

It Feels Good to Be Yourself by Theresa Thorn

Grade: 3rd to 5th grades

OVERVIEW

This beautifully illustrated book takes a peek at 4 children, each of whom has a different gender identity. The first half of the book briefly describes each child's journey to find their own identity and what pronouns they use. The second half of the book describes the role family can play in realizing a gender identity, the variety of ways to think about non-binary identities, and the importance of trusting yourself and being yourself.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Students will be able to define and use the correct pronoun for various gender identities.
- Students will be able to identify the gender identity and pronouns of fictional characters.
- Students will be able to explain how people feel when their gender identity is respected.
- Students will be able to explain the role families play in expressing a gender identity.

STANDARDS

- **Washington State Sexual Health Standards:**
- **3rd Grade:** H1.Se5.3b Understand the importance of treating others with respect regarding gender identity.
- **4th Grade:** H2.Se5.4 Identify how friends and family can influence ideas regarding gender roles, identity, and expression.
- **5th Grade:** H2.Se5.5a Describe how media, society, and culture can influence idea regarding gender roles, identity, and expression.
- **CCSS Speaking and Listening:**
- 3rd Grade: RL.3.3
- 4th Grade: RL.4.4
- 5th Grade: RL.5.9/RI.5.9/W.5.9

TIME

One 45 minute lesson

5 minutes to review classroom ground rules and introduce vocabulary

15 minutes for reading and discussion

5 minutes to model worksheet

10 minutes for partner work and share out

10 minutes closure or extension

RESOURCES / MATERIALS NEEDED

- It Feels Good to Be Yourself
- Gender Mapping Slips (at the bottom of this document)
- (for 5th Grade) Create a poster with 4 quadrants labeled Cisgender, Transgender, Non-Binary, Not Sure
- Student reading journals

VOCABULARY

Define key words for discussion: (At the back of the book)

- **Sex Assigned at Birth**
- **Intersex**
- **Gender Identity**
- **Gender Expression**
- **Cisgender**
- **Transgender**
- **Non-Binary**

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

Ground rules: Introduce or review classroom rules 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: This is a book about Gender Identity.

We will read this book twice through. The first time, just listen and learn about the characters introduced to you. As we read we will define a few words. When we are finished we will talk about those words and make sure everyone understands their meaning.

Read aloud

First Read Aloud

(pg. 3) “She’s a transgender girl...” What does transgender mean? A person whose gender is different than the one they were assigned at birth.

(pg. 5) “Xavier is a cisgender boy.” Cisgender is the opposite of transgender. If transgender means that a person is not the gender they were assigned at birth, what do you think cisgender means?

(pg. 8) “non-binary is a helpful word that can describe a kid who doesn’t feel exactly like a boy or a girl.” What pronouns can we use to talk about non-binary people? (they, zi, use their name)

(Pg. 19) “Maybe they got it right, maybe they got it wrong.” As children grow older, how can parents respect their choices about their gender identity?

Second Read Aloud

During our second read aloud we are going to explain how we can use pronouns to show respect for all people, regardless of their gender identity. I will use myself as an example by creating a gender identity map:

(place down first slip) When I was born I was assigned _____ at birth. (Place down second slip) As I grew older I realized that I am _____. (Place down third slip) When people talk about me they should use the pronouns _____.

Now I am going to give each pair of students a set of cards to match to each character in this book. As we read I will pause after each character is described. During this pause, you and your partner will set up a gender identity map for them.

When you are finished reading page 12, stop reading and ask random groups to share out the map they created for each character.

Which parts of the map are important for you to know about people who you meet? What might be important to ask them if you want to be respectful of everyone's pronouns? (YES what pronouns do you use, NOT what gender were you assigned at birth, MAYBE what is your gender identity.) How do you think people feel when their correct pronouns are used and their gender identity is respected?

3rd/4th Grade Activity:

As I flip through the book, look at the pictures. Notice how the families in this book treat their children. Describe the ways they show support for their children, what do you see them doing in the book? Next, imagine a friend or family member tells you that they are thinking in different ways about their gender. What are two supportive things you could say to that person?

5th grade Activity:

Now we are going to read our individual reading books. As you read, choose a character and make a gender identity map for them, include only the information you know for sure. In your reading journal write the character's name, the gender they were assigned at birth, the gender they are now, and what pronouns people use when they talk about that character. Please include a quote from your book to illustrate pronoun use and how you know the gender with which they identify.

When students are finished, take down information about the genders represented in students' individual reading books (How many of you are reading a book about a boy? A girl? A cisgender person? A transgender person? A Non-Binary Person?)

Closure and Wrap Up

3rd Grade: Why is it important to use the pronoun that matched someone's gender identity? How does using someone's correct or incorrect pronouns make them feel? On page 22 we see Ruthie telling her parents that she is a girl. How do you think she is feeling right now? Why?

4th Grade: What is the role of family members as people grow up and think about gender? What is an ally and how can family members be allies to each other when thinking about gender?

5th Grade: Are the books we tend to read in school diverse in their gender representation? Do we see all sorts of genders in the books we read? How might the diversity of gender in our books affect how we think about gender?