

Birthday Gifts

Goal: To create awareness of gender stereotyping and the influences toys can have on how children learn and reproduce societal gender ideals and expectations.

When: It would be best to do this activity in the middle of the semester when students might feel a bit more comfortable sharing some of their answers and experiences.

Time: 10-15 minutes for activity, 10 minutes for class discussion.

Materials: Laptop, smart phone, or other device with access to the Internet.

Instructions: Divide class into groups of 2-4 people. Give students 5-7 minutes to “shop” online at a website such as Amazon.com for a child who is celebrating their birthday. Three groups should shop for Ashley and three groups should shop for Lukas; students should choose a toy in the \$10-20 range. Each team will be assigned a specific age group for their toy: toddler, 5-year-old, and 10-year-old. Ask students to search for toys they thought of themselves (and not just to search for boys’ or girls’ toys). After they have chosen their gift, each student should individually answer the discussion questions on the next page. The entire class can then share the toys they picked and address the discussion questions.

Follow-up Questions:

- What did you think of this activity?
- Did any of your classmates’ picks surprise you or stand out to you? Why?
- Describe the process you used to select your gift. What influenced your decision?
- As a child, what toys did you play with? Were these toy selections influenced at all by your parents, the media, or friends? Why or why not? Were these toys similar to or different from the toy you selected?
- Do you believe that choices caregivers make about toys or media influence children’s beliefs about appropriate roles for women and men or boys and girls? Why/why not?
- Do you think children who play with toys designed for the other sex are treated differently from children who play with gender-typical toys? Why or why not?
- Do we portray toys differently for each gender? If so, how?

SOURCE: Adapted from Kite, M.E., Simpson, M.D., Ryan, B. 2014. *Breaking the prejudice habit: gender stereotypes activity*. Retrieved from

<http://breakingprejudice.org/teaching/group-activities/childrens-gender-stereotypes-activity/>