

WHAT DOES GENDER MATTER?

IDEAS AND THOUGHTS ABOUT EQUALITY
FOR DISCUSSION IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

FOREWORD

Dear teacher,

Gender is a diverse thing. Each one of us has our own way of experiencing it. The experience of acceptance or discrimination forms a significant part of one's identity throughout life. Sexuality and the related conversation influences each one of us - whether we want it to or not. It is important to open up unspoken beliefs and attitudes towards gender.

Most people feel that they are either a woman or a man. Some feel that they are both, and some do not find themselves in these categories at all. Others feel they do not belong to any gender. All of these experiences are equally "right". The idea of this learning material is to support the understanding and acceptance of gender diversity. The material talks about women and men but our wish is that schools take the whole spectrum of genres into account in the conversation. The purpose of this material is to get young people to reflect on their own ideas; how does gender matter from their own or society's perspective? The aim is also to encourage everyone to be themselves bravely regardless of preconceived ideas or roles.

With the help of this learning material you can carry out the broad learning objectives of the curriculum in grades 7-9 (especially Thinking and learning to think L1), promote your school's equality plans' realisation and get ideas for building a multisectoral thematic entity. The material consists of informational and functional contents that can be used to build a suitable package for your students; you can get tools and ideas for diverse conversation about equality with youth.

One of the most important goals of the ISOT-project is to encourage students to be themselves, just the way they are. We all need to have the same opportunities and open choices regardless of gender. We trust in the power of kindness, happiness and encouragement, and wish that you discuss the subject through these values.

Kind regards,
The ISOT -project team and the research team of University of Jyväskylä

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This learning material has been realized as a part of the nationwide ISOT - Equality work with Finland's secondary pupils 2017 -project which has all the ninth-formers of Finland as its principal target group. The objective of the project has been to support the young to act as active and broad-minded citizens who accept both themselves and others, and also to create diverse, multiform and multivoiced conversation about issues on equality and the right to be and act as who you are - a right that belongs to all humans.



ISOT -project's four parts:

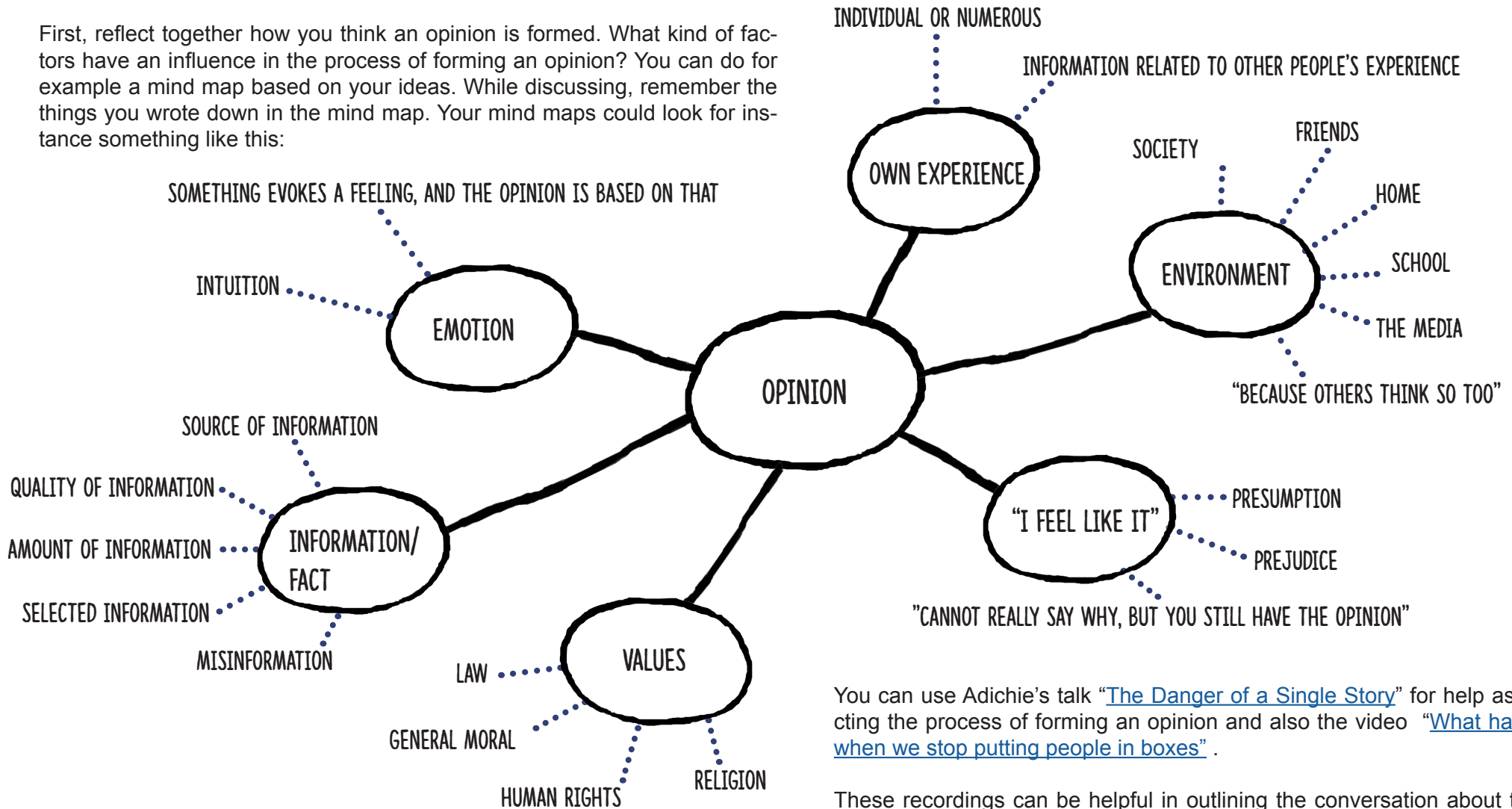
- 1) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's book We should all be feminists was given out to each ninth-former of Finland. This down-to-earth and accessible book tackles gender equality related questions, teaches empathy and advances cultural diversity.
- 2) Learning material for teachers - a digital material designed to support the processing of the book and conversation about equality.
- 3) The Great Interactive Celebration of Equality -live streaming the 8th of March 2017 from Tampere Hall.
- 4) A nationwide writing review for ninth-formers to bring out the youth's voice.

