



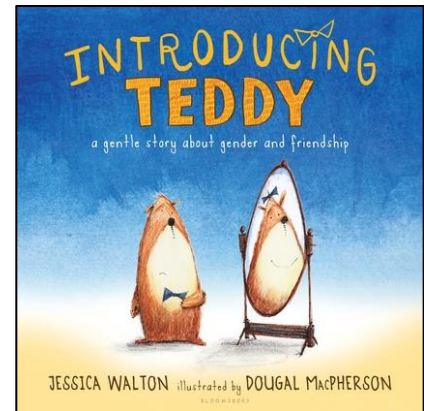
INTRODUCING TEDDY: UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND FRIENDSHIP

SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL: K – 2

LENGTH OF TIME: 40 minutes

GOALS

- To expand students' perception and understanding of gender.
- To help understand what it can mean to be transgender, non-binary or gender expansive, using developmentally appropriate language for younger students.
- To help students cultivate allyship around gender.
- To explore the concept of gender expression with students and to embrace differences in the classroom community.



OBJECTIVES

- Students will listen to a book read aloud and discuss a fictional story about a transgender character.
- Students will learn new vocabulary words related to gender identity.
- Students will learn about differences and being an ally.

ACADEMIC Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups. (Also 1.1 and 2.1)
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.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 1.2 and 2.2)
- 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.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- *Introducing Teddy* by Jessica Walton
- [Teacher's Guide to *Introducing Teddy*](#) by Jessica Walton
- [Gender Snowperson Teacher Guide](#)

EDUCATORS' NOTES

Students are already learning and talking about gender and differences. They receive formal and informal messages about gender from a multitude of sources—their families, peers, communities and the media. This messaging can be empowering or limiting. As such, it is critical to discuss gender in the classroom.

By guiding discussions about gender with students, you can help to prevent bias-based bullying, harassment and gender stereotyping. It is also important to review classroom rules about respect and being an ally when having discussions about gender. Gender-based bullying has a high frequency of occurrence in elementary schools and needs to be interrupted and addressed by educators. This intentional work in your classroom can improve the academic achievement and social-emotional learning of your students.

Ensure that every child in your classroom is allowed to express themselves freely, regardless of gender norms—or any aspect of their identity that may be considered by other students to be “different.” Understand that gender is a spectrum, not a binary, and that we all express ourselves in many different ways along that spectrum. Each child is an individual with their own unique expression of who they are in the world.

If you have students in your school or classroom who are transgender or non-binary, be mindful not to put those students in the position of teaching other children about their identity. That is the job of the educator, not the student. Also, remember student privacy. It can jeopardize a student’s safety and well-being if they are outed to their peers or non-affirming adults.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Errol and his teddy, Thomas, are best friends who do everything together. One sunny day, Errol finds that Thomas the Teddy is sad, and Errol can’t figure out why. Then, Thomas the Teddy finally tells Errol what Teddy has been afraid to say: “In my heart, I’ve always known that I’m a girl Teddy, not a boy Teddy. I wish my name was Tilly.” And Errol replies, “I don’t care if you’re a girl teddy or a boy teddy! What matters is that you are my friend.” A sweet and gentle story about being true to yourself and being a good friend, *Introducing Teddy* also helps children understand gender identity.

Before Reading *Introducing Teddy* to Your Students

- Read the book yourself and think about what questions you and 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.
 - Take a look at the Welcoming School’s handout [Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#) to help you be prepared to define LGBTQ words.
 - For ideas on ways to respond to questions or put-downs about gender, take a look at 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.

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- Reference the [Gender Snowperson](#), a simple tool to break down the concepts of gender identity (how you feel), who you love, girl/boy assigned at birth and gender expression.

INTRODUCING THE BOOK

As you begin having discussions about gender, it is often important to review classroom rules about respect and being an ally, given that gender is a common way that children participate in identity-based bullying behavior.

When you show your students the cover of the book, you could say, “This book is about Errol who has a friend—a teddy bear named Thomas. Errol and his teddy like to do everything together. Thomas has something very special to share, and Errol shows us how to be a kind friend.”

READ AND DISCUSS *INTRODUCING TEDDY*

As you read you the book or afterwards, use some of these questions for discussion.

- Why didn't Tilly the Teddy want to go to the park? Why was she so sad?
- How does Errol react when Tilly tells him that she is a girl teddy? What does he say?
- Is Errol being a good friend to Tilly the Teddy? How does that make Tilly feel?
- How does Ava react when Errol tells her that Tilly has a new name? What does she say?
- Is Ava being a good friend to Tilly the Teddy? How does that make Tilly feel?
- What four activities do Errol and his teddy always do together before Tilly tells Errol she is a girl?
- What four activities do Errol and his teddy always do together after Tilly tells Errol she is a girl?
- Is there something important about Errol and Tilly doing the same activities together at the beginning and end of the story? What do you think the author is trying to tell us?

One possible way to explain what it can mean to be transgender is:

When a baby is born, a doctor or midwife looks at the baby's body and says they are a girl or a boy and they are given a pronoun (she or he). For many people the way they feel inside will match what the doctor or midwife said when they were babies (cisgender).

This isn't true for everyone, though. Remember at the beginning of *Introducing Teddy*, when everyone thought Tilly the Teddy was a boy teddy even though she knew in her heart that she was a girl teddy? Some people will feel the same way that Tilly did (transgender).

They might choose a new name and pronouns like Tilly, and they might decide to wear different clothes or change their hair if that's what makes them happy. Hopefully, they have some friends like Errol and Ava! We all need friends who accept us for who we really are.

Some people who feel the same way Tilly did use the word *transgender* to describe themselves. A *transgender* person is someone who has a different *gender (or pronoun)* than

the one they were *assigned* at birth. Some people might use other words to describe their gender identity (*non-binary* which means a person can feel like both or neither).

The important thing is that we are kind and understanding toward each other, whatever our gender identities are!

Talk to your students about the term gender expression.

- Let them know that at [Name of Your School], everyone gets to wear what makes them feel happy and comfortable without being teased or bullied. ([*Jacob's New Dress: Understanding Gender Expression*](#) is a great lesson to further explore this concept).
- Remind students that we cannot assume someone's gender identity (she, he, neither or both) based on their gender expression. There are lots of ways to be a girl, boy, both or neither.

EXTENSIONS

- Do *Activity 9 Finding The Both* in the [*Teacher's Guide to Introducing Teddy*](#) and read *Big Bob, Little Bob* by James Howe.
- Do *Activity 7 Sorting Out Gender* in the [*Teacher's Guide to Introducing Teddy*](#).
- To continue a discussion of gender identity and gender expression, use the Welcoming Schools lesson, [*Red A Crayon's Story: There's More to Me Than You Can See*](#).
- Read and discuss the book *I Am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings and Jessica Herthel. See the lesson: [*I Am Jazz: Reading A Children's Book to Help Understand Transgender Topics in Elementary School*](#).

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- Ongoing teacher observation of kindness, respect and ally behavior when children participate in all kinds of work and play.
- Ongoing teacher observation and class discussions on whether or not gender-based bullying behavior is recognized more often, becomes less frequent or is interrupted.
- Ongoing teacher observation on whether or not students feel comfortable making choices outside of the gender binary.

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](#)

[Be Prepared For Questions and Put-Downs Around Gender](#)

[Defining LGBTQ Words for Elementary School Students](#)

[Professional Development Training](#)

Adapted by Michele Hatchell, Madison, WI from [*Teacher's Guide to Introducing Teddy*](#) by Jessica Walton.