



## CHILDREN JUST LIKE ME: UNDERSTANDING GENDER EXPRESSION

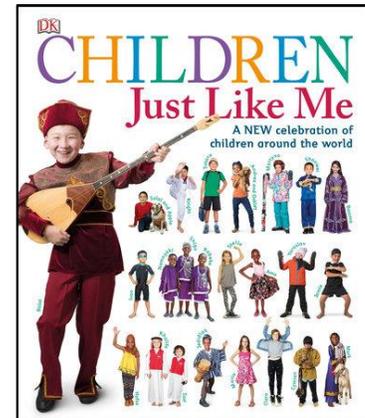
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**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** K – 2

**LENGTH OF TIME:** 35 minutes

### GOALS

- To explore the concept of personal expression with students and to embrace differences in the classroom and in our global community.
- To use the book *Children Just Like Me* to introduce the concept of gender expression to students.
- To help students understand that gender expression can vary personally, culturally and globally.
- To help students cultivate allyship around gender and personal expression.
- To provide students with an opportunity to see and understand similarities and differences among people.



### OBJECTIVES

- Students will listen to a book read aloud and discuss its meaning.
- Students will participate in a class activity to help them explore the concept of gender expression.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics, grade 1 or grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups. (Also SL.K.1 and 1.1)
- 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 and 1.2)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.5: Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts and feelings. (Also SL.K.5 and 1.5)

### EDUCATORS' NOTES

Each page of the book shows children, their family, their friends, their food, how they learn, their school books, where they live, and information about their family's religion (if applicable). Before looking through this book with your class, you might choose countries or specific children to read about depending on your school community or parts of the world you may be studying.

It is natural for young children to notice differences. This lesson offers an opportunity to build classroom community by giving students a chance to share and learn about each other's

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differences around personal expression in clothing and hairstyles. The book *Children Just Like Me* provides a wonderful opportunity to discuss identity and expression with children through a global lens.

One of the learning objectives of this lesson is to teach children to accept and embrace the many ways students may choose to express who they are through clothing and hairstyles. It is important to help students understand that clothing and hairstyles are unique and different depending on personal preferences, family traditions and cultural traditions.

After reading the book, students will participate in a class activity to further explore gender expression and the many ways there are to be a girl, boy, both or neither.

### **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- *Children Just Like Me* by UNICEF
- Small sticky notes, black permanent markers, pencils, markers or colored pencils
- Chart paper and markers
- Optional video: [\*I Love My Hair\*](#) by Sesame Street

### **READ AND DISCUSS THE BOOK *CHILDREN JUST LIKE ME***

As you begin, let your students know that the book is called *Children Just Like Me* and that it provides an opportunity to learn about children from 36 different countries throughout the world. It is important when discussing the photos in this book to direct children not to engage in appearance-based stereotypes. For example, you cannot know the gender of the children in the book unless you look for text clues such as pronouns. Also, many children are multilingual, and you will need to look for text clues about the languages that children speak.

- Write the words “Gender Expression” at the top of a piece of chart paper.
- Show your students lots of example photos from the book *Children Just Like Me*, and ask them these questions:
  - Do all the children wear the same kinds of clothes?
  - Do all the children have the same kind of hair?
- Do we know if the children feel like girls, boys, both or neither? (Answer: No, we cannot know someone’s gender identity unless they share that with us or we look for text clues like pronouns. Model for your students how to do this.)
- Let your students know that hair and clothing are two of the many ways that people all over the world share who they are, what they like to wear and special things about their culture and/or religion. (For example, some Muslim women wear a hijab as an expression of their religion.)
- Depending on your school community, you may have students who share their own personal experiences about the clothing they and their family wear. We live in a global community. Ground this discussion in respect for all.

### **DIRECTIONS FOR ACTIVITY**

- Have your students each think of one piece of clothing or hairstyle they really like. It could be real or imagined. For example, maybe a student wishes they had red,

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sparkly, glittery shoes, or long hair that reaches to their toes. Maybe a student has a favorite dress that their grandfather sewed for them.

- Give each student a sticky note and drawing tools. Have each student label and draw a picture of one article of clothing or hairstyle that makes them feel happy. Examples: red boots, short hair, twists, braids, pink hair, basketball shoes, bow tie, tiara, necklace, knitted sweater, etc.
- Have the students place their sticky notes on the large paper at the front of the classroom that is titled “Gender Expression.”
- Gather the students and read out the different articles of clothing and hairstyles to the class. (You may want to choose a few students to share and name their hairstyle or article of clothing.)
- After sharing, remind students that at [Name of Your School], everyone gets to wear what makes them feel happy and comfortable without being teased. This includes clothing, jewelry and hairstyles.
- You may want to keep the sticky notes up in your classroom as a visual reminder to your students to respect everyone’s gender expression.

## **EXTENSIONS**

- Do this lesson along with [\*Jacob’s New Dress: Understanding Gender Expression\*](#).
- Have your students write about an important article of clothing, why it matters to them and how it shares who they are.

## **ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

- Offer an opportunity for students to share their sticky notes with each other in pairs. Direct students to share why they like that article of clothing or hairstyle with a classmate.
- While the students are sharing their work with each other, are they using vocabulary and showing comprehension of the concept of gender expression?
- Assessment for this lesson will be mostly informal. You should 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 gender expression and their ability to apply this understanding by being respectful of their classmates.

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FROM WELCOMING SCHOOLS**

[Lessons to Understand Gender](#)

[Books that Look at Gender and Support Transgender and Non-Binary Students](#)

[Resources for Gender Inclusive Schools](#)

[Defining LGBTQ Words for Children](#)

[Professional Development Training](#)

Credit: Michele Hatchell, Madison, WI.