You can find more information from the website of Cultural Centre Piipoo (Kulttuurikeskus PiiPoo) which is coordinating the project.

PREPARING TO WORK

HOW IS AN OPINION FORMED?

First, reflect together how you think an opinion is formed. What kind of factors have an influence in the process of forming an opinion? You can do for example a mind map based on your ideas. While discussing, remember the things you wrote down in the mind map. Your mind maps could look for instance something like this:



You can use Adichie's talk "[The Danger of a Single Story](#)" for help as reflecting the process of forming an opinion and also the video "[What happens when we stop putting people in boxes](#)".

These recordings can be helpful in outlining the conversation about the diversity of opinions and being oneself. Based on the recordings you can also reflect your ideas on the following questions: What kind of generalizations and classifications do we make based on gender - or do we ?

DEEPENING THE TOPIC



OWN EXPERIENCES AND EVERYDAY OBSERVATION

As the issues related to gender equality and feminism are complex and there are no simple answers, we suggest to approach the topic through the observations of one's own life. We all have experiences and perspectives about gender. Examination of our own experiences and the act of sharing them helps to approach difficult issues and makes it easier to understand other people's standpoints.

EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS:

In what kind of situations have you noticed that gender is relevant?

When has your gender been an advantage / disadvantage for you?

What kind of thoughts are usually related to the representatives of your gender?

What kind of preconceptions or expectations have you encountered with other people?

Have you personally encountered wrong or restrictive attitudes or expectations?

Are all the students treated equally at school?

SOCIETY AND EXAMINING ITS STRUCTURES

Although Finland and many other countries are quite advanced in the realisation of equality, yet there is no country in the world that would have fully achieved equality. The valuation of genders and different gender roles exist in various social structures, customs and courses. You can make them visible for example by doing the following concrete exercises. After doing them, reflect together with the students what the importance of these exercises is.

MINNA CANTHIN KATU

ALEKSIS KIVEN KATU

EXERCISES:

How are the streets named in your home city? Are there as many names for women as there are for men? You can read the [New Yorker's article](#), article which discusses these questions from New York's point of view.

How many titles are gender based (eg. policeMAN)? And in everyday language (eg. lunch LADY)?

