



LESSON PLAN

Level: Grades 8 to 9

About the Author: This lesson was adapted, with permission, from the award-winning Violence-Prevention Curriculum Healthy Relationships, produced by the Halifax, Nova Scotia advocacy group [Men For Change](http://menforchange.ca).

Learning Gender Stereotypes



This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A Digital Media Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

Overview

This is the second of three lessons that address gender stereotypes. The objective of these lessons is to encourage students to develop their own critical intelligence with regard to culturally inherited stereotypes, and to the images presented in the media.

The lesson begins with a review of stereotypes that are associated with men and women and their possible sources - including the role of the media. Students deconstruct a series of advertisements based on gender representation and answer questions about gender stereotyping in advertising.

Learning Outcomes

Key concepts:

- Media are constructions
- Media have social and political implications
- Media have commercial considerations
- Each medium has a unique aesthetic form

Students will:

Know:

- Recognize and identify gender stereotypes in ads

Understand:

- Analyze how stereotypes are communicated in media
- Discuss the causes and impacts of gender stereotypes



Do:

- Find examples of gender stereotyping in media

Preparation and Materials

- keep Act Like a Man/Be a Good Girl charts handy (from the lesson [Exposing Gender Stereotypes](#))
- prepare to project or distribute the handout *Staying in the Girl Box*
- prepare to distribute the handouts *Staying in the Man Box* and *Media Messages*
- *optional*: Prepare to project the Media Literacy 101 video [Media Have Social and Political Implications](#)

Procedure

Remind students of the work they did drawing up the “Act Like a Man” and “Be a Good Girl” boxes. Tell them that if we can identify some of the influences in our lives that can teach us or pressure us to fit into these stereotypes, it can help us choose more freely who we want to be and make us less likely to experience some of the negative effects of feeling like we have to live up to stereotypes.

- display the flip chart sheets from Act Like a Man/Be A Good Girl, from the lesson *Exposing Gender Stereotypes*, for reference.

It's easy to see that our families, friends and classmates may push us to stay inside the stereotype boxes (sometimes without meaning to.) The way the media influences us is not always so obvious.

Optional: If you feel your class needs a better understanding of how media can influence our attitudes and views of reality, show the Media Literacy 101 video *Media Have Social and Political Implications*.

Buying inside the box

Explain to students that while all kinds of media can contribute to forming and maintaining gender stereotypes, ads are a particularly useful example to look at because they often use stereotypes more *openly* than other media do. This is partly because an ad has less time to grab your attention than other media works, and also because ads are trying to *persuade* you to like or buy what they're selling.

Project or distribute the handout *Staying in the Girl Box* and tell students that while many ads use gender stereotypes in an *aspirational* way, telling you that the product will help you fit into a gender stereotype (by being prettier, more popular, more athletic, and so on), others appeal to *gender insecurity*. These ads reassure you that you won't be *leaving* your gender box by buying the thing they're selling.

Ask students:

What product is each ad selling (remind students that packages are a form of advertising)?

(A toy glider and a toy bow-and-arrow.)

Why might each product be seen as moving you out of the “good girl” box?



(Gliders are traditionally a toy aimed at boys because they are usually based on real military aircraft and serving or being interested in the military is seen as un-feminine. “Fighting” toys like bows-and-arrows are even further outside of the “girl box” because girls traditionally have been raised to be caregivers and to resolve conflict non-violently.)

What does each ad do to reassure you that buying the product won’t move you out of the box?

The glider is shaped like a fairy, rather than an airplane. It and the package it comes in are covered with stereotypically feminine images like flowers and butterflies, and the image of the glider on the package is surrounded by a pink halo.

The arrowheads are pink and purple, traditionally feminine colours. There are images of two girls using the toy who have several feminine signifiers like long hair, braids, and painted fingernails. The toy is described as an “agent bow” and the phrase “secrets and spies” makes it seem less about masculine areas like military or hunting and more about spying, which is seen as more feminine. The use of the word “Rebelle” (instead of “rebel”) also make it seem more feminine.

