

Gender Detective Activities

Book detective – non-fiction

Aim: To investigate gender stereotyping in non-fiction books – if you have a range available at home

Suggested time: 30-45 minutes (dependent on number of books you have available)

Notes for parents: biographies of inventors, scientists, sportspeople, explorers and historical figures tend to be male-dominated. Do the pictures in a book tell a story about gender roles – e.g. in a book about rescue services are the people doing the rescuing mostly shown as men and the people being rescued mostly shown as women and children? **With older children,** talk to your child about why they think men are represented in some roles and not in others, and why women are represented in some roles but not in others. Would it be better to have representation of both genders in a variety of roles?

Activity:

- Ask your child to take all their non-fiction books from their bookshelf. Non-fiction books can include science, or history, or sport. Some might be 'Lift the Flap' finding out books about the sea, space, your body, as well as colouring books or activity books. Brothers and sisters can do this together if they'd like to.
- Look at the roles that men and women are shown in these books. Put the books into different categories, by making piles related to topics or jobs: sport, inventors, explorers, key figures from history, authors, scientists, political leaders

Discuss with your child:

What are your findings? Is there balanced representation of genders in the topic areas? If there are certain areas or jobs in which women or men are under-represented (e.g. women as inventors or explorers, men in caring or domestic roles), does it matter?

Sometimes there are books that are specially 'dedicated' to covering women in one career or area (e.g. famous female scientists, famous women writers or artists): you might have some of these books at home. Is there a need for this? Could it risk separating out female scientists into a special category and suggesting that 'regular' scientists are men?