

Developing pupils' literacy skills with International Women's Day – a celebration of women's voice and agency

Introduction

International Women's Day takes place every year on 8 March, and is a global celebration of the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating **gender equality** – one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030. This year's campaign asks everyone to [#BeBoldForChange](#) in order to achieve a more gender-inclusive world.

March is also the opportunity to celebrate **Women's History Month**, when various community events, internet blog series, television presentations and entertainment specials are staged to look back on women's achievements, to celebrate the progress made by women around the world, and to remember that there is still work to be done.

The [Global Learning Programme](#) (GLP) has created this resource to support