Which prominent figures do we celebrate traditionally? Are there as many flag days for women as there are for men?

DEEPENING THE TOPIC



Find in the media (TV, radio, tabloids, online conversations), examples of current conversation on gender, equality, feminism, motherhood, fatherhood, etc. What are the conversations like?

Find in the newspapers examples of different ways of presenting gender: Count from the pictures how many women and men you can find. What kind of images have more women in them? How are the pictures that represent men?

Related to this, you can see a [website](#) focused on all male panels (founded by Saara Särmä).

"CONGRATS! YOU HAVE AN ALL MALE PANEL!"



Observe the full lifespan of a person. How does gender appear in childhood, adulthood, parenthood, work, etc.? In the following articles you can find viewpoints and observations. There are more tips for links at the end of the material.

[Gender stereotypes in nurcery rhymes](#)

[Gender neutral preschools in Sweden](#)

[About the differences in physical exercise between genders](#)

[About talent and gender](#)

[About parenting and equality](#)

[Wages and equality](#)

[Gender and political participation](#)

[The impact of gender in economics](#)

[An article about women working in the White House and their ways to be heard](#)

[The History of Equality in Finland -document](#)

In the picture the president of the US Donald Trump signs an order which prohibits international abortion counseling and abortion from local non-governmental organisations.

Picture: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

DEEPENING THE TOPIC



"The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are. Imagine how much happier we would be, how much freer to be our true individual selves, if we didn't have the weight of gender expectations."

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

OBSERVING GENDER-BOUND ISSUES

The purpose of this exercise is to reflect our qualities as human beings both through own experiences and stereotypes.

The teacher shows a list that describes different features. Each student selects 3-5 features that best describes them and writes them down in their notebook or paper. There is no need to show the list to anyone else.

Select a scribe. The scribe draws a line on the board that has the words BOY and GIRL on opposite ends. The idea of this exercise is to make stereotypes visible by showing the chosen gender normative extremes.

Now, one by one, go through the words that describe the features. The students can vote together whether each feature associates more to boys or girls. The point in the line which is discussed can be marked for example with a magnet. Students can compare individually the general opinion of the class to their own, personal choices on the features.

YOUR WORD LIST CAN LOOK LIKE THIS, FOR EXAMPLE



- FUNNY
- INTELLIGENT
- EMOTIONAL
- SMART
- CALM
- OUTGOING
- SHY
- WILD
- CHATTY
- EASILY LED
- WITHDRAWN
- TROUBLEMAKER
- QUICK-WITTED
- FAIR
- QUIET
- FLEXIBLE
- SELFISH
- SOCIAL
- CHEERFUL
- HARSH
- ARROGANT
- QUICK-TEMPERED
- BRAVE
- EMPATHETIC
- PROUD
- NEGATIVE
- OFFENSIVE
- TALENTED
- BORING

DEEPENING THE TOPIC

DISCUSSION ABOUT FEMINISM

The original idea of the ideology of feminism (women's movement) was to achieve equality between women and men in social life from the beginning of the 19th century. The women's movement strove to improve women's status and demanded equal rights for women and men. Today the definition is not as specific and feminism means different things to different people.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie writes in her book:

FEMINIST: A PERSON WHO BELIEVES IN SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY BETWEEN GENDERS.

What is your idea of feminism? We encourage everyone to find out and to form own opinions based on facts. There is no 'right way' to be a feminist! What is your feminism like?

The purpose of this exercise is to create conversation based on knowledge. The aim is not to look for one correct answer but to make visible the thoughts, feelings and attitudes related to the theme. Knowledge-based conversation is an essential civic skill nowadays.

This exercise can evoke a wide range of emotions. Its purpose is to guide you to understand why and how different emotions arise; it helps to understand that the differences in people's thoughts and experiences are acceptable - being different is OK! Regardless -and because of this- things can be discussed.

MAKING A COLLECTIVE MIND MAP:

Make together a mind map about feminism just as you did the mind map about forming an opinion. Compare the ideas you write down with the ideas of Adichie.

EXAMPLE OF QUESTIONS:

Do you know what feminism is?

What does feminism mean to you? What do you think it means to others?

Why does feminism generate resistance in some people?

Why does feminism provoke so much passion and ardent conversation, both for and against?

What is the opposite of feminism?

What kind of activism related to feminism has there been in your country over the past century? What has its significance been in the society?

