

How are Societal Views of Colour Shaping the Young Mind?

Activity: Examining how colour is perceived and influences early years students.

Grade: Kindergarten

Subject Areas: Social Studies and Science

Connections to the Manitoba Curriculum

My pedagogical tool will include using literature to connect ideas of gender to colour. In the Kindergarten Social Studies curriculum, students are asked to consider what values are important to them as well as their classmates. Due to the curricula being focused on ideas of self, the people, and the world around them, I found this age to be perfect for addressing gender biases. The curriculum states that students need to: “Identify groups that are important to them,” [and] “recognize that everyone has particular interests and abilities’ ” (Manitoba Education, 2003). In the Science curriculum, students are asked to: “compare and contrast colours using appropriate terms. Examples: lighter than, darker than, brighter than...,” and “Use appropriate vocabulary related to their investigations of colours.” (Manitoba Education, 2003). These curricular outcomes are broad and can be used to analyze how colour in story books affects individual children. Not only will the lesson be covering identification and labeling of colours, but what the colours represent to society.

Connections to Media Literacy

Colour is a concept highly characterized by gender which is why I have chosen the book “Pink is for Boys” by R. Pearlman, to analyze the media’s influence on the subject. After reading the book students will be asked to think about “a variety of situations, people, and cultures, and learn about themselves” (Media Smarts, 2021). Students will wonder why certain colours are

associated with certain genders, as well as why certain colours are associated with certain holidays, feelings, and more. In the book “Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media,” Renee Hobbs' references media literacy concepts that can be used to engage Kindergarten students in ideas about the purpose of literature. These concepts include: “The content of media messages contain values,” “ideology and specific points of view,” “messages have effects on people’s attitudes and behaviors,” “authors create media for different purposes,” and “messages use stereotypes to express ideas and information” (2021). While these concepts as a whole can be difficult for young students to understand, they can be addressed in simple yet effective questions after class readings. For instance, asking inferring questions can be beneficial to the overall goal of identifying media: “what did we learn in this book?” “Do you think the author is trying to tell us something about colours?” “Do colours belong to either boys or girls?” “Do these colours remind you of anything?”

Activity Description

A common theme amongst children's literature is the use of colour and how it is represented in gender. Young girls are always dressed in light colours such as pink, while boys are in dark colours such as blue. The purpose of this activity is to read a story that questions mainstream ideas about colour; followed by engaging in class conversation about its effect on gender in society. The teacher will begin the lesson by reading "Pink is for Boys" by R. Pearlman, pausing occasionally to ask questions such as "what else is brown?" When finished the story, the teacher will turn to the pages that describe the various objects the colours can be. Ask students if there are any other objects they know of that can be that particular colour. After getting a few examples, also ask them if particular colours remind them of anything. For example, does the colour yellow remind them of their mom because it is her favourite colour; and does the colour red remind them of a particular holiday like Valentine's Day. Ask them to think of "why" this reminds them of these particular things. Draw the items they verbalize to you on the board in that colour. Since they cannot read, this is a good visual way to see their ideas. The students will then be asked to complete a self portrait of themselves to activate critical thinking about their own perception of colour. Students will be reminded that they can choose any colour for their clothing that they like, as a way for them to think about themselves and their own particular interests. Ask; "which colour do you think is a good representation of yourself?" "Is there any colour that makes you feel a certain way?" As a result of this activity, students will be able to read stories and analyze the purpose of the colour representation. A follow up lesson can include talking about how colours make us feel certain ways.

