1.2 describe some characteristics of various text forms and genres, including cultural text forms, and explain how they help communicate meaning

Day 5

C1.1 read and comprehend various texts, using knowledge of words, grammar, cohesive ties, sentence structures, and background knowledge

C1.3 identify text patterns, such as cause and effect in a persuasive text, and text features, such as a preface and glossary, associated with various text forms, including cultural texts, and explain how they help readers, listeners, and viewers understand the meaning

**Overall Lessons**

**Day 1**
As an end to the unit, have a group discussion with the students generating some examples of movies and tv shows they watch or have heard of. This activity may prompt discussion of different restrictions on viewing placed by parents or guardians.

Each student will choose one of their favorite tv shows or movies. They will discuss this in groups of three to four, comparing similarities and differences between the different shows.

Key Topics for Discussion
- Character Qualities - What do you like/dislike about the characters in your show? What words describe your favourite character(s)? What do male characters (if any) do in your show? What do female characters (if any) do in your show? Are there any trans or non-binary characters in your show?
- Setting - Where does the story take place? Is it a real place or a pretend place? Does the story take place in the past, present, or future? Does the setting affect whether you like the show?
- Plot - What happens in the story? What makes the story interesting for you?
- Problems/ Solutions - What are the problems that occur in the story? Are they realistic? How are they solved? Who solves them?

Revisit the list of shows as a whole class and have a few students share what they came up with, choosing as many as timing will allow.

Finish the day with an exit ticket, having the students express one thing that may interest that plays a role in our society.

**Day 2**

Have a group discussion on the students' favorite tv shows; selecting between five to seven students to share. Discuss what all of these shows have in common, are there any differences between them. Steer the conversation to how the shows portray gender roles and expectations. Do any of the shows challenge traditional portrayals of gender?

Play an episode of *Phineas and Ferb* for the class. During each episode, point out an example of various gender stereotypes. With the group, discuss: who is this cartoon marketed to? How might that group come to view the roles or traits of female or male characters after watching this show? Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Upon completion of the episode, students will work individually or in pairs. They will reflect on what they just watched, thinking about gender roles, overall plot, and what was the main issue throughout the show.

Students will then use their journals and express what they learned and connect it back to their own lives.

**Day 3**

Create a KWL chart to commence a group discussion about the novel *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, using some predictions about the plot and some of the characters. This activity should be quick since the main focus of the lesson is either to have a group read aloud of the novel or read in small groups.

**Continuation of Day 3**

Quickly review what everyone has read so far. This will be the final in class opportunity to read the novel, so give them the whole period.

If some students are reading in groups, make sure the educator is circulating to monitor the progress of the students.

Question: In *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, two of the main characters are boys and two are girls. As you read, keep track of the main human characters (the heroes) and the other characters.
1. What words would you use to describe Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy? Are there ways that the girls are the same? Are there ways that the boys are the same? How are they different? What might that mean? Who are the hero(es)? Are any of them sidekicks? Are any of them villains? Are any of them Damsels in Distress?
2. What are Peter's problems? How does he solve them? What gift does Peter receive from Aslan and how does he use his gift to solve his problems? What does it mean that Peter is named King Peter the <u>Magnificent</u>?

3. What are Susan's problems? How does she solve them? What gift does Susan receive from Aslan and how does she use her gift to solve her problems? What does it mean that Susan is named Queen Susan the <u>Gentle</u>?
4. What are Edmund's problems? How does he solve them? What does it mean that Edmund is named King Edmund the <u>Just</u>?
5. What are Lucy's problems? How does she solve them? What gift does Lucy receive from Aslan and how does she use her gift to solve her problems? What does it mean that Lucy is named Queen Lucy the <u>Valiant</u>?
6. Based on their actions and who they are as people, did you expect these characters to be given these kingly/queenly traits?
7. What words would you use to describe the White Witch? Mr. Tumnus? Aslan? The Beavers? How are they the same or different? Who is the villain? Are any of them heroes? Are any of them sidekicks?

**Continuation of Day 3**

Have the students choose a character that resonates with them.

Key Questions
1. What are some characteristics that best describe the character you selected?
2. What role do they play in the story?
3. Is there anything you would change about this character?
4. How do they fit into the problem of the story?

Students will use their journals to answer these questions, making sure that they are using full sentences and including relevant details from the novel to support their thinking.

**Day 4**

The focus of this lesson is on main characters and the students will be tasked with selecting a character from *The Chronicles of Narnia* and comparing them to a different character from a tv show or movie of their choosing.

The purpose of this activity is to compare the character traits, outlining how most movies are portraying how each gender is supposed to act. Complete the handout.

Student Handout: [Comparing Characters in Tv Shows and Movies](#) (Appendix B)

**Day 5**

The final assignment for this unit will ask the students to write a mini story that focuses on a balance of strong gender qualities amongst the characters, ensuring it focuses on equality.

Using some of their favorite tv shows and movies as their inspiration.

Assessment: [Story Writing Rubric](#) (Appendix B)

Keys for story:
- At least four characters
- Plot that has at least one problem and one solution
- At least two settings
- Take time to reread work
- Inclusion is evident in the story

After explaining the final assignment, allow the students to have a work period.

**Continuation of Day 5**
Arrange student led conferences throughout the period, where each student will meet with the educator, checking the progress that they have made. This is their time to ask any questions they have or clear up any confusion along the way.

**Day 5**
This is their last work period to complete the assignment. If the students finish early, have them revisit their work and make sure they have edited it at least two times. If more than one is completed then they can share their work.

**Questions to Generate Additional Discussion:**

1. Do any of these fictional characters share similarities with us?
2. Are there any certain gender roles shown? Do any of the characters act in ways that would not be expected based on their gender?
3. How might these tv shows impact how we act?
4. Was there a difference in characters between movies and tv shows?
5. Does visuals affect how you viewed some of the characters?
6. Was the novel or the tv show better at showing the characters? Why might there be a difference?
7. How were each gender shown in the various mediums?
8. What are some of these gender issues that you noticed?
9. Do these tv shows affect your daily life?
10. What was an issue that you were surprised about that you did not know before?

