

7-11 GUIDE 11. CHOOSING AND USING RESOURCES

During their junior years, children gain a sharpened awareness of their own and others' appearance, and tend to make more judgements based on appearance. Dislike of people with disfigurements begins to show and children become less accepting¹. How children perceive and feel about their own and about others' appearance and body shape is widely held to be in large part shaped by their constant exposure to media images and messages. Resources and experiences in schools can encourage pupils to become more objective and thoughtful concerning media representations of appearance and style and the link which is so often implied between 'looking good' and being virtuous.

You can keep diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities in mind when you select new materials, but you can also make good use of what you do have available.

1 SHAPING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- What resources are you using? What sort of message do they convey?
- Look at the resources you use and ask yourself how inclusive they are.
- Can all your pupils recognise something of themselves and their life experience in the resources that surround them at school? Can they see something of the lives and experiences of other children quite different to themselves?
- Does the school depict a wide a range of different people? Check for diversity of ages, facial features, impairments, body shapes, skin colour, styles and culture, etc.

2 CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES

History, mythology and contemporary culture abound with stories and beliefs linking outward appearance to deeper character. Heroes are generally noble, handsome, brave, clever and strong while heroines tend to be beautiful and gentle. Contemporary stereotypes link red hair with fiery temper, high foreheads with intelligence, and scarred or irregular faces with criminality and evil.

Our [A World of Difference](#) resources examine what stereotypes are and why they are unjust and unfounded. The resources include lesson plans and assemblies for junior schools.

3 CURRICULUM LINKS

To help children gain awareness of how difference might affect an individual, topics and ideas can be explored in a range of curriculum areas. Avoid making difference or disability a special topic. Instead, develop topics so as to include consideration of appearance and difference. For example:

History

In Tudor times, clothes were very important as a sign of social status. The padding of doublets and farthingales was designed to emphasise a body shape that would not be fashionable today. The Tudor ideal of beauty required that a type of white cosmetic was used by wealthy women including Queen Elizabeth, to make their faces look very pale and smooth. What does this tell us about the impact of culture and how it changes over time?

Maths

When gathering data to explore ways of describing and representing statistics, take care to emphasise how hard it is to generalise. Bar charts can make it look as if people – the pupils in your

¹ Richardson (1970) quoted in Bull, R. & Rumsey, N. (1988) *The Social Psychology of Facial Appearance*, Springer-Verlag, New York Inc.

class – fall neatly into distinct groups. But in reality, there are always things we have in common with people with whom we seem to differ.

“We showed all the football teams different people supported and there were six people who didn't support a football team at all. Then we tried to show people's favourite music on the same chart by using different colours in the bars. It, like, cuts across. Some people in every supporters group and in the no football group liked Indie best.”

4 USING STORY BOOKS TO TEACH ABOUT DIFFERENCE

Wonder, by R. J. Palacio

Auggie wants to be an ordinary ten-year-old. He does ordinary things - eating ice cream, playing on his Xbox. He *feels* ordinary - inside. But ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. Ordinary kids aren't stared at wherever they go. This story is about Auggie's first year in school and the challenges he faces. [Link to Wonder](#)

Charlie's Eye, by Dorothy Horgan.

Charlie has a glass eye and is a rare mixture of fun and trouble. As her adventures build to a climax, you can't help seeing that the things which really matter aren't her eye (not that she ever tries to hide it) but what she cares about and what she does.

The Huge Bag of Worries, by Virginia Ironside

Jenny's worries follow her around in a huge blue bag and she can't seem to get rid of them. A wise friend knows – “There's nothing a worry hates more than being seen.” Together, they open the bag, get the worries out into the open, and deal with them.

The Ordinary Princess M.M. Kaye

Princess Amy has six perfectly beautiful sisters but is herself quite ordinary. When her father starts trying to get a prince to marry her Amy runs away to live in the forest with woodland creatures who accept her just the way she is. Amid plenty of humour and with much good sense, ordinary princess Amy gets herself a job and finds her own prince.

Books to help children learn about differences in appearance.

Blabber Mouth, by Morris Gleitzman

Hiding in cupboards is one way of dealing with your problems, especially when you have just stuffed a frog into Darren Peck's mouth. But Rowena Batts has a bigger problem – her Dad. How can she tell him that his shirts and his singing are wrecking her life? Rowena doesn't let a fact like not being able to speak stand in her way.

Seal Surfer, by Michael Foreman

A boy watches as young seal is born on the rocks near his home and from that moment a special friendship grows up between them. Despite his disability, the boy is a keen surfer. One day in some very rough seas, the young seal saves his life.

You can also get ideas of other books from:

Letterbox Library (www.letterboxlibrary.com) - a specialist supplier of children's books that celebrate equality and diversity.