



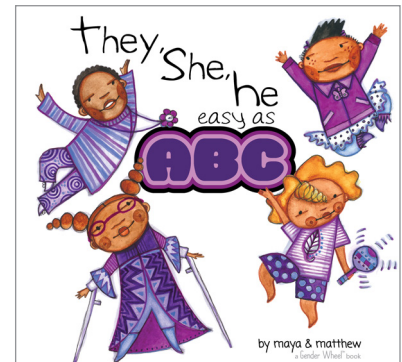
They, She, He easy as ABC: Understanding Names, Pronouns and Gender Expression

Suggested Grade Level: K – 2

Length of Time: 35 – 40 minutes plus 1 – 2 periods for the art project

Goals

- + To help students share and explore names and pronouns through discussion of literature and art.
- + To explore the concept of pronouns with students and to embrace differences in the classroom community.
- + To explore the concept of personal expression with students and center difference.
- + To explore the concept of gender expression with students.



Objective

- + Students will listen to a book read aloud and discuss its meaning.
- + Students will create an ABC expressive self-portrait illustration with two descriptive sentences about their names and pronouns (if they use pronouns; some people don't).
- + Students will share their ABC self-portrait illustrations and practice respectfully understanding the names and pronouns that their schoolmates use (if they use pronouns; some people don't).
- + Students will learn to accept and embrace the many ways people may choose to express who they are through clothing, hairstyles and actions, free of gender norms.

Academic Standards

- + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups. Also SL K.1, 1.1, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1
- + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL. 2.2: Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood. Also SL K.2, 1.2, 3.2, 4.2, 5.2
- + CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. 2.5: Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts and feelings. Also SL K.5, 1.5, 3.5, 4.5, 5.5
- + Social Studies Strand 4: Individual Development and Identity—Examine the factors that influence an individual's personal identity, development and actions including family, peers, culture and institutional influences.

Educators' Notes

It is natural for young children to notice differences. This lesson offers an opportunity to build classroom community by giving students a learning opportunity to share and learn about each other's differences. Each student will create an expressive, illustrated self portrait with two descriptive sentences modeled after the book *They, She, He easy as ABC*, by maya and matthew. This book provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss names, pronouns and gender expression with students in an accessible way.

One of the learning objectives of this lesson is for children to accept and embrace the many ways people may choose to express who they are through clothing and hairstyles, free of gender norms. This lesson also provides an opportunity to talk about names and pronouns to help students gain important social skills around respectfully understanding that there are many pronouns that people use; for example, some people use their names instead of using pronouns.

Vocabulary

- + **Gender Expression:** People express themselves in many ways, such as through clothes or hairstyles. Sometimes people think that these things go with certain genders, but really you cannot guess someone's gender or pronouns from how they look.
- + **Gender Identity:** How you feel. Girl, boy, both or neither. Everyone has a gender identity
- + **Gender Binary:** A way of seeing gender as two distinct and opposite groups—girl and boy. This idea doesn't include all the ways we can have a gender identity and express our gender.

Before Reading *They, She, He easy as ABC* to Your Students

- + Read the book yourself and think about questions you and your students may have. Practice how you want to respond. Being prepared will help you be comfortable with a topic you may be unfamiliar discussing.
 - » For ideas on ways to respond to questions or put-downs about gender, take a look at the Welcoming Schools handout [Be Prepared for Questions and Put-Downs on Gender](#).

- » 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.
- » You may want to reference the [Gender Snow-person lesson](#), a simple tool to break down the concepts of gender identity (who you are, how you feel), who you love, pronoun assigned at birth and gender expression.
- » Finally, it is often important to review classroom rules about respect and being an ally when having discussions about gender, given that gender is a common way that children participate in identity based bullying behavior. Our lesson [Words That Hurt, Words That Heal](#) gives students an opportunity to practice and learn ally skills.

Materials Needed:

- + [They, She, He easy as ABC by maya and matthew](#)
- + [A Story About Pronouns](#) (video created by maya and matthew)
- + 9" x 12" sturdy white paper (Educators may want to pre-print paper with the first letter of the student's name at the top and two sentence starters at the bottom.)
- + Pencils, black permanent markers, colored pencils, crayons or markers
- + Chart paper

Introduction

- + You may want to pair this lesson with a pronoun unit that you are doing in language arts.
- + Play the video: [A Story About Pronouns](#) created by maya and matthew
- + Ask your students to tell you about pronouns. Generate a definition with them.
- + Ask your students to list pronouns and write them on a piece of chart paper. Make sure [they, them](#) is listed as a pronoun choice. You will come back to this chart after reading the book. (At this point you are getting your students to list she, he, and they. After you read the story you will have more pronouns to add with your students from the text.)

- + Remember that some people may use only their name instead of a pronoun. Write “name” on the pronoun chart paper.
- + Say to your students, “As we read this book, we are going to be noticing names, pronouns and gender expression.”
- + Let your students know that gender expression is one of the many ways we all like to show who we are with items such as our hair and clothes.
- + Remind students that we cannot tell if someone is a girl, boy, both or neither by how they look.
- + Say to your students, “As we read the story, we will pay attention to the name, pronouns and special things that each person likes to do in the book. I also want you to think about your name, pronouns and things you like to do, because we are going to do an art project after we read the story!”

