



Born Ready: The True Story of a Boy Named Penelope

Suggested Grade Level: PK-3

Length of Time: 30 Minutes

Goals

- + To expand students' perceptions and understandings of gender.
- + To help students understand what it means to be transgender using developmentally appropriate language for younger students.
- + To increase student understanding of ally behavior.

Objectives

- + Students will read and discuss a story about a transgender boy named Penelope inspired by the author's journey as a parent.
- + Students will learn new vocabulary words related to gender.
- + Students will learn about differences and being an ally.

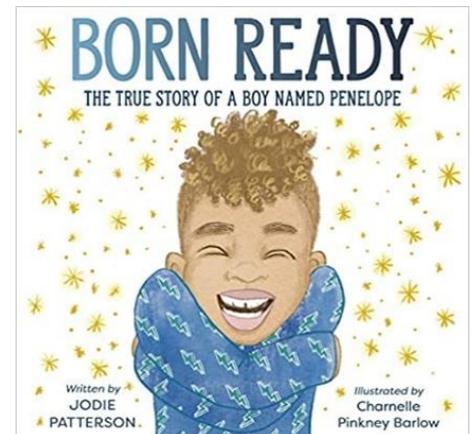
Academic Standards

- + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1: Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers. (Also RL.K.1,1.1,2.1, 4.1 and 5.1)
- + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3: Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events. (Also RL.K.3,1.3, 2.3, 4.3 and 5.3)

Educators' Notes

About the Book

Penelope knows that he's a boy. (And a ninja.) The problem is getting everyone else to realize it. In this story, Patterson shares her son Penelope's frustrations and triumphs on his journey to share himself with the world. Penelope's experiences show children that it always makes you stronger when you are true to yourself and who really are.



Before Reading *Born Ready to Your Students*

- + Review the book and think about what questions your students may have. Practice how you want to respond. Being prepared will help you to be comfortable with a topic that you may be unfamiliar discussing.
 - » Review [Defining LGBTQ+ Words for Elementary School Students](#) to prepare to define words for students.
 - » [Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender](#) will help guide your answers to common questions that can arise around gender stereotypes and norms.
 - » If a student asks you a question and you're unsure of the answer, it's OK to say that you don't know! You could say you'll figure it out and get back to them.
- + When having discussions about gender, it is often important to review classroom rules about respect, given that gender is a common way that children participate in identity-based bullying.
- + Ensure that every child in your classroom is allowed to express themselves however they want, regardless of their gender identity or expression—or any aspect of their identity that may be considered by other students to be “different.”
- + Remember student privacy. If you have students in your school or classroom who are transgender or non-binary, it can jeopardize a student's safety and well-being if they are outed to their peers or non-affirming adults.

Be mindful to not put transgender or non-binary students in the position of teaching other children about their identity. That is the job of the educator, not the student.

- + You may want to reference the [Gender Snowperson](#), a simple tool to break down the concepts of how you feel and know yourself to be (gender identity), who you love (sexual orientation), pronoun assigned at birth (sex assigned at birth) and gender expression. Many people do not realize that gender identity and sexual orientation are two very different concepts and that all of us have both a gender identity and sexual orientation. There are lots of different ways to be a boy, girl, both or neither.

Materials

- + *Born Ready: The True Story of a Boy Named Penelope* by Jodie Patterson

Prompts for Discussion

- + Everyone thinks that Penelope is a girl and treats him like a girl. How does Penelope respond to this?
- + When Penelope was born, the doctor or midwife said that he was a girl. Now that he is older, he can tell people who he knows himself to be, that he is a boy. What is the word that Penelope uses to describe himself in the book? (Transgender)
- + How does Penelope let people know that he is a boy? Does he change something about himself? Are there some things that he does not change?
- + Do you know or have you ever heard about someone who is transgender?

Activities

- + Play “Switch It Up!” - Set up just enough seats/spots in a circle for everyone but one person. This person starts in the center of the circle and says, “Switch places if you ...” and then finishes the sentence. Everyone who fits the description must get up and change seats; in the general commotion, the person in the center tries to get a

seat/spot also. Whoever is left standing there, gets to be in the center.

Examples of ways to finish “The big wind blows on everyone who...” from the story.

- Likes ninjas.
- Likes skateboarding.
- Likes wearing high-tops.
- Likes math.
- Likes science.

Extension

- + Continue the discussion about gender identity with some of books from the Welcoming Schools booklist [Diverse Children's Books with Transgender, Non-Binary and Gender Expansive Children](#).
- + This lesson pairs well with these books:
 - » [Red: A Crayon's Story –There's More To Me Than You Can See](#)
 - » [They, She, He easy as ABC: Understanding Names, Pronouns and Gender Expression](#)
- + These books are based on the real experiences of transgender, non-binary and gender expansive children.
 - » *Calvin*, JR and Vanessa Ford
 - » *I am Jazz*, Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
 - » *Jacob's New Dress*, Sarah and Ian Hoffman
 - » *My Rainbow*, Trinity and DeShanna Neal
 - » *Sam is my Sister*, Ashley Rhodes-Courter

Assessment and Evaluation

- + Ongoing teacher observation of gender-based teasing, and if it is recognized more often or becomes less frequent.
- + Ongoing teacher observation of whether or not students feel comfortable making choices outside the gender binary.

Resources from Welcoming Schools

- + [LGBTQ+ and Gender Inclusive Professional Development Training](#)
- + [Diverse Children's Books with Transgender, Non-Binary and Gender Expansive Children](#)
- + [Lesson Plans to Help Students Understand Gender](#)
- + [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#)
- + [Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender](#)
- + [Transgender Children: Books to Help Adults Understand](#)