

Zoey Smith  
Gender Roles and Beauty Standards in Mainstream Media

1. A rationale for the proposed unit

This series of lessons will be taught as part of a larger unit on body image and gender roles. Because fifth graders are entering puberty, these topics will be relevant and engaging for the students. These lessons will incorporate my learning about East Asian gender roles and beauty standards to show students that these things are defined by society. I will teach these lessons at the beginning of the unit to establish what gender roles and standards of beauty are. Though students have probably heard these terms before, for many of them this will be the first time that they will study these topics in depth in school. Students will have had practice reading and annotating news articles, as well as experience with using their Chromebooks for research and to create final products.

2. Skill and content objectives

Objectives:

- Students will compare standards of beauty across time and cultures to learn about how “beauty” is not a fixed concept.
- Students will compare media messages about gender roles from various times and cultures to see how those are developed by societies, not biologically set.
- Students will develop a sense of how the media influences self-image, and come up with ways to achieve a healthy body image.

California Health Standards

- 2.1.G Explain how culture, media, and other factors influence perceptions about body image, gender roles, and attractiveness.
- 6.1.G Identify steps to achieve and maintain a healthy and accurate body image.

California Language Arts Standard

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1  
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.2  
Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text

3. Detailed lesson plan

Day 1 – Introduction – Modern Beauty Standards

Hook (15 minutes)

- On the first day, we will begin by identifying standards of beauty and gender role expectations in current American society. I will begin by asking students: What do you think makes someone physically beautiful? I will chart their answers, separating them for men and women.

- I will then ask students to give me examples of “girl things” (expected answers: pink, dancing, unicorns, princess movies, etc.) and “boy things” (blue, sports, dinosaurs, cars, etc.) I will ask students if any jobs fall under either of those categories.
- I will ask students how they know which category these things fall under. They will share with their partner, then we will discuss as a class. I will explain that this is our question for the week.

#### Student Activity (10 minutes)

- To introduce students to the concepts in this unit, I will have them use their Chromebooks to look up definitions of the following words: gender role, beauty standard, body image, media,
- Students will share out their definitions and we will come to an agreement on what each term means.

#### Group Activity (30 minutes)

- I will show a slideshow with images and video clips from American pop culture, and ask students what beauty standards and gender roles they see represented in each.
- Images and videos will include: clip of the Disney princesses from *Wreck it Ralph 2*, photos of pop singers such as Taylor Swift, Shawn Mendes, and the Jonas Brothers, commercials aimed at men vs. commercials aimed at women, clip from TV show *Modern Family* showing nagging wife and bumbling husband
- For each clip or image, I will have students first discuss what they see at their tables, then share with the class. We will chart their responses. They may see some patterns in how men and women are represented in media, and they may also point out counterexamples.

#### Closing (5 minutes)

- Students will write in their journals a response to the question: How does the media influence my ideas of beauty or gender roles?

### Day 2 – Introducing Other Time Periods and Cultures

#### Hook – (10 minutes)

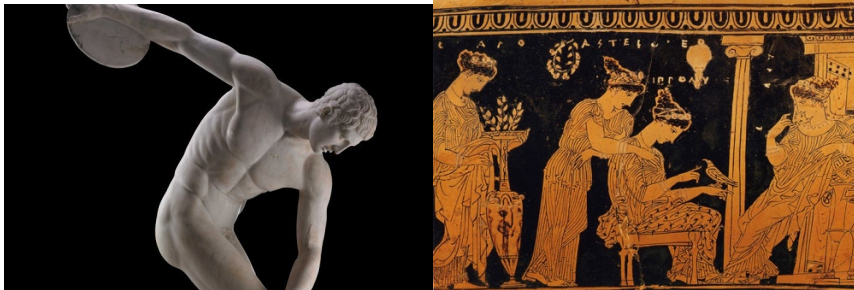
- I will post the following quote from Ban Zhao:  
 “To choose her words with care; to avoid vulgar language; to speak at appropriate times; and not to weary others with much conversation, may be called the characteristics of womanly words. To wash and scrub filth away; to keep clothes and ornaments fresh and clean; to wash the head and bathe the body regularly, and to keep the person free from disgraceful filth, may be called the characteristics of womanly bearing. With whole-hearted devotion to sew and to weave; to love not gossip and silly laughter; in cleanliness and order to prepare the wine and food for serving guests, may be called the characteristics of womanly work.”
- I will read the quote to the students and answer any questions about vocabulary. I will have them think about whether they agree or disagree with this statement and why. I will then give them the context of Ban Zhao’s *Lessons for Women* and ask them how the attitude in this quote compares to the attitude we discussed on the previous day.

Small Group (10 minutes)

- Flappers from the 1920s in the US



- Ancient Greek art



- Ancient Egyptian art



- Paintings from the Italian Renaissance



- Maoist propaganda



- Traditional Japanese art



Etc.

- Students will write down what gender roles or beauty standards they see represented in their image.
- Students will then compare their image with those sitting near them.
- We will come together as a class to discuss. Each group will present their image briefly and describe what they saw.
- We will discuss the many differences between the images. Why are they so different from each other? What does this tell us about gender roles and beauty standards?

Closing (5 minutes)

- Students will write in their journals their response to the question: What gender role expectations or beauty standards from today's lesson surprised me?

Day 3 – Case Study – Modern Korean beauty standards

Hook (5 minutes)

- Similar to the previous day's activity, I will post photos of Kpop groups Blackpink and BTS. I will ask the students if they know who they are. We will talk about the beauty standards shown in the photos.

Student Activity (20 minutes)

- In pairs or by themselves, students will read this article:  
<https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-luxury/article/2125286/k-beauty-ugly-face-south-koreas-obsession-women-looking> (edited for age appropriateness)
- They will practice annotating the article as we have learned in class to promote active reading and comprehension.
- They will answer comprehension questions on a worksheet, such as: What is one reason so much money is spent on makeup and skincare in South Korea? What is one Korean beauty ideal mentioned in the article? What step did the government recently take to address this issue? What type of power does the article say women have?

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

- Key discussion points include: How media images can affect a person's worldview, How media images can affect a person's actions, How media images can affect a person's self-esteem, Whether students can think of similar examples in the United States

Closing (5 minutes)

- Students will write in their journals the answer to the following question: What changes can be made to promote healthy body image in the media?

4. A plan for assessing student achievement

Day 4-5 – Final Project

- Students will use their newfound knowledge of beauty standards and gender roles around the world, as well as media influence, to design a “healthy self-image” media campaign.
- We will review what we learned in the previous three days by looking again at the images we viewed and reading our journal entries.
- Students will be put in groups of 3-4 students. They will design a media campaign of their choosing to promote a healthy self-image in students their age. Examples might be pamphlets, public service announcements, or a series of posters or billboards.
- Students will have access to the internet through their Chromebooks. Projects may be completed digitally or on paper.
- Requirements – Campaigns must:
  - Discuss how media can negatively influence self-image
  - Explain what it means for gender roles and beauty standards to be defined by society
  - Show an example of beauty standards that are different from those in the United States
  - Give ways to develop a healthy self-image
- Students will present their projects to the class.