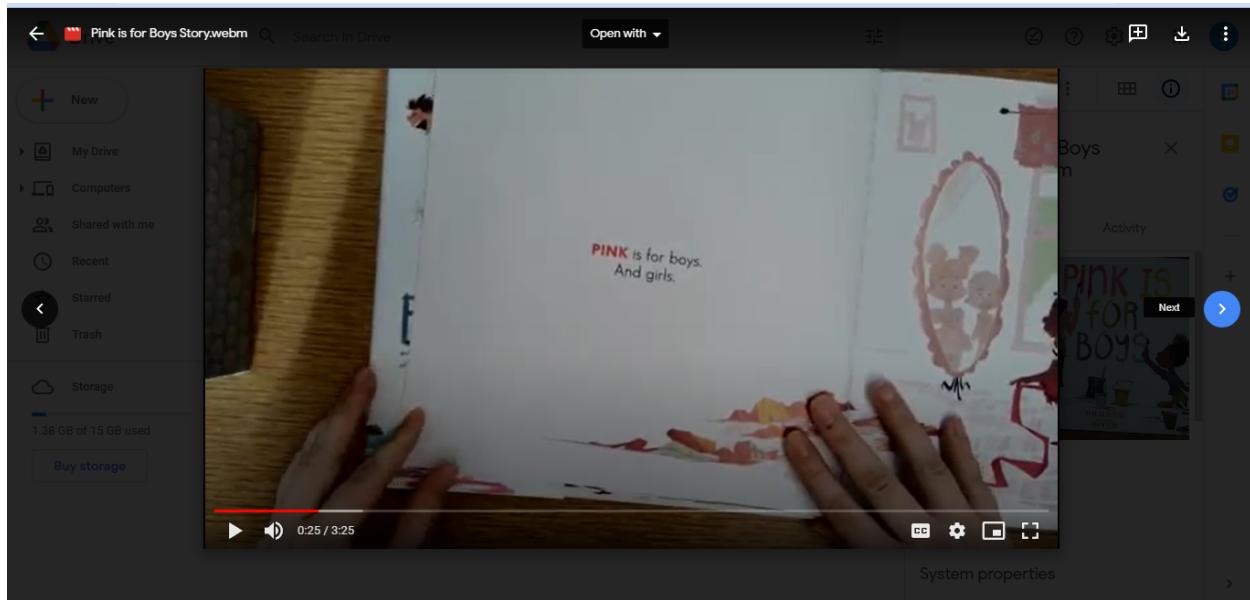
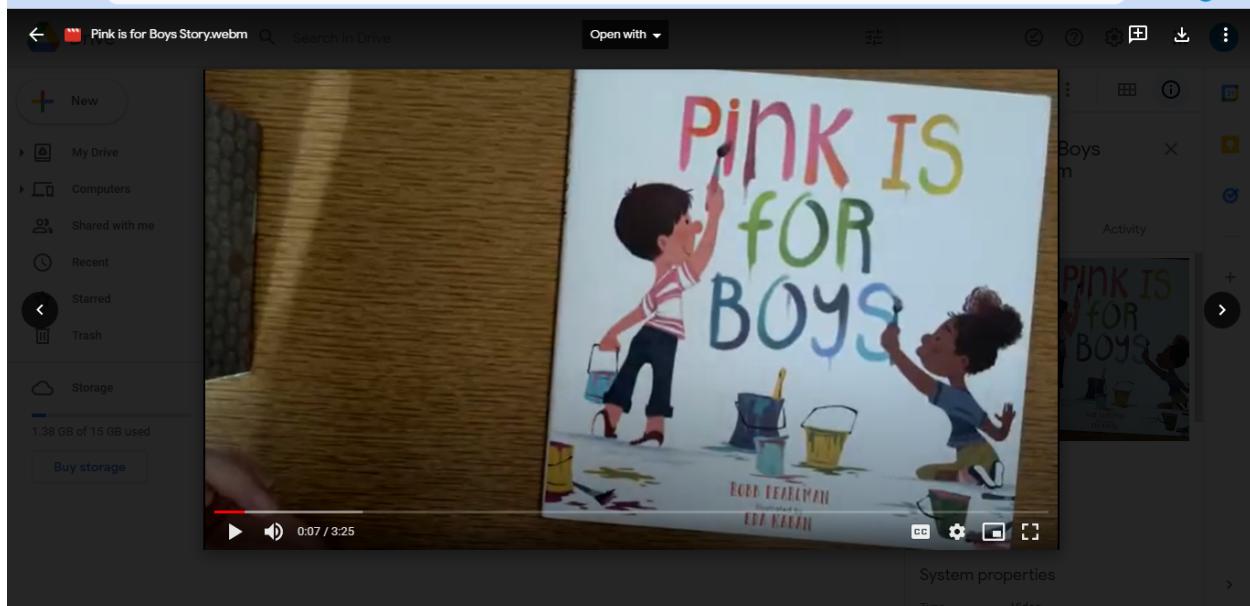
Lesson Plan