**Resources**

Phineas and Ferb: Any Episode

Novel: The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe
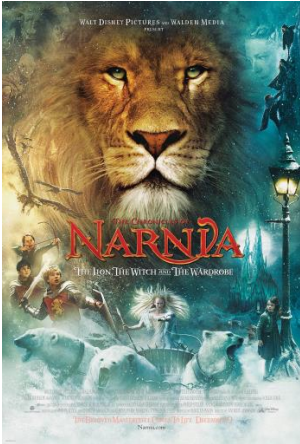
# Week 4: Gender Representation in Social Media

**Relevance**

Social media is a vital part in many people's daily life especially for students in this age. As the technology becomes more accessible, the usage continues to reach new heights. The purpose of this topic is to outline good habitats and proper behavior on social media, by helping to illustrate some potential problems and creating a positive mindset when using various apps.

**Big Idea**

Social media allows learners to interact with their peers, exchange opinions, receive swift answers to their questions, as well as explore different learning approaches and materials. These features can be included in classroom learning to encourage them to actively participate in the learning process and explore their subject of interest in more detail.

**Timeframe:**

One to Two Weeks

**Curriculum Expectations**

**Overall:**
**A2. Digital Media Literacy:** demonstrate and apply the knowledge and skills needed to interact safely and responsibly in online environments, use digital and media tools to construct knowledge, and demonstrate learning as critical consumers and creators of media

**Specific**

Day 1

A2.1 explain their rights and responsibilities when interacting online with appropriate permission, and make decisions that contribute positively to the development of their digital identity and those of their communities

Day 2

A2.5 demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships between the form, message, and context of texts, the intended audience, and the purpose for production

Day 3

A2.3 gather, evaluate, and use information, considering validity, credibility, accuracy, and perspectives, to construct knowledge, create texts, and demonstrate learning

Day 4

A2.4 demonstrate an understanding of the forms, conventions, and techniques of digital and media texts, consider the impact on the audience, and apply this understanding when analyzing and creating texts

Day 5

A2.7 communicate and collaborate with various communities in a safe, respectful, responsible, and inclusive manner when using online platforms and environments, including digital and media tools, and demonstrate cultural awareness with members of the community

**Overall Lessons**

**Day 1**
This lesson presents an introduction to social media and teaches the students some proper ways to use social media. Students will work to create a list of some dos and don'ts that will keep them safe when they use social media.

Use this short clip to help students develop the list. *Are you Living An Insta Lie? Social vs Reality* https://youtu.be/0EFHbruKEmw?si=TeC49Iszr0Zy7RDH

Key Questions after short film
1. Were these short stories realistic? Did you recognize the behavior of the actors?
   ○ What does it mean to be safe or unsafe on social media? How can you recognize behaviours that might be safe or unsafe?
   ○ What behaviours on the video were safe bahaviours? How do you know?
   ○ Were some of the behaviours unsafe? Why or how might they be dangerous?
   ○ Give examples of ways that characters treated one another on social media in these stories? Why do you think some actors might choose to treat other actors in kind or unkind ways?
2. How many hours do you spend on social media a day?
   ○ What is your favourite social media platform? Why do you like it?
   ○ How do you feel when you are on social media? Why? Give some examples if you feel comfortable sharing.
   ○ Have you ever felt unsafe on social media? How did you handle that feeling?
3. Could you imagine life without social media? Even one week or month?

Exit Ticket: Students will share any connections they are able to make with the short film. Alternatively, they can illustrate some ideas on the topic of Instagram vs reality, does it connect to them? If so, how come?

**Day 2**
Have a group discussion about what we have learned about gender roles and stereotypes in the previous lessons. Upon completion of the discussion, play the video for the students.

Gender Role and Stereotypes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulh0DnFUGsk

Use Google Classroom to create a poll with several questions about gender roles, mainly focusing on certain characteristics being attached to a certain gender.
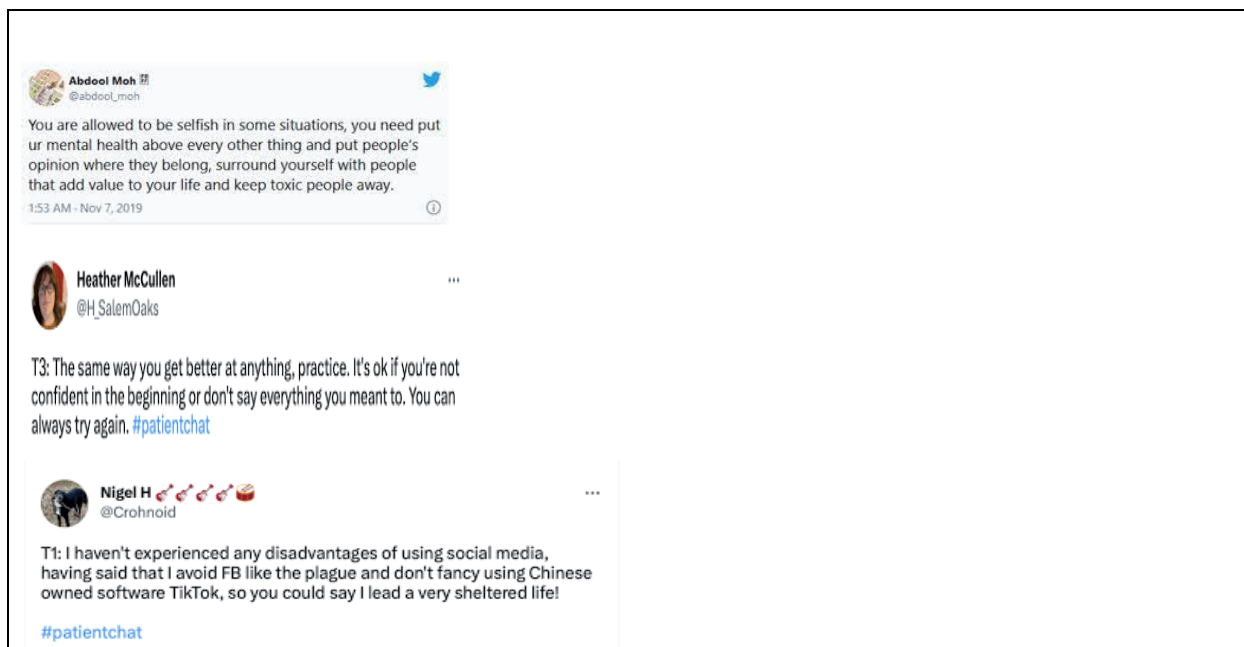
Potential topics
- Sports
- Cooking/ Cleaning
- Hugs
- Compliments
- Mud
- Fishing

These are some general ideas, tailor the poll towards things that best fit your classroom based on the responses given by the class to date.