Read and Discuss the Book

- + Read the book *They, She, He easy as ABC* to your students.
- + “Ari loves to arabesque. They hold their pose with ease.” Ask your students what the child’s name is, what pronouns they use and what they like to do. Ask them to notice which words start with the letter ‘A’.
- + “Brody is a break dancer. Brody loves to freeze.” Ask your students what the child’s name is, what pronouns they use (Brody does not use pronouns), and what they love to do.
- + As you read certain letters, have your students name classmates or raise their hand if their name starts with the same letter.
- + “Diego drums and dances. Tree has all the sounds.” “What pronoun does Diego use?” (Tree) “Did we have that on our list of pronouns?” Ask your students to notice pronouns that were not listed so they can be added to the chart after you finish the book.
- + See if your students notice that the pronouns are purple in the book.
- + Ask your students about their interests. For example, for ‘H’ it says, “Harvey’s heart beats happily. Hip hop makes her flow.” Ask your students if any of them like hip hop.

- + “Indigo’s into insects. Ze love the buzzing vibe.” Ask your students to name the pronoun on this page.
- + “Jorge jams to jazzy tunes. He, or they can jive.” Ask your students to notice the pronouns for Jorge. Let them know that some people may use more than one pronoun. Make sure to remind students that it is up to each person to decide what pronouns feel right for them. It is not OK for people to give someone else a pronoun.
- + “Sky is like a star so bright. All the pronouns are right.” Notice with your students that Sky uses all the pronouns.
- + Make sure to read the text near the end of the book that starts with “easy as A,B,C...” This page gives wonderful information about many pronouns.

After Reading the Story

- + Ask your students if someone’s gender expression (how you wear your hair or how you express the spirit of who you are, even what colors you like) is affected by their pronouns. Is there one way to be if your pronouns are she? Is there one way to be if your pronouns are he? Can we know someone’s pronouns by how they look or do we need to politely ask?
- + Ask your students if you can know how someone feels on the inside based on how they how they look on the outside. (The Welcoming Schools lesson [Red: A Crayon’s Story: There’s More To Me Than You Can See](#) is a wonderful tool to explore this concept with students.) Let your students know that some people use more than one pronoun. Some people choose not to use pronouns at all; they might use their name instead. (The Welcoming Schools lesson [Call Me Tree/Llámame árbol: Exploring a Gender Free Book](#) explores this concept with students.)

Directions for Art Project

- + Go back to the pronoun anchor chart. Ask your students if there are any pronouns they want to add after reading the book.
- + Give each student a piece of 9” x 12” paper.
- + Have each student put the first letter of their name in the upper corner.

- + Help your students create two sentences about themselves. Use examples from the book. You may want to brainstorm examples on an anchor chart at the front of the class with your students. Have students write their sentences at the bottom of the paper. For early readers such as kindergarteners, you may just want to have them write their name and pronoun (if they use pronouns; some people don't) at the bottom of their self paper.
- + In the middle of the paper, have students draw a picture of their full body selves. (Educators may want to pre-print paper with the first letter of the student's name at the top and two sentence starters at the bottom.) Encourage them to add lots of details that are special to them—hairstyles, clothing styles. For example, let students know that if they have always wanted to wear a bow tie with rainbow suspenders, that they can draw themselves this way. Students can also change their hair to a style that represents their true selves. After they have drawn themselves in pencil with lots of details, have students trace over the pencil lines with a black permanent marker.
- + Once students are done outlining, they can color in their drawing of themselves with crayons, colored pencils or markers. Make sure to provide a wide variety of skin and hair tones.

Sharing Their Artwork

- + Put all of your students' illustrations into a classroom alphabet book or classroom display.

Extension

- + Read the book *Call Me Tree/Llámame árbol* by Maya Gonzalez. Talk about how the main character does not use pronouns and wants to be called Tree.
- + Give students an opportunity to read their illustrated page to the class.
- + Teach the lesson *Red: A Crayon's Story: There's More To Me Than You Can See*.

Assessment and Evaluation

- + Offer an opportunity for students to share their artwork with each other in pairs. Direct students to share one thing they like about their picture with a classmate. Next, ask students to give an appreciation to their partner about their picture.
- + While the students are sharing their work with each other, are they using vocabulary and showing comprehension of the concepts of names, pronouns and gender expression?
- + Assessment for this lesson will be mostly informal. Observe your students' reactions during class and small-group discussions. By paying attention to their conversations and individual responses, you can assess their comprehension of diversity and their ability to apply this comprehension by exploring their own differences.

Additional Resources from Welcoming Schools

- + [Lessons to Understand Gender](#)
- + [Diverse Children's Books with Transgender, Non-Binary and Gender Expansive Children](#)
- + [Resources for Gender Inclusive Schools](#)
- + [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#)
- + [Welcoming Schools Professional Development Training](#)

Adapted from the book *They, She, He easy as ABC* by maya and matthew.