Does feminism mean the same thing in different countries?

[Male celebrities talk about feminism](#)

[Feminism effects on society](#)

DEEPENING THE TOPIC

TOPIC OF THE ESSAY

Challenge your students to an open and insightful reflection and to express their opinions as well as argument. Support them to make their own observations of their lives and society. Encourage each student to be their own spectacular self freely, and to feel free to bring forward their own thoughts. Each student can choose their own way of writing the text in the following assignment. The text can be for example a poem, an essay, a blog post, a story or rap lyrics.

A work group that collects material about equality for educational and research purposes. This group consists of researchers in the University of Jyväskylä Department of Education, Department of Teacher Education and Department of Music, Arts and Culture Studies. The work group is happy to receive all kind of materials produced by students. You can download students' writings, pictures, drawings, etc. to Peda.net. The texts that are sent to PedaNet will be collected and archived for research purposes (anonymously). Texts can be published in future with the permission of the writers.

WHAT DOES GENDER MATTER?

Topics you can work on:

What does gender mean to you as a girl / a boy / as human beings in the present time?

As a representative of your gender, what kind of situations do you find easy or difficult?

What kind of things does gender restrict and / or enable?

What would you change if you could decide for yourself?

ART EXERCISES

The following exercises encourage students to express opinions and inspire others by visual arts.

EXPRESS YOURSELF! -POSTERS

Make opinion-expressing posters in groups of 3-5 people. The posters' message should encourage everyone to be themselves, to brake prejudices and to speak out about issues that are important for you. If you need inspiration for designing your posters, take a look at graffito, subvertising or propaganda posters, for instance. The teacher can guide students to think on any posters that have grabbed their attention and use them as source of their own ideas.

For making the posters you need:

- Colourful cardboards
- Black and white photocopied images taken from the newspapers (e.g. clear pictures of different people, objects, animals, buildings, plants, etc.)
- Markers
- Scissors
- Glue

You can start working by choosing a message. Think what you want to say. You can suggest your students to be clear and concise in their messages because that works best in posters.

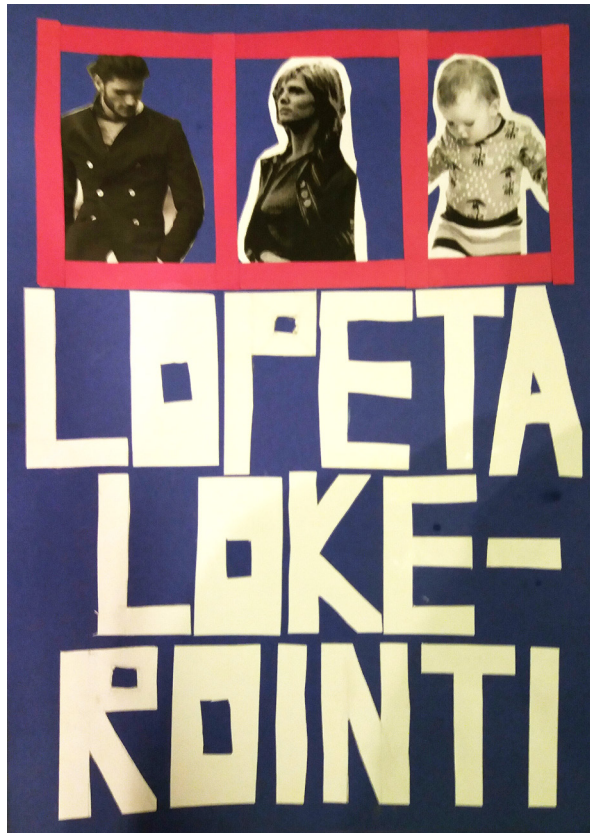
While thinking about the posters' appearance, students should take into consideration how images and text support each other mutually. Black and white images tend to be easier to handle, tune and combine, so we recommend you to use them. Texts can be either handwritten or typed, as long as they are easy to read.

DEEPENING THE TOPIC



After finishing, groups can present their posters to each other. Talk together about each poster's message. Place the posters in a visible place at your school, so that other students and teachers can also see them. This way your posters can provoke thoughts and make others happy.

If you take photos of your works and want to share them in social media, you can hashtag #isothanke, #justhyvä and #wowfin. You can also download pictures of them to Peda.net in <https://peda.net/jyu/hankkeet/isot>. In this case, students should give permission to the University of Jyväskylä to use their works for research and educational use.