Duration 25-30 min	Teacher says/does	Student says/does	Modification	Assessment
Intro 2 min	Have students settle in a comfortable position for listening to a read aloud	Students settle	Students who have troubles seeing/hearing may need to be seated closer to teacher	N/A
Giving it 4-5 min	Read: "Pink is for Boys"	Students listen to book	To switch up the usual read aloud that is done in person, pre-record yourself reading the story and play during this time.	N/A
Getting it 5-7 min	When finished reading, go back to the pages that have the colours of items and ask questions such as: What else could be pink? Brown? Etc. Ask leading questions about colours and what it reminds them of/could represent. Draw their suggestions (they cannot read so write the name of the colour in the colour with their idea drawn below. This is a great way to see their ideas on the board).	Students raise hands to make suggestions	Draw images in a decent size so they can be seen by children further away. Are there any students with colour blindness?	Can the students identify "gender neutral" objects?
Getting it 7 min	Are there any objects in the room that you	Students search the room for one	Students with mobility disabilities	Can students find objects in

2 min for finding object 5 for discussing what they found and their opinions	<p>think were made to be for girls or boys based on their colour? Can you bring them to me? Have students vocalize why they think it was made for a particular gender. Clarify that all toys are made for all children!!</p>	<p>object that they think may be made in 'boy' or 'girl' colours.</p>	<p>may need assistance.</p>	<p>our own classroom that may be directed to a specific gender?</p>
Using it 5-7 min	<p>Get students to put objects away and then draw a self portrait using colours that they would wear regardless of it is a 'boy' or 'girl' colour because there is no such thing. Show yours as an example and describe why you chose the colours you did.</p>	<p>Students put away objects and colour self portraits</p>	<p>Some students will be done quickly and others will take their time. Make sure there is something for students to do when done. For example, read a book or colour on small white boards</p> <p>If there is a large amount of students with fine motor issues, get them to colour in wax crayon. Wax crayon forces them to 'pinch' and use more pressure when colouring.</p>	<p>Did students use colours they liked? Can be assessed by asking questions such as: "why did you choose to colour your shirt blue?"</p>
Closing 2 min	<p>Collect self portraits. Hang in the room side by side to demonstrate diversity amongst each other.</p>	<p>Students put away supplies</p>	<p>Students who take a bit longer to transition should be warned prior and perhaps given more time to do so.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Activity Demonstration

