

Introducing Teddy by Jessica Walton

Grade: Kindergarten

OVERVIEW

Errol and his teddy, Thomas, are best friends who do everything together. Whether it's riding a bike, playing in the tree house, having a tea party, or all of the above, every day holds something fun to do. One sunny day, Errol finds that Thomas is sad, even when they are playing in their favorite ways. Errol can't figure out why, until Thomas finally tells Errol what the teddy has been afraid to say: "In my heart, I've always known that I'm a girl teddy, not a boy teddy. I wish my name was Tilly, not Thomas." And Errol says, "I don't care if you're a girl teddy or a boy teddy! What matters is that you are my friend." *Introducing Teddy* introduces the youngest readers to understanding gender identity and transition in an accessible and heart-warming story about being true to yourself and being a good friend. *Introducing Teddy* can be used to prompt conversations about being yourself and being a good friend, as well as to discuss gender and how it can take many different forms.

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand that there are many ways to express gender
- Connect to and express oneself visually and verbally
- Gain understanding of empathy for others

STANDARDS

OBJECTIVES

- **Washington State Sexual Health Standard:** Understand that there are many ways to express gender (H1.Se5.K)
- With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K1)

TIME

One 40 minute lesson

RESOURCES / MATERIALS NEEDED

- [Introducing Teddy](#) by Jessica Walton
- Blank book cover print-out
- Color pencils or crayons

VOCABULARY

Define key words for discussion:

- **Acceptance:** Being supportive, kind or friendly to others. Accepting other people

and their differences, or being OK with something.

- **Compassion:** Being a good friend to someone when that person needs it. Awareness and kindness for other's feelings/emotions/experience.
- **Gender:** A person's feeling about being either boy or girl or another gender.
- **Gender Role:** Cultural ways of how men and women are "supposed" to act. (EX: baking as an activity that is associated with girls typically, and weightlifting as a boy activity, but anyone can do those things and they make them feel like themselves.)
- **Unique:** Something or someone very special.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

This activity would ideally be done at the beginning of the school year to get to know each other, in addition to teaching about gender. It can also frame the year around respect and "seeing" each other.

Ground rules: Introduce or review classroom rules in order to create a safe place for students to discuss the book. Consider using the ground rules listed below:

- Respect other people in the class
- One person speaks at a time
- Everyone has the "right to pass" if someone doesn't want to talk
- Everyone will have a chance to speak

Introduction: Differences

Post and discuss the vocabulary words for this lesson. Consider pre-teaching the vocabulary words in the days leading up to this lesson. Review briefly before reading.

Ask the class to look at the book cover. Ask them, "What do you think this book is going to be about?" (Students may notice how the teddy is smiling and wearing a bow on top in the reflection, but not smiling in real life with their bow on their chest. So maybe it's about the teddy wanting to change, or do something that someone told them they couldn't do. This also reminds the class of how important it is to pay attention to the details in each picture.)

Tell students you are going to read a story about Errol and his best friend, who happens to be a Teddy Bear. Ask students if they have a stuffed animal or something they spend a lot of time with. (Perhaps they do still or they did so in the past?) Say, "Let's read about Errol and his teddy and see how these friends get along and support each other. Think about the words we just reviewed...Acceptance, Compassion, Gender, Gender Role, and Unique.

Read Aloud *Introducing Teddy* stopping along the way to ask prompting questions. After finishing the designated pages, ask the class a question; request that students take individual time to think and then have them turn to the person next to them to discuss for a minute (THINK-PAIR/SHARE).

- After this page:



Ask: Why doesn’t Tilly the Teddy want to go to the park? Why is she sad? **Ask:** How do you think our vocabulary words might fit in so far? Is Tilly worried about **Acceptance**? So far, does Errol show **Compassion** toward Tilly?

- After this page:



Ask: Tilly the Teddy and Eva moved their bows to wear what makes them happy. What clothes to do you like to wear and why do they make you happy? Why is it important for us to wear what makes us happy? How do Errol and Eva show **Acceptance** or **Compassion**?

- At the end of the book, **Ask:** What do you think it means to “be yourself?” How were the characters in this book “being themselves?” Point out that some people might feel like Tilly if they are expected to do something, or wear something, or act in a way that doesn’t feel like being themselves. They may feel like there are certain **Gender Roles** they are expected to live by.

Activity: “Introducing... A story about being yourself.” Give students the front cover/self-portrait handout; there is space for students to draw themselves. Encourage them to do a self-portrait that shows who they really are.

Tell students that the book covers should include yourself and three things that make you YOU! (What you like, what you do that is **Uniquely** YOU, what you wear, things you do for fun, etc...)

After students have illustrated their portrait, bring students back together and share out.

*Extension: students can create a story or picture book about themselves, and/or they can present their book covers to the class pointing out things that show them being themselves.

ASSESSMENT

The objectives will be met if students are able to:

- Complete a self-portrait/book cover that depicts three things about who they are if they are being themselves.

Things to consider

If you have time, make copies of the students' covers, and bind them into a book. You can use this book celebrating the students to revisit the topic of diversity and "being yourself" in future discussion. If you have wall space, you could also hang them on the wall in the classroom. Be mindful that identities can change over time, so please create space for students to make changes to their portraits.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Teaching Tolerance: Gender Diversity Lessons

<http://www.tolerance.org/>

Keywords: gender, equity, bullying, lessons, diversity

Gender Spectrum

www.genderspectrum.org



DEFENDING
EDUCATION