Journal: Write a paragraph in which you describe an event where you feel like these stereotypes have affected you. What happened, how did you feel? What did you do about it?

**Day 3**

For this task, the students will analyze a few advocacy tweets that were available online.

With the students in small groups, have them ask each other the following key questions, then share their ideas with the whole class.

1. What is the topic of the tweet or tweets you analyzed? What features or strategies did the author use to show you what the topic was?
2. What social problem or issue might the tweet be addressing? Do you know about that problem? If you don't know about that problem or issue, how might you learn more about it?
3. What types of information are included in the tweet or tweets? If analyzing more than one tweet, is there one that is more effective in your view? Why do you think that?
4. Who is the audience of the tweet? How do you know? Do you think the tweet or tweets was/were effective in communicating that message to the audience? Why do you think so?
5. Examine the hashtag, if any. If the hashtag is present, what information does it give? What might an alternative hashtag or hashtags be for the tweet or tweets?
6. Is there any part of the tweet or tweet(s) that you don't understand?

The students will be tasked to create their own tweet about a social issue, the limit needs to be a normal tweet (280 words). Have students reflect on the following questions:

1. What is an issue that is important to me that I might want to write a tweet about?
2. What strategies from the tweets we reviewed might be helpful for me in writing my tweet?
3. What kind of information do I want to include?
4. Who is my audience and how should I address them? What knowledge will my audience have? What kinds of language will they use? Would that language change if I was writing to a different audience that might be older/younger, etc.?

5. Will you include a hashtag (or multiple hashtags) with your tweet? If so, how will you write a short, catchy, informative hashtag?

They will have the remainder of the class to work on their tweets. It is important to think about issues and focus on editing the paragraph or tweet to be polished and easily understood by the intended audience. Another option is https://simitator.com/generator/twitter/tweet, this allows the students to just create a tweet without going through the process of creating an account.

**Continuation of Day 3**

Revise the tweet and discuss some of the main topics or strategies about advocacy tweets, then give them time to complete the tweet and submit by the end of the class.

Students can try different types of social media such as Facebook or plan a TikTok video or Instagram post, for example.

**Day 4**
Host a group discussion on social media, i.e., how are there different avenues to promote social change in order to not only reach the community, but beyond.

Key Words
- News Report
- Broadcast
- Tweets
- Facebook Posts
- Podcasts

Play the video after the discussion. Give them a few moments upon completion of the video to reflect.

Gender Inequality
https://globalnews.ca/news/10152726/school-competition-gender-inequality-issues/

Exit ticket:
Have the students write a reflection about the video. One to two paragraphs will be created, making sure they use full sentences.

Key Topics
- How did it make you feel about what happened in the video?
- Would you ever want to do what the characters are doing in the video? Why or why not?
- What is one issue that comes to your mind when you view the video? Why do you think this is an important issue? Is this an important issue for all people or some people more than others?

- How does this issue affect you? How might it affect other people around you?

**Day 5**
For the final lesson of this unit, the students will be tasked to work in small groups of 2 or 3. The objective of this assignment is to find an issue that resonates with them and then?. The issue can be local or global, and will preferably be about gender issues, but will not be limited.

Assessments: Oral and Written Communication Rubrics (Appendix B)

Further, the students have the option to pick from various ways to present their projects. Any form of social media is allowed; however, there are key components that they do need to include.

Things needed for assignment
- Written
- Oral
- At least one form of social media
- One Social issue
- At least one solution

Students will be tasked to complete a brief organizer describing their issue and how they plan on using social media to communicate about it.

**Continuation of Day 5**

Students will have the period to work on their projects and each group will meet with the teacher at some point throughout the lesson. Ensure that they are aware of the time frames and using their time wisely.

**Continuation of Day 5**

Last work period for the students, the teacher is circulating to answer any final questions. If the students finish early, they can practice with another group if they finish early.

Depending on your timeline, a group or two can present by the end of this period and then continue with presentations for the final day.

**Final Day**

Presentations- allow students to volunteer for order or just randomly select from hat to draw an order.

If there is extra time, have the students read independently.

**Questions to Generate Additional Discussion:**

1. How often do you spend on social media daily?
2. Do you ever notice that social media is stopping you from being present?
3. Is there a use for social media beyond just communication?
4. What is one way we can use social media for social awareness?
5. Does social media compare to other themes throughout this unit?
6. How do these apps portray gender?
7. What's the biggest challenge with social media?
8. How can we ensure that we use social media safely?
9. Which form of social media reaches the biggest audience?
10. What form of communication do you use more written or oral when using social media?

**Links to Media Resources**

*Are you Living An Insta Lie? Social vs Reality*
https://youtu.be/0EFHbruKEmw?si=TeC49Iszr0Zy7RDH

Gender Role and Stereotypes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulh0DnFUGsk

Gender Inequality
https://globalnews.ca/news/10152726/school-competition-gender-inequality-issues/

# Week 5: Social Justice: Be the Change

**Relevance**

This unit will start with issues that will be easy for the students to connect to, working with their classmates to develop a better class environment. Further, with the development of technology it is also important to look at global scale, the students will be tasked with learning issues that may not relate to them. Outline to them, just because we are unable to see this does not mean it is not there, this has now become a reality with the click of the button using social media.

**Big Idea**

Students will build on what they have learned throughout the prior units and apply in various levels. The final week will be looking at different scales on environments, for example they will start in their classroom and expand my moving globally. Starting with smaller issues and as the unit moves forward the social problems will become more in depth.

**Time Frame**

One to two weeks

**Curriculum Expectations**

**Overall Expectations**

**D1. Developing Ideas and Organizing Content:** Plan, develop ideas, gather information, and organize content for creating texts of various forms, including digital and media texts, on a variety of topics.