Stop labeling! -poster by Gabriel Virhiä.



Finnish rapper Paleface with You're just fine like that. -card.
Picture: Janina Ahlfors

PRINTABLE VERSIONS OF THE CARDS

During the project, postcards were given out. They contained a message of everyone being lovely, important and good. The cards that gained big success are here in a printable form. Schools can use them freely and we encourage you to make your own versions of them.

The postcards are A6 -sized, the dimensions are 105 x 148 mm. Cards are in Finnish, English and Swedish.



MÄ OON TÄRKEÄ. SÄKIN OOT.

OOT.. IHANA OK FIKSU HYVÄ JUST TOLLASENA MURU
(ympyrii sopivat vaihtoehdot)
KIVA VIISAS HIMMEE HAUSKA SIISTI OP MUKAVA
PARAS AITO LUOTETTAVA ROHKEA TAITAVA RENTO
TÄRKEÄ YSTÄVÄ ILOINEN HYVÄ JÄRKEVÄ HUIPPU
MEHEVÄ UPEA TAITAVA RAKSU ÄLYKÄS MAHTAVA <3
>3 MAHTAVA MAHTAVA RAKSU ÄLYKÄS MAHTAVA <3
TÄRKEÄ YSTÄVÄ ILOINEN HYVÄ JÄRKEVÄ HUIPPU
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TÄRKEÄ YSTÄVÄ ILOINEN HYVÄ JÄRKEVÄ HUIPPU
MEHEVÄ UPEA TAITAVA RAKSU ÄLYKÄS MAHTAVA <3



OOT JUST
HYVÄ NOIN.

OON JUST
HYVÄ NÄIN.



BE PROUD OF
YOURSELF.
SO AM I.

YOU ARE
AMAZING.
SO AM I.



I'M LOVELY.
SO ARE YOU.

JAG ÄR
VIKTIG.
DU ÄR OCKSÅ.

JAG ÄR HÄRLIG.
DU ÄR OCKSÅ.

DU ÄR
MÄKTIG.
JAG ÄR OCKSÅ.

DEEPENING THE TOPIC



LINKS AND READING MATERIAL

To support teaching, we have gathered some good sources and websites. The materials contain lots of information, functional exercises and different approaches that can be used in equality education. The links were collected in February 2017.

Vocabulary related to gender:

<https://bolt.straightforequality.org/files/Come%20Out%20as%20a%20Straight%20Ally/equality-literacy-101-s4e-.pdf>

Equality plan checklist for schools:

<http://www.lissinfantschool.co.uk/policies/cmsaction=download&page=141&id=1874>

A wide material related to gender equality:

<https://finallyfeminism101.wordpress.com/>

A study package for building a more equal learning environment:

http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/education/the-abc-of-gender-equality-in-education_9789264229945-en#.WO8tk3pcxHU#-page8

Material about human rights for schools:

<http://www.youthforhumanrights.org/what-are-human-rights.html>
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol32/001/2012/en/>

OPINIONS, NEWS AND ARTICLES ON EQUALITY, FEMINISM AND GENDER

You can use these writings for example as basis for discussion or analyse them as texts. Read the texts and reflect your thoughts about them. The links were collected in February 2017.

[Feminism 101](#)

[Michael Kimmel talks about gender equality](#)

[President Obama's ideas of feminism](#)

[About gender equality plans in Finnish schools](#)

[An article about opposing feminism](#)

[A biological view on sexes](#)

[About genderqueer](#)

THANKS FOR GETTING TO KNOW
OUR MATERIAL!

YOU CAN SEND FEEDBACK TO:

Cultural Centre PiiPoo to Pilvi
pilvi.kuitu@kulttuuripiipoo.fi

University of Jyväskylä to Mari-Anne
mari-anne.l.okkolin@jyu.fi





Opetus- ja
kulttuuriministeriö



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Cultural Centre PiiPoo has coordinated the ISOT -project. PiiPoo is a centre for barrier-free culture, producing and developing accessible cultural activities and services based on applying art and culture. Offering art and culture for all people in their everyday lives as well as in times of celebration is the heart of our activities. In PiiPoo we strongly believe in the benefits of art and making things together! For more information: www.kulttuuripiipoo.fi

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