1. Settle students for the read aloud. Read “Pink is for Boys” or play pre-recorded video

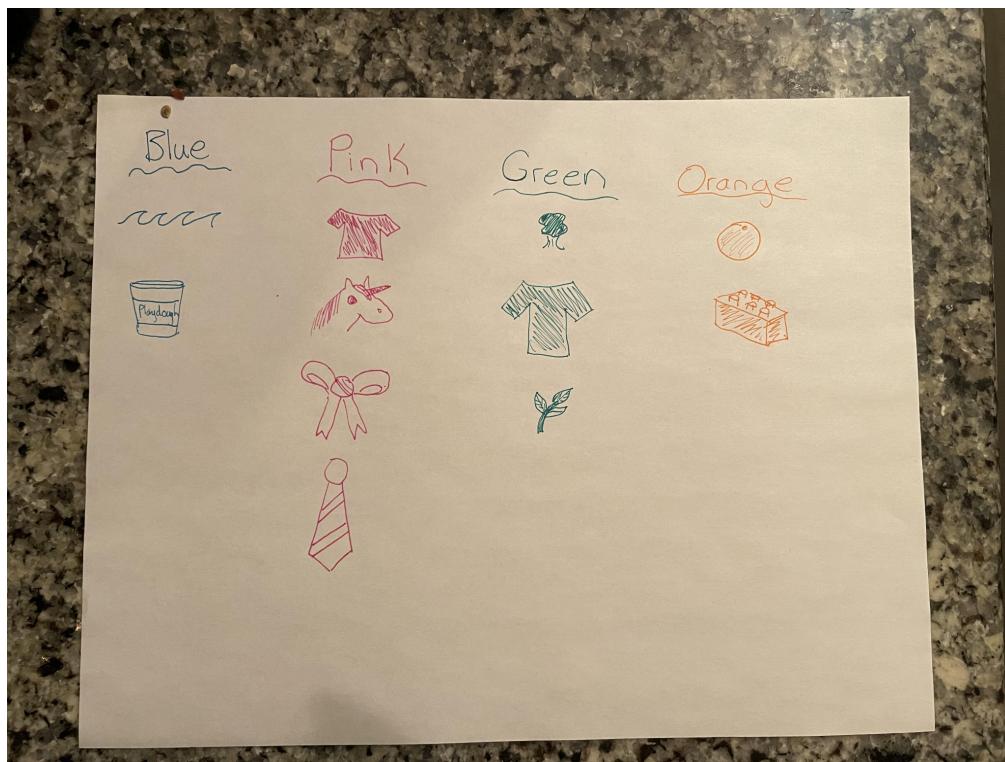


2. Open up book to pages with the colour examples

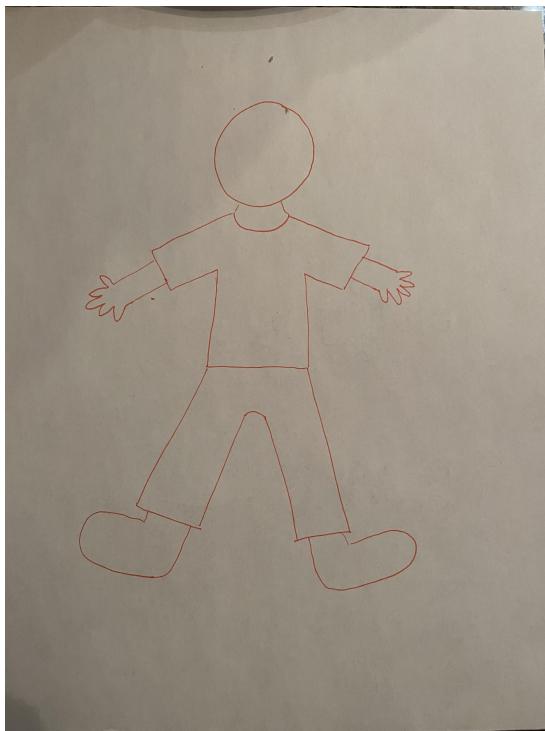


3. Ask student questions similar to the following:

- What can you think of that is also the colour pink? Blue? Green? Red? Etc.
- Is there any holiday that the colours green and red remind you of? What about pink and red?



4. Get students to bring you objects from around the classroom. Ask questions about their objects. For example
 - Who do you think the object was made for, a boy or a girl? Both?
 - After students share, add what you think. **Always state that both boys and girls can use the object/play with the toy.**
5. Give students a template similar to the following. Get them to colour their clothes the colours they like, not the colours they think boys or girls should wear. Show your own example as a demonstration. Vocalize that you drew your shirt blue because it is your favourite colour.



References

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Photos by Sarah Kinley