

Masculine Boys – Feminine Boys

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and Keywords:

Vague role definitions and wishy-washy systems of values and norms at different levels of socialisation are making it increasingly difficult for boys to develop an identity. Issues related to sexuality and issues related to the onset of puberty for elementary school age boys play an essential part in helping them to find and develop their identity (girls as well). The activity that is presented here offers the teacher a didactical and methodical three-tier approach to working with the self-image and self esteem of boys.

This activity could be used in particular when the teacher establishes that a boy is being called “feminine”, “sissy”, “queer”, by children of the same age as a result of his behaviour patterns.

Similar Topics:

Identity, self-image, self esteem, sexuality (see Theoretical Background and Further Information)

Materials:

- Material on Lewis Hamilton
- Material on Bill Kaulitz and Tokyo Hotel
- Music video ‘Monsoon’ by the Group Tokyo Hotel
- A3 sheet of paper and pens
- Film “Clash of the Titans”
- Illustrations of gods from Greek mythology
- Worksheets 1 to 6

Duration:

2 lessons each lasting 45 minutes

Number of participants:

12 boys (the boys should know each other well; attend the same class for example)

Age:

The boys should be aged between 9 and 10. The activity must be adapted to the level of knowledge of younger boys.

Aims:

- The boys learn about typical masculine and/or feminine traits.
- At the end of the activity the boys will be capable of judging themselves (self-image) and will be able to assign to themselves the (character) traits that they have studied beforehand.

- The boys develop a greater awareness of the existence of masculine and feminine traits. They understand that existing feminine traits should not be deprecated.
- The boys learn to communicate openly about themselves
- The boys will have greater self esteem.
- The boys have an idea of how to establish a link between human traits and sexuality.
- The boys become more tolerant towards different sexual interests.

(Short) Explanation:

The teacher should prepare for the activity by familiarising the boys with numerous adjectives (comparative as well as superlative), to enable them to describe individuals. This knowledge has been conveyed by showing them photos and pictures of celebrities from the areas of music and sport and by encouraging them to tell stories about family members and friends. This storytelling focused on the questions: Why is he/she your friend? And what do you like about him/her?

1st step:

The teacher begins with a recap of the previous studies to increase the boys' awareness of the subject matter again. The teacher explains to the boys that traits that they have studied are to be used in this lesson to analyse two celebrities. Background information on the racing driver Lewis Hamilton is supplied. The teacher must ensure that he gives an impartial account of Lewis Hamilton. He shows photos, pictures and videos (depending on the material available).

The boys are subsequently divided into four groups. They are given Worksheet 1 and are asked to describe and characterise Lewis Hamilton and to answer the two questions on the worksheet. Depending on his relevance to the present, the person chosen – Lewis Hamilton in this case – should be replaced by someone else.



The boys write their answers on a large A3 sheet of paper to enable them to present their opinions to the other boys. In the round-table discussion the teacher summarises the traits that the groups have come up with and explains the differences at the same time. It is important here for the teacher to interpret the traits that have been highlighted as feminine in a manner that conveys to the boys that the traits are not to be regarded as negative and should not be ridiculed. The boys become aware that it is wrong to deprecate someone who is different and has different traits.

The exercise is repeated. This time the teacher shows the boys the video clip 'Monsoon' by the group Tokyo Hotel. The teacher gives the boys background information about the group initially (the focus is on the singer Bill Kaulitz).



The boys are given homework. They should each compile pictures and / or other material about one person with whom they identify or do not identify. They are again required to answer the question, what they like or do not like about the person chosen. The boys present their examples at the beginning of the second lesson.



Step 2:

After the boys have presented their examples and the teacher has summarised them, the teacher draws the boys' attention to different traits and behaviour patterns again.

In the second lesson the subject matter is broached using Greek mythology. As the boys have limited understanding and knowledge of this subject the teacher has the important task of giving them a detailed, albeit simple, introduction to Greek mythology. An excerpt of the film "Clash of the Titans" might be useful here.

Greek gods are often used to depict personal human traits. The boys basically have all the tendencies in themselves, but environmental influences mean that some are activated and others are not. The teacher chooses two male and two female gods from the broad spectrum, and describes them with illustrations. The gods Zeus, Poseidon, Aphrodite and Athena are recommended (background information on these gods may be found on the websites cited below).

When the boys have been given the necessary background information, the lesson continues with the boys working in pairs. Each pair takes worksheets 3 and 4 or alternatively 5 and 6, so that they are evenly distributed throughout the group. The boys work in pairs and answer the questions on the worksheets for the other boys in each case.

The answers are assessed in the group discussion. The assessment is described under the heading 'Reflection' below.

Reflection:

Step 3:

When the boys have completed the work in pairs (with assistance), the boys take it in turns to present their assessment of their partners. The other boys then have the opportunity to agree with the assessment or to reject it. The boy concerned should then say whether he sees himself in the same way as the Group does.

The teacher should ask each boy the following questions, depending on the assessment:

- Which traits that the male and female gods possess apply to you?
- Are more male or more feminine traits applicable to you?
- Which male and which feminine traits are you particularly proud of?
- Have the other boys judged you correctly?
- Does it make any difference to you what other boys think about you, or do you wish to reflect on what the other boys have said about you?

The teacher should discuss the following questions together with all the boys:

- Are you surprised that you all have feminine traits as well?
- Do you think it's okay for each boy to have feminine traits as well?
- Do you think it's bad if a boy has more feminine than masculine traits? How might you help such a boy?

The reflection should focus on increasing the boys' awareness of feminine traits. The reflection should (provided the age group allows it) also inform the boys about different sexualities and teach them to be tolerant of different forms of sexual conduct.

Variations (Continuation):

The activity may be varied and extended at random.

The first section (description of boys) may be extended to include more celebrities, family members, other children and teachers from everyday life.

The section on Greek mythology can also be extended. Role plays (dressing up for example) or theatrical performances could be used as didactical methods.