Now distribute the handout *Staying in the Man Box* and have students answer the questions about the three ads on it. (You may need to tell students that the “Lait d’homme” ad is advertising chocolate milk.)

Take up the questions in class. If students have difficulty with some the questions, you can use the following prompts:

For Lait d’homme:

- Is chocolate milk something that adults usually drink, or just kids? How is being grown-up connected to being a man?

For Q-tips:

- What uses for the product are suggested on the package? How are they different from how we generally expect Q-tips to be used?
- What does the pattern on the package suggest? How is it connected to masculinity?

For Dial soap:

- How much are men supposed to care about their appearance (including things like skin texture and how they smell)? How is that different from women?
- What does the “grip” on the soap bar suggest? How is it connected to masculinity?

Media messages

Now put students in groups of 4-5. Distribute the handout *Media Messages* and have each student find an ad in any format (print, TV/video, influencer post, etc.) that appeals to either male or female stereotypes. This can be either an *aspirational* ad that suggests the product will help you fit into a gender stereotype, or one that appeals to gender *insecurity*.

Once students have found their ads and completed their analysis, have them share it with the other members of the group. Have group members add any other observations they have and then have each group choose two ads and analyses to share with the class.



Reflection:

Ask students:

- Which stereotypes occur most often in these ads?
- Based on that, what can you conclude these ads saying about roles for men and women?
- How do you think these ads can affect our attitudes and our expectations for gender roles?



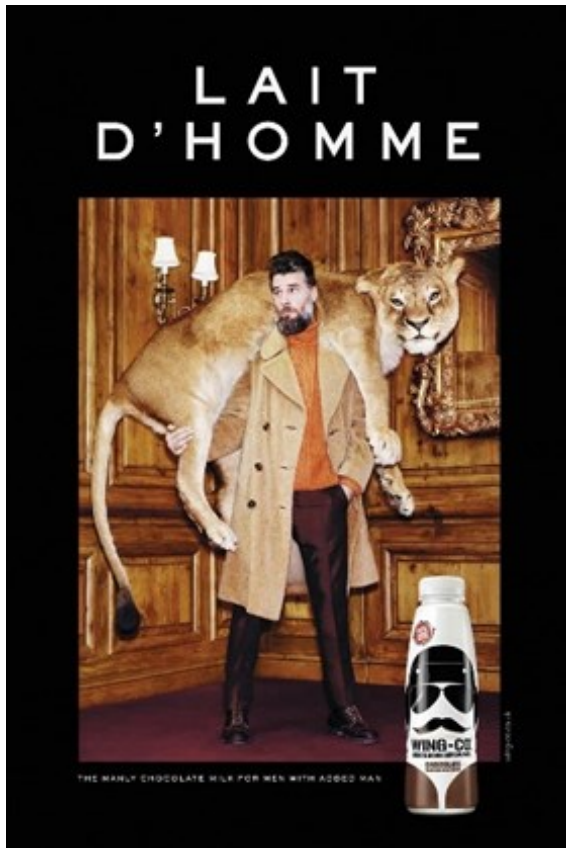
Staying in the Girl Box



Staying in the Man Box

Answer the following questions about each of these ads:

1. What is the ad selling?
2. Why might each product be seen as moving you out of the “be a man” box?
3. What does each ad do to reassure you that buying the product won’t move you out of the box?



Chocolate milk



Cotton swabs



Soap



Media Messages

Find an ad in any format (print, TV/video, influencer post, etc.) that appeals to either male or female stereotypes.

This can be either an *aspirational* ad that suggests the product will help you fit into a gender stereotype, or one that appeals to gender *insecurity*.

Analyze your ad by answering the following questions:

1. What gender is the ad aimed at? How does the ad make that clear? (Consider things like colour, images, word choice, who is in the ad and what they look like, the product being sold, and so on.)
2. Is this an *aspirational* ad or an ad aimed at *gender insecurity*? How do you know?
3. What stereotypes does the ad appeal to? How does it do that? (Again, consider images, colour, word choice, what's happening in the ad, and so on.)
4. If people of a different gender from the target audience are in the ad (women in an ad aimed at men, men in an ad aimed at women, etc.), how are they represented?