**B1**. **Oral and Non-Verbal Communication:** apply listening, speaking, and non-verbal communication skills and strategies to understand and communicate meaning in formal and informal contexts and for various purposes and audiences

**Specific Expectations**

Day 1

D1.1 identify the topic, purpose, and audience for various texts they plan to create, and explain why the chosen text form, genre, and medium suit the purpose and audience and how they will help communicate the intended meaning

Day 2

D1.3 gather and record information and content relevant to a topic, using multiple textual sources; verify the reliability of sources, using simple criteria; and record the creator and source of all content created by others

B1.3 identify the purpose and audience for speaking in formal and informal contexts, and use appropriate speaking strategies, including paraphrasing and restating, to communicate clearly and coherently

Day 3

D1.4 select and classify ideas and collected information, using appropriate strategies and tools, and sequence content, taking into account the chosen text form, genre, and medium

Day 4

D1.5 describe the strategies and tools that helped them develop ideas and organize content for texts of the chosen forms, genres, and media, and explain how they helped them improve as a text creator

Day 5

D1.2 generate and develop ideas and details about various topics, such as topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to other subject areas, using a variety of strategies, and drawing on various resources, including their own lived experiences

B1.5 use appropriate word choice, including new vocabulary, varied adjectives and adverbs to elaborate, a variety of sentence types, and cohesive sentences during formal and informal communication, to support audience comprehension

**Overall Lessons**

**Day 1**

Town Hall Meeting

The students will have a chance to change one thing in the classroom, in groups of three or four they will develop an issue that they would like to change. Ensure that there are reasons why you are presenting this to the class, further develop a solution.

Examples of Issues:
1. Lack of time for homework
2. To much talking by the educator
3. Lack of effective communication

Nonexamples
- More gym class
- Play time
- Recess
- Movie Days

Give the students an allotted time that you are able to spare, the students will still need to present their ideas at the end of class keep that in mind.

Upon completion of their written, the students will present their issues to the class, upon completion of all their proposals. Having a class vote can be as simple as just putting the issues up on the board and voting. Or another solution is have the students write down who they think is best and why.

The winner of the poll from all the students, their solutions will be implemented into daily or weekly lessons depending on what the solution was from the students.

**Day 2**

Start the lesson with a group discussion led by the students, they will be discussing some issues with the school. It is important that this discussion is to better the school and should be taken seriously by the students. After generating some discussion, the students will work in partners and create their own idea to present to some of their peers.

The goal of this project is to have the students generate an idea on how to better their school. They will develop a few questions to ask students outside of their classroom, the questions must be related to the issues. Using what they have gathered and other research they will develop a proposal to help address this issue.

**Continuation of Day 2**

They will use this time to finish their interviews, their proposal only needs to be a page or two so there should not be too much written work. Proposals are done at the end of the period, if students finish early they can read independently. Interview questions and responses need to be stapled to proposals to see what they gather during that process.

Student Handout: School Community (Appendix B)

**Day 3**

Learning about their community. The students will be tasked with researching about their communities. Most likely, there will be a mix of communities since some people live in different regions. This project will be independently, the students will be tasked with finding a

way of presenting their findings. There is no oral portion to this lesson.

5 topics
1. Who lives in their area?
2. What services and facilities in their region?
3. What do they like about it?
4. What do they dislike?
5. What could be changed?

Assessment: [Community Writing Rubric](#) (Appendix B)

**Day 4**

Social Issue Poster

Have a group discussion with the students, establishing several key things that make a good poster. Try to let the students lead the discussion, converse until the chatter is not enhancing the students' understanding of posters. The poster is focusing on social issues at a national level, something that should represent the country on a larger scale.

Keys to an effective poster
1. Tittle
2. Graphics
3. Layout
4. Flow
5. Colour Affect
6. Text
7. Usage of space (Any white space)

Examples of Social Justice Poster

**Continuation of Day 4**

Students will get some more time on their posters, upon completion of the task, they will write short passages explaining their choices and why they chose to add the items on their posters.

**Day 5**

To close out the unit, the students will do a research paper on a social justice issue in relation to gender that expands beyond North America. They will have several periods to work on this, they will be asked to provide information on the issue, what are the key problems, how come this issue continues.

Handout an organizer that will allow the students to get organized and outline their ideas as they continue to research and develop their ideas.

Student Handout: Research Paper Graphic Organizer (Appendix B)

**Continuation of Day 5**
Students will get the period to work on their projects, the teacher needs to be available to meet with partners.

**Continuation of Day 5**

Final period of working on the project, the next class time will have the students present, and the educator is walking around throughout the period to answer any final questions. If complete the students can practice presenting

**Final Day**

Presentations, presentations should only be 3- 5 minutes. Written copy will be given after presentation from each partnership.

There are two rubrics presented, you can use both to assess or one depending what marks you need from the students.

Assessment: Oral and Written Communication Rubrics (Appendix B)

**Questions to Generate Additional Discussion:**

1. What are the biggest challenges that we are facing at the moment in the classroom?
2. How can we implement this solution into the classroom that creates a better atmosphere?
3. How come some of the questions in interviews spark more dialogue?
4. Why was it hard to get participants for our interviews?
5. How come we do not know everyone that lives in our community?
6. Why is there a lack of attention being brought to these community issues?
7. How do we show meaning using colour and visuals?
8. What is a good way to use words to promote change?
9. Is it possible to have multiple solutions to this issue?
10. How do you narrow it down to one issue?

**Appendix A: Teacher Guide Resources (Texts)**

**Comics:**

*Batman: Li'l Gotham Vol. 1: Fridolfs, Derek, Nguyen, Dustin, Nguyen, Dustin: 9781401244941:*

> *Books - Amazon.ca*. (n.d.). https://www.amazon.ca/Batman-Lil-Gotham-Vol-
> 1/dp/1401244947

Spiderman:

*MIGHTY MARVEL MASTERWORKS: THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN VOL. 1 - WITH GREAT*

> *POWER. . .: Lee, Stan, Ditko, Steve, Cho, Michael, Ditko, Steve: 9781302929770: Books*
>
> *- Amazon.ca*. (n.d.). https://www.amazon.ca/MIGHTY-MARVEL-MASTERWORKS-
> AMAZING-SPIDER-
> MAN/dp/1302929771/ref=asc_df_1302929771/?tag=googleshopc0c-
> 20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=459320658681&hvpos=&hvnetw=g&hvrand=17277992429
> 636323829&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy
> =9000795&hvtargid=pla-
> 1162193819885&psc=1&mcid=43091983bc17301788292afc4c2b545e

