

Early Years Foundation Stage

Listening, Attention and Understanding and Literacy

The Paper Bag Princess

Learning Objective(s):

- Explore gender stereotyping through the context of familiar stories and characters.

Success Criteria:

- I can recognise gender stereotypes and notice when stories do not follow them.

Early Learning Goal:

- Listen attentively and respond to what they hear with relevant questions, comments and actions when being read to and during whole class discussions and small group interactions.
- Demonstrate understanding of what has been read to them by retelling stories and narratives using their own words and recently introduced vocabulary
- Use and understand recently introduced vocabulary during discussions about stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems and during role-play

Gender Equality Objective(s):

- Recognise stereotyping in a range of scenarios
- Understand that a person's skills are not determined by their gender

Resources:

- *The Paper Bag Princess*, Robert Munsch
- Flipchart/large pieces of paper
- Marker pens

Key Vocabulary:

Gender
Stereotype
(children may not use this language specially, but be able to understand the concept)

Prior Learning

Children will be able to listen to a story in a small group.
Children will have had experiences of Princesses, either through their play or Fairy tales.
Children will understand that in most 'Princess stories' a Prince traditionally does the rescuing.
Children may be able to answer 'why' and 'who' questions.

Whole-Class Teaching & Discussion

Ask children to show you what *they* think a princess looks like (they can draw on mini-whiteboards; act it out; move like a princess etc).
Now tell them that you're going to show them a picture of a princess. Introduce the book by showing the cover. **Ask "Is this what you expected a princess to look like? Why/why not?"**
Briefly discuss our assumptions about what princesses are.
Read the story to the children, ensuring they can see the pictures as you read the book.

Discussion Points

Encourage the children to think about other stories they know where characters have been rescued.
Ask **"Who normally does the rescuing in fairy tales? Why do you think this is? Does it have to be this way? Why?"** (If necessary or helpful, make a list of stories and films where characters

are rescued, and who the rescuer/rescuee is in both: Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, Frozen etc.)



Ask **“Do we notice any patterns? Why do you think this is?” “Did you expect the princess to be the one to do the rescuing? Why/why not?”**

Discuss how the many other stories follow the pattern of the princess needing to be rescued by the prince, and so we begin to expect it.

Some children may present ideas like “men do the rescuing because they are stronger than women” etc.

Challenge gender bias gently when you meet it, offering counterpoints and asking questions like:

- **“Why do you think that?”**
- **“Is that always true?”**
- **“Do all boys/girls act in that way? Can you think of an example where that was not true?”**
- **“Does anybody think something different?”**

Ask **“At the end of the story, Prince Ronald tells Elizabeth to come back when she is dressed ‘like a real princess.’ Do you think that Elizabeth is a ‘real’ princess, even though she is different? Explain why.”**

Plenary

As a group, briefly reflect on the ways in which Elizabeth is different to stereotypical story book princesses. You may choose not to use the language ‘stereotypical’ in discussions but perhaps think about, ‘how we might usually think of a Princess’. Remind the children of her accomplishments (defeating a fierce dragon, rescuing the prince, and choosing to be happy on her own) and discuss how stereotypes are often wrong and unfair, and can put limits on what we expect from people. We need to remember that a person’s gender does not set limits on what they can do.

Ask children to rethink about what they feel a princess looks like now. Have their ideas changed? Support this by asking: **“Can someone still be a princess even if they don’t look like a stereotypical fairy tale princess?”**

Focus Group Suggestions & Follow-Up Ideas

- Dress a doll/peg doll as the Paper Bag Princess and add it to the small world/role play areas with a dragon and prince, so that the children can recreate and explore the story. **(Links to all of Communication and Language, all of PSED, Expressive Arts and Design: Being Imaginative).**
- Share as a class parts of *Fantastically Great Women Who Changed the World* (Kate Pankhurst) and discuss real life heroines who did not allow themselves to be limited by others’ assumptions of what they could do as women. You might extend this by creating a class book of real-life heroines who are important to the children (including family members, teachers, friends, sporting heroes etc). **(Links to Understanding the World: People and Communities, PSED, Literacy: Reading and Writing).**
- During story time, work as a class to change parts of classic fairy tales so that the princess isn’t the one being rescued. Explore *Gender Swapped Fairytales*

- (Karrie Fransman and Jonathan Plackett) or *Princess Smartypants* by Babette Cole. Pause at key parts and ask questions like “*What could happen instead of her waiting to be rescued?*” You might extend this idea by scribing the stories into a book, which the children can illustrate and add to the book corner. **(Links to all of Communication and Language, Literacy: Reading and Writing).**
- Share the stories *Zog* and *Zog and the Flying Doctors* (Julia Donaldson). Explore how the princess in these books shuns wearing ‘frilly dresses’ to become a doctor. **(Links to all of Communication and Language, PSED, Literacy: Reading).**

Assessment Opportunities

- Can children respond to a story with their own comments, thoughts and opinions?
- Can children begin to understand the concept of a ‘stereotype’?
- Can children see that *The Paper Bag Princess* rejects the ‘Princess’ stereotype and that some other Princesses in literature and film do too?
- Can children begin to relate this to gender stereotypes in general e.g., all firefighters must be men?