

Examining Stereotypes in Books

As you read independently, complete the handouts on page 3 and 4. Use specific examples from your book to show how it reinforces or breaks down stereotypes. The questions and issues on the next page may help guide your thinking, or you might have your own ideas to contribute.

Gender Stereotypes

What stereotypes about gender come up in the book you are reading? What gender are most of the characters, and how do they act? What is important to them? What explicit or implicit messages might the author be sending about gender? How is this similar to or different from what you've seen in other books?

Race/Ethnicity Stereotypes

What stereotypes about people of color come up in the book you are reading? What race or ethnicity are the characters, and how do you know? What explicit or implicit messages might the author be sending about race or ethnicity? How is this similar to or different from what you've seen in other books?

Class Stereotypes

What stereotypes about class come up in the book you are reading? What social class do some or all of the characters represent? What explicit or implicit messages might the author be sending about class? How is this similar to or different from what you've seen in other books?

TEACHING TOLERANCE



A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER
WWW.TEACHINGTOLERANCE.ORG

EARLY GRADES ACTIVITY

EXAMPLE OF REINFORCING A STEREOTYPE:

Book Title and Author "Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing" by Judy Blume

Example of Stereotype Being Reinforced or Challenged

This book reinforces the stereotype that girls are fussy and whiny, and boys are low-key and let things go. Sheila is always complaining about things that don't seem that important, and Peter is able to see the bigger picture and act more sensible.

What harm or help does this stereotype cause?

I think the book is sending an unfair message about boys and girls. Boys and girls can both be fussy or sensible at different times, and it's not fair when books only show both genders to be one way. I wish there were more stories that showed that girls could be "cool" the way Peter is in this book. It is harmful to girl readers to feel like there is only one way they can be!

What to Do About It?

Anyone who writes stories can fight this stereotype by writing more stories with characters who are "outside the girl and boy boxes" to show that boys and girls can act in all sorts of different ways, regardless of their gender.

EXAMPLE OF CHALLENGING A STEREOTYPE:

Book Title and Author "The Other Side" by Jacqueline Woodson

Example of Stereotype Being Reinforced or Challenged

This book fights the stereotype that people of different races can't make friends with each other. The main character's mom doesn't want her to make friends with the girl on "the other side" of the fence because she is black, but it turns out the girls have a lot in common and their races don't keep them apart any more than the fence does.

What harm or help does this stereotype cause?

This book sends a really helpful message. It shows that race is not a reason to avoid making friends with someone you think you might get along with. Lots of kids could be helped by this lesson because it shows that friendship is more important than skin color.

What to Do About It?

Story writers can show people of different races getting along, and we can also keep this book's message in mind when we make friends with all different people regardless of race.

TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER
WWW.TEACHINGTOLERANCE.ORG

EARLY GRADES ACTIVITY

Book Title and Author _____

Example of Stereotype Being Reinforced or Challenged _____

What harm or help does this stereotype cause? _____

What to Do About It? _____

TEACHING TOLERANCE

A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER
WWW.TEACHINGTOLERANCE.ORG

EARLY GRADES ACTIVITY

Book Title and Author _____

Example of Stereotype Being Reinforced or Challenged _____

What harm or help does this stereotype cause? _____

What to Do About It? _____