Batman

Batman *Batman No Man's Land Omnibus 1: O'Neil, Dennis, Gorfinkel, Jordan B., Vincenzo,*

> *Darren, Carlin, Mike, Idelson, Matt: 9781779513229: Books - Amazon.ca*. (n.d.).
>
> https://www.amazon.ca/Batman-Mans-Land-Omnibus-
> Vol/dp/1779513224/ref=pd_sim_d    _sccl_1_2/131-9401559-
> 4550846?pd_rd_w=a87iS&content-id=amzn1.sym.40651f80-e79e-43eb-91b0-
> 94aa283a4a64&pf_rd_p=40651f80-e79e-43eb-91b0-
> 94aa283a4a64&pf_rd_r=3Y5XDDDY1PGMG6PG1SHK&pd_rd_wg=fc5o4&pd_rd_r=e
> 1daf09a-33e1-46aa-806d-66edd0a1f19d&pd_rd_i=1779513224&psc=1

Black Widow

*Marvel Black Widow: Secrets of a Super-spy: 9780241428016: Books - Amazon.ca*. (n.d.).

> https://www.amazon.ca/Marvel-Black-Widow-Secrets-Super-spy/dp/0241428017

Justice League

*Justice League Vol. 1: Origin (The New 52): Johns, Geoff, Lee, Jim, Williams, Scott:*

  *8601200478785: Books - Amazon.ca*. (n.d.).


**Novels / Picture Books**

No Girls Allowed

*No Girls Allowed: Inspired by the True Story of a Girl Who Fought for her Right to Play:*

  *Corbett Sampson, Natalie: 9781771087773: Books - Amazon.ca*. (n.d.).

  https://www.amazon.ca/No-Girls-Allowed-Inspired-Fought/dp/1771087773/ref=sr_1_1?c

  rid=2WUMHZJU1FNGB&keywords=no+girls+allowed&qid=1707245154&sprefix=no+

  girls+%2Caps%2C172&sr=8-1

Girls Can't Play Football

*Girls can't play football: Waugh, David: 9781909644861: Books - Amazon.ca*. (n.d.).

  https://www.amazon.ca/Girls-Cant-Football-David-Waugh/dp/1909644862

The Lion, the Witch, and The Wardrobe

*The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (The Chronicles of Narnia) : C. S. Lewis: Amazon.ca:*

  *Books*. (n.d.). https://www.amazon.ca/Lion-Witch-Wardrobe-Chronicles-
  Narnia/dp/0064471047/ref=sr_1_4?crid=OUKA7DHLK9ZI&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.WiVIU
  Djtoez3PloVU5opq-7z3jvuD6f3LyTbszy6nGymcxg2-
  UwYLduguuEewn5P0IdwFFw2tKDa4iclov6fZMm0vuj0SCtlsoBQgGnWXfICPmpoM0
  o3JdOecrJ361WA3cPCy8Ii7lStnNlqZlTqgMeryuw2jkvGDUyzObIOgfN0lV42H9Mfervs
  fPzfFmOxXdSlpK-X9jQSc_pLO5kEvn0O9IKCzgjgZy-
  HcNub62E.Vuh6XxnPMEI3AOZ0-
  3sTEBrue8CNjWd4fs_qsA_f32o&dib_tag=se&keywords=chronicles+of+narnia&qid=17
  08442804&s=books&sprefix=chro%2Cstripbooks%2C116&sr=1-4

Videos or Movies

Phineas and Ferb

*Watch Phineas and Ferb | Disney+*. (2007, August 17). Disney+.

https://www.disneyplus.com/en-ca/series/phineas-and-ferb/1Vl0AKTYhC6U?distribution

Partner=google

*Are you Living An Insta Lie? Social vs Reality*

https://youtu.be/0EFHbruKEmw?si=TeC49Iszr0Zy7RDH

Gender Roles and Stereotypes

AMAZE Org. (2018, December 20). *Gender roles and stereotypes* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulh0DnFUGsk

Gender Inequality

Spector, D. (2023, December 6). School competition empowers girls to solve gender inequality

issues. *Global News*. https://globalnews.ca/news/10152726/school-competition-gender-
inequality-issues/

*Are you Living An Insta Lie? Social vs Reality*

https://youtu.be/0EFHbruKEmw?si=TeC49Iszr0Zy7RDH

**Appendix B: Teacher Guide Documents (Weekly Assignment Resources and Rubrics)**

**Index of Assignment Resources and Rubrics**

## **Week 1: Comic Comparison Between Justice League and Black Widow**

Name: _____

Question 1: List all the Superheroes in the comic. Outline two or three qualities that each hero has.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question 2: Who are the villains in the story? Do they share any qualities as the heroes? What are the differences between villains and heroes?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question 3: Who is the Damsel in Distress? What are some things you use to describe them?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question 4: What are some important relationships you notice throughout the comic?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## **Week 1: Comic Strip Organizer**

Name: _____

| Beginning | Middle | End |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| Characters | Settings | Plot |
| | | |

## Week 1: Comic Strip Rubric

| Areas Assessed | Great Work 4 | Good Work 3 | Getting there 2 | Not Quite 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Clarity and Neatness** | Comic is easy to read and all elements are so clearly written, labeled and illustrated. | Comic is easy to read and most elements are clearly written, labeled and illustrated. | Comic is hard to read with few illustrations and labels | Comic is hard to read and understand. |
| **Spelling & Grammar** | No spelling or grammatical mistakes on comic strip with lots of text. | No spelling or grammatical mistakes on a comic strip with little text. | One to 4 spelling or grammatical errors on the comic strip. | More than 4 spelling and/or grammatical errors on the comic. |
| **Content** | There are references to the topic assigned in each frame. | There are references to the topic assigned in most frames. | There are very few references to the assigned topic in the a few frames. | There are no references to the assigned topic in the comic strip. |
| **Graphics** | The graphics are meaningful, colorful, and appropriate. It is clear that time and effort went into their creation. | The graphics are somewhat meaningful, colorful, and appropriate. It is clear that some time and effort went into their creation. | The graphics are scarce throughout the piece and not much time or effort was put forth. | Little or no graphics were evident. It is clear that the effort was lacking and they did not complete the assignment. |
| **Format** | They have included at least 7 frames to their comic strip. | They have included 6 frames to their comic strip. | They have included 4 frames to comic strip. | They have 3 or less frames to the comic strip. |

Score: _____/20 points

## <u>Week 2: Sports Connections</u>

Name:_____

Book Title:_____

Question 1: Pick two or three characters. List their personality traits and any likes or dislikes.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question 2: Describe the problem in the story and list any solution(s).

