

Gender Detective Activities

Book detective – villains

Aim: To investigate gender stereotyping in fiction

Suggested time: about 45 minutes (dependent on age of child and number of books!)

Notes for parents: if villains are mostly shown as male, does that reflect society's different expectations of how men and women, and boys and girls, should behave?

Activity:

- Ask your child to take all their fiction and story books from their bookshelf. Siblings can do this together if they'd like to – younger siblings can look at picture books with their older brother or sister.
- Ask children to look at the pictures or read enough of the book to work out who is the villain (or they may just know, if it's a well-loved book!)
- Make separate piles of books: one for villains who are male, one for villains are female and one where sex is not specified.

Discuss with your child:

What are their findings?

Are there villains of one sex more than the other?

Why do they think this is?

Are there stereotypes in how male and female villains are portrayed (e.g. are female villains frequently witches or evil queens)?

Does it matter?

If you don't have enough books at home, you could do this activity with children's TV shows, films or well-known fairy stories instead.

Think about the villains in each one and make lists instead of piles.