

Lesson adapted from: Student, Family and Community Support Department  
San Francisco Unified School District

## **B in the World by Sharon Mentyka**

**Grade:** 3rd grade

### OVERVIEW

Seven-year-old B Browning doesn't know why sometimes he feels like wearing overalls and a flannel shirt and other days wakes up wishing he could dress like his sister Patti-Anne. He knows it bothers and confuses people, even the people who love him, but it feels just right to B. But when B and Mia, the bossiest kid at New Horizons School, both decide to try out for the part of the Mermaid in the Spring play, B wonders how he'll ever survive the year.

This lesson explores gender expression, stereotypes, and being an ally. Throughout this chapter book, the characters treat B in loving and supportive, as well as painful and hurtful ways. Based on a true-life story, B shows great resilience as he navigates school, peers and adults in his life.

### OBJECTIVES

**By the end of the lesson, students will:**

- Describe ways that gender roles vary between characters

### STANDARDS

- **Washington State Sexual Health Standard:** Describe that gender roles can vary considerably. (H1.Se5.3a)
- **Washington State Sexual Health Standard:** Understand importance of treating others with respect regarding gender identity. (H1.Se5.3b)

### TIME

**Multiple 30 minute lessons**  
Review vocabulary

### RESOURCES / MATERIALS NEEDED

- [B in the World](#) by Sharon Mentyka

### VOCABULARY

Define key words for discussion:

- **Acceptance:** The act or state of being supportive or welcoming of others. It is especially important to show acceptance to people different than you.
- **Ally:** A person who works for equality to support people and groups different than them. Anyone can be an ally.
- **Gender Role:** Cultural ways of how men and women are “supposed” to act.
- **Stereotype:** A generalization, usually negative, about a person based a certain characteristic. The generalization is then attributed to everyone who may fit into the group.

## CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

**Ground rules:** Introduce or review classroom rules in order to create a safe place for students to discuss the book. Consider using the ground rules listed below:

- Respect other people in the class
- One person speaks at a time
- Everyone has the “right to pass” if someone doesn’t want to talk
- Everyone will have a chance to speak

### **Introduction: Differences**

Post and review the vocabulary words for this lesson. Emphasize the terms Gender Role and ask students to think about ways our society “expects” people to act according to their gender. Tell students to look for examples of ways the characters in the story “B in the World” either expect people to act or how the characters might break the stereotypes of their gender.

### **Read Aloud**

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1. Introduce the book, B in the World.
    - Keeping in mind the definitions of gender roles and stereotypes, let’s read about a young person who doesn’t always fit the expectations of others.
  2. Read the book and periodically ask students about ways B fits or does not fit his gender roles. Ask how he is treated by others and how this makes him feel.
  3. As an option, use lesson extension ideas from author, Sharon Mentyka’s lesson plans (found on SPS website)

## ASSESSMENT

Have students write from one character's perspective how they might respond in a particular scene. Ask students to identify 3 ways a character fit or broke the gender norms in a passage/chapter.

## Things to consider

If a student in your class is known to be gender non-conforming, or does not adhere to rigid gender stereotypes, be mindful of how this book can put them on the spot. Don't use the student as an example, but ask students generally, if they can relate to the experiences of B or other characters in the book.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### **Teaching Tolerance: Gender Diversity Lessons**

<http://www.tolerance.org/>

Keywords: gender, equity, bullying, lessons, diversity

### **Gender Spectrum**

[www.genderspectrum.org](http://www.genderspectrum.org)