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Question 3: List the settings throughout the story.

_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____

Question 4: Explain one similarity and difference between the two stories.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## <u>Week 2: Comparing Professional Athletes</u>

Names:_____

Names of Athletes:

_____

_____

List the sports they play:

_____

_____

List one characteristic that they share and one that they do not

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is there a big wage gap between the athletes?

_____

_____

_____

_____

List a few things about the athletes' stories. (How did they become an athlete? What did they have to do to become professional?)

_____

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**Week 2: Gender and Sports Social Issue Research**

Name_____

1. Pick an issue that connects with you, can be national or international. Make sure the issue relates to the unit of gender.
2. Meet with teacher to discuss topic, should only be brief, express whether you have a partner or working by yourself
3. Research, the overall facts of the social issue, give a summary of everything about the topic you selected
4. Setting, where is this place taking? Is it happening all over the world?
5. Who is this issue affecting? When is this group of people affected by this issue?

Come up with one small solution that you would like to right away and than think of a long term

solution that will take longer to do.

## Week 2: Gender in Sports Rubric

| Areas Assessed | Great Work 4 | Good Work 3 | Getting there 2 | Not Quite 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Content | Includes all sections of the handout. Succeeds expectations of detail. | Includes most Sections of the handout. Provides good detail. | Includes a few things from the handout. Provides some detail. | Includes very few things from the handout. Details are confusing. |
| Organization | All materials are neat and information organized | Most materials are neat and information organized | Some materials are neat and some information is organized | Materials are not neat and information is hard to read |
| Presentation | Students are confident and clear with their information | Students were mostly clear with their information | Students were clear some of the time | Students were hard to follow and seemed confused |
| Grammar | Minimal errors in their writing, shown the effort they put forward | Errors in their writing are minor and still able to follow | Several errors that make information hard to follow the information | To many errors that make it hard to understand the information |

Score: _____/16 points

## **Week 3: Comparing Characters in Tv Shows and Movies**

Name_____

List the two characters, explain the role they play in the story.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
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_____
_____
_____

List at least three characteristics for each character, compare and contrast between each character.

_____
_____
_____
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How do these characters fit into the problem of the story? Do they help with the solution?

_____
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_____

## Week 3: Story Writing Rubric

| Areas Assessed | Great Work 4 | Good Work 3 | Getting There 2 | Not Quite 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Topic sentence | The sentence is complete and clearly states the main idea. | The sentence is complete and adequately states the main idea. | The sentence is complete, but does not state the main idea. | The sentence is incomplete and does not state the main idea. |
| Supporting details | The main idea is fully developed using specific details. | The main idea is some-what developed using mostly specific details. | The main idea is supported with general details. | Paragraph has few detail sentences to support the main idea. |
| Concluding sentence | The sentence is complete and clearly sums up the paragraph. | The sentence is complete and adequately sums up the paragraph. | The sentence is complete, but does not sum up the paragraph. | The sentence is incomplete and does not sum up the paragraph. |
| Organization of ideas | Ideas flow in the paragraph and clearly support the main idea, creating meaning. | Ideas in the paragraph support the main idea, but could be organized more clearly. | A few ideas in the paragraph do not support the main idea or are out of place, causing a confusion of meaning. | Ideas in the paragraph are disorganized and do not support the main idea, causing a confusion of meaning. |
| Sentences and grammar | All sentences are complete and effective; complex sentences are used; no grammatical errors. | Sentences are complete; simple and complex sentences are used; few grammatical errors. | Some sentences are incomplete or run-on; simple sentences are used; some grammatical errors. | Some sentences are incomplete, choppy or run-on; grammatical errors affect readability. |
| Vocabulary or word use | All words are used appropriately; there is evidence of some new vocabulary being used. | All words are used appropriately. | Words are basic; some words are used in the wrong context. | Some inappropriate vocabulary is used; some words are used in the wrong context. |
| Conventions | There are no errors in spelling, capitalization, and/ or punctuation. | There are only a few errors in spelling, capitalization, and/or punctuation. | There are some errors in spelling, capitalization, and/or punctuation. | There are many errors in spelling, capitalization, and/or punctuation. |

**Week 4: Oral and Written Communication Rubrics**
## Oral Presentation Rubric

| Areas Assessed | Great Work 4 | Good Work 3 | Getting There 2 | Not Quite 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Delivery | Holds attention of the audience with use of direct eye contact, seldom looking at notes. Speaks with fluctuation in volume and inflection to maintain audience interest and emphasize points. | Consistent use of direct eye contact with audience, but still returns to notes. Speaks with satisfactory variation of volume and inflection. | Displays minimal eye contact with audience, while reading mostly from the notes. Speaks in uneven volume with little or no inflection. | Holds no eye contact with audience, as entire report is read from notes. Speaks in low volume and/ or monotonous tone, which causes audience to disengage |
| Content/ Organizatio n | Demonstrates full knowledge by answering all class questions with explanations and elaboration. Provides clear purpose and subject; pertinent examples, facts, and/or statistics; supports conclusions/ideas with evidence. | Is at ease with expected answers to all questions, without elaboration. Has somewhat clear purpose and subject; some examples, facts, and/or statistics that support the subject; includes some data or evidence that supports conclusions. | Is uncomfortable with information or is able to answer only basic questions. Attempts to define purpose and subject; provides weak examples, facts, and/or statistics, which do not adequately support the subject; includes very thin data or evidence. | Does not demonstrate grasp of information and cannot answer questions about subject. Does not clearly define subject and purpose; provides weak or no support of subject; gives insufficient support for ideas or conclusions. |
| Enthusi asm/ Audienc e Awareness | Demonstrates strong enthusiasm about topic during presentation. Significantly increases audience understanding and knowledge | Shows some enthusiasm about topic. Raises audience understanding and awareness of most points. | Shows little or mixed feelings about the topic being presented. Raises audience understanding and knowledge of some points. | Shows no interest in topic presented. Ineffective in increasing audience understanding of knowledge of topic. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| of topic; convinces an audience to recognize validity and importance of the subject. | | | | |

## Writing Rubric

| Areas Assessed | Great Work 4 | Good Work 3 | Getting There 2 | Not Quite 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Opinion with Reasons** | Opinion is clearly stated and reasons are strong. | Opinion is clearly stated and reasons are stated. | Opinion is clear but reasons are unclear or incomplete. | Opinion is unclear; no reasons are given. |
| **Evidence** | Supports opinion and reasons with strong, accurate facts and thorough details. | Supports opinion and reasons with facts and necessary details. | Attempts to support opinion and reasons with facts; however, the information is unclear or inaccurate. | Opinion is not supported. No evidence provided. |
| **Explanation** | Clear and concise explanation that thoroughly discusses the information presented. | Clear explanation that discusses most of the information presented. | Explanation attempts to discuss the information but is unclear at times. | Little to no explanation of the information presented. |
| **Conclusion** | Effectively ends with a strong concluding statement. | Ends with a concluding statement about the opinion stated. | Ends with a concluding statement that does not clearly relate to opinion stated. | Abrupt ending. No concluding statement. |
| **Organization & Transitions** | Strong organization and transitional language used throughout. | Organizes ideas in a logical way. Transitional language used. | Attempts to organize ideas, but transitional language needs to be added. | Little to no attempt at organization. |
| **Mechanics (Spelling & Grammar)** | Mechanics reflect careful editing. | A couple errors present, but they do not distract. | Mechanical errors distract at times. | Distracting mechanical errors throughout. |

## **Week 5: Student Community**

Name_____ School Issue_____

| Areas Assessed | Great Work 4 | Good Work 3 | Getting There 2 | Not Quite 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Questions | All questions are well throughout<br><br>The questions help promote the topic | Most questions are well throughout<br><br>Most of the questions promote the topic | Some of the questions are well throughout<br><br>Some questions promote the topic | Questions are confusing and hard to understand<br><br>Hard to connect the questions to the topic |
| Grammar | No mistakes were made. All the questions were well throughout<br><br>Clearly lots of time was spent editing. The content was really clear | Minimal mistakes made. Rather easy to understand questions.<br><br>Evident that there was time spent editing. | Several mistakes that made it harder to understand the questions<br><br>Some time spent editing but could have used more. | To many mistakes that it made the questions hard to read<br><br>Little time spent editing the questions and content |
| Content/Responses | Questions were through and well written. There was so much content due to well throughout questions. | Questions were done well, content was mainly from their interviews | Questions were somewhat confusing, students used more of their ideas | Questions were confusing and generated very little responses |

## Week 5: Community Writing Rubric

Name_____

| Areas Assessed | Great Work 4 | Good Work 3 | Getting There 2 | Not Quite 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research Ideas | Develops ideas logically within paragraphs and connects them with effective transitions. | Develops ideas within paragraphs that generally use adequate transitions. | Develops ideas in paragraphs that are not necessarily consistent. | Does not develop ideas, confusion, introduction or conclusion. |
| Writing Ideas-Language (Grammar) | Writing essentially was error free. | Writing included minor errors but the overall meaning was there. | Frequent errors in writing and grammar. | Writing had numerous errors and unclear sentences |
| Content-Creativity | Project demonstrated students' own interpretation and expression of research material. | Used students created material as well existing material from other sources. | Information was factual but showed little student interpretation. | Student information was not factual and had no self interpretation |
| Overall Organization | Used time well. Assignment was handed in early or on time. | Most work was done on time. | Some work was done on time. Needed assistance from time to time. | Did not use time well. Needed several meetings to ensure progress was occurring. |

## **Week 5: Research Paper Graphic Organizer**

Name_____

| Social Issue | Short Term Solutions |
|---|---|
| Long Term Solutions | Why the Issue Continues |
| Where does this Issue Take Place | Who is Affected by the Issue |

## Week 5: Oral and Written Communication Rubrics

Name: _____  Score: _____

## Oral Presentation Rubric

| Areas Assessed | Great Work 4 | Good Work 3 | Getting There 2 | Not Quite 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Delivery | Holds attention of the audience with use of direct eye contact, seldom looking at notes. Speaks with fluctuation in volume and inflection to maintain audience interest and emphasize points. | Consistent use of direct eye contact with audience, but still returns to notes. Speaks with satisfactory variation of volume and inflection. | Displays minimal eye contact with audience, while reading mostly from the notes. Speaks in uneven volume with little or no inflection. | Holds no eye contact with audience, as entire report is read from notes. Speaks in low volume and/ or monotonous tone, which causes audience to disengage |
| Content/ Organization | Demonstrates full knowledge by answering all class questions with explanations and elaboration. Provides clear purpose and subject; pertinent examples, facts, and/or statistics; supports conclusions/ideas with evidence. | Is at ease with expected answers to all questions, without elaboration. Has somewhat clear purpose and subject; some examples, facts, and/or statistics that support the subject; includes some data or evidence that supports conclusions. | Is uncomfortable with information or is able to answer only basic questions. Attempts to define purpose and subject; provides weak examples, facts, and/or statistics, which do not adequately support the subject; includes very thin data or evidence. | Does not demonstrate grasp of information and cannot answer questions about subject. Does not clearly define subject and purpose; provides weak or no support of subject; gives insufficient support for ideas or conclusions. |
| Enthusiasm/ Audience Awareness | Demonstrates strong enthusiasm about topic during presentation. Significantly increases audience | Shows some enthusiasm about topic. Raises audience understanding and awareness of most | Shows little or mixed feelings about the topic being presented. Raises audience understanding and knowledge of some | Shows no interest in topic presented. Ineffective in increasing audience understanding of knowledge of topic. |

| | understanding and knowledge of topic; convinces an audience to recognize validity and importance of the subject. | points. | points. | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## Social Issue Written Rubric

| Areas Assessed | Great Work 4 | Good Work 3 | Getting There 2 | Not Quite 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research Quality | Includes facts, quotes, and paraphrasing from sources. Included more opinion than facts. | Includes facts, opinions, conclusions from sources. | Included facts from sources, opinions from unreliable sources. | Included more opinion than facts. Information was taken from unreliable sources. |
| Writing Ideas | Writings included information based on facts. | Writing included interesting information. | Writing had three or more ideas that supported | Writing had few details |
| Content-Creativity | Project demonstrated students' own interpretation and expression of research material. | Used students created material as well existing material from other sources. | Information was factual but showed little student interpretation. | Student information was not factual and had no self interpretation |
| Overall Organization | Used time well. Assignment was handed in early or on time. | Most work was done on time. | Some work was done on time. Needed assistance from time to time. | Did not use time well. Needed several meetings to ensure progress was occurring. |

**Chapter 5: Final Reflection on the Portfolio**

I started my masters in the hopes of completing a thesis, with studying the perspectives of several teachers' ideologies on critical literacy and how we can use these perspectives to promote social justice. Unfortunately, there were too many challenges that restricted me from pursuing this type of research within a realistic timeframe, which encouraged me to seek out a portfolio and focus on how I can create change for the students to have opportunities to dive deeper into critical literacy and social justice.

However, although this journey has been one of the hardest things I have ever faced, these hardships have made me stronger and helped me to develop an excellent understanding of the various concepts and how they interconnect. In addition, I have come to realize the lack of attention that is focused on this area of education, especially in relation to gender issues that reach grade five and six students, who are on the cusp of puberty. Therefore, even though this may seem cliché, the challenges that I have faced along the way have forced me to become a stronger teacher, scholar, and advocate and outline how important this work is to the future of society. If we are willing to develop students who are able to move beyond the surface and do not accept everything that they see on the surface, challenging ideas that do not encompass all perspectives, then we will educate children who are able to face the challenges of the future. Evidently, I was unaware of what I expected as I started this journey; but, over time it is important to stress that it is impossible to fully describe what I have gathered along the way.

Eventually, I found a way to find myself and to grow as a student and an educator as it became on my mind from when I woke up until I closed my eyes. I focused on learning more about critical and social education and its missing gaps in the curriculum and in classrooms,

which became my focus while working on this portfolio. Thus with that being said, throughout the process of searching for various articles or using different mediums it was challenging to find ones that connect to the overall goal of this portfolio. There were several issues that arose throughout this process, one of the biggest being how to connect to themes or concepts of the week; whether it was the limited selection of books or being able to find ones that were age appropriate for the students. Further, finding books that were able to reach the wide variety of the students was challenging and it was typical to find books that were male dominated and had minimal connections to female issues. Also, there was not an abundance of selection, especially advanced picture books or novels, for children this age. It was quite clear that this issue of availability and representation needs to be addressed: how are the students supposed to make connections to these reading materials without a diverse selection? Although we do not remember every book we have ever read, there are a few that have stuck with me and during that time, they were a big factor in how I lived my life. It is significant that these topics become more relevant in the curriculum when it promotes more reading materials that are diversified.

In relation to social justice, it connects to a bigger problem with which I was not familiar until I began the journey of understanding critical literacy. In the Ontario Language Arts Curriculum (2006), prior to a few years had very little direct mention of critical literacy, it was touched upon briefly through a few pages out of over one hundred pages. Some resources produced later discussed how to teach some expectations from a critical literacy stance, but this was not made explicit in the curriculum. Despite other controversies, the new adjustments to the curriculum (2023 version) has added a specific section where the main focus is critical literacy. Although this is a positive step, it is a minor adjustment that has been made, since there are four

strands in each grade, critical literacy is one of several competing priorities. To take it a step further, it is not even a main strand, it is a subsection of one, limiting the opportunities that teachers are able to implement into the classroom. Further, with developing my resource package, one of the most challenging parts was finding specific expectations that related to the lesson that I wanted to add to the guide. Thus, the lessons did relate to a specific expectation to some degree but on several occasions, I had to make adjustments in order to relate to more expectations throughout this long unit.

This issue around curriculum and the lack of attention on critical literacy is due to the fact that the curriculum is focusing so much on the foundational skills that it takes away from the educators being able to expand their lessons. There is too much focus on specifics such as how to use a comma or quotation marks and not enough on larger topics. These concepts should be discussed but to what degree? In my opinion, formalities such as grammatical conventions are no longer a vital part of our daily life with the advancement of technology. Therefore, with the focus on these foundational skills, it becomes challenging to find an essentially balance of early literacy with actual society and gender issues that should be discussed. I will admit it is a fine line of being able to learn the basics and developing a stronger connection throughout their educational journey. Students' connection to things outside of the classroom outweigh the foundations, especially as they progress through the upper years of middle school. To conclude, it is important to stress that I am suggesting that the students do have lessons on the foundations of literacy but there needs to be a bigger emphasis on critical literacy and social justice in which they learn about the world and issues beyond the classroom.

The biggest thing I am taking out of this journey is the new ways in which to develop a

unit, understanding that there is more than just a concept. More specifically, the more you can

connect with the students and have the learning relate back to the outside world, the more

engaging and relevant the students will find it. Further, by doing so it makes the students find a

deeper meaning while participating in the lesson and will encourage them to act upon their best

selves. In addition, with this connection it also generates more student-led discussions and

lessons that imply an inquiry-based learning framework. A couple of examples of where I have

tried to support student discussion and inquiry include during week five of the resource, when

the students are asked to find an issue in their classroom and school that they feel is important.

Although each student may have some similarities, each student is bringing different experiences

to the classroom, and this fact is important to acknowledge. This acknowledgement gives the

educators and students a better understanding of how each is feeling beyond the surface and what

they feel is important or worthy. Developing these relationships allows the educators to discover

how much connection to social justice they can introduce into their lessons and tailor the

learning to be meaningful and relevant to the students in their individual classrooms. Each week

and lesson are adaptable based on the students' needs and interests, however it is important to

stress that the lessons begin a bit lighter and try to get a grasp on how the students handle the

work before progressing to deeper, more complex tasks. It is evident in my work in various

classrooms that educators and the formal curriculum do not give the students enough credit for

what they are able to handle, and spend too much time restricting what is being taught, either

censoring topics in an attempt to not be controversial or not keeping up with the changing views

and norms of a society that is becoming more progressive and diverse. With this new

advancement of technology, vast knowledge is at students' fingertips, largely unmonitored and

unrestricted. There is no benefit in overly sheltering students in their learning; only guiding them

through this new journey of life and teaching them to be critical thinkers who advocate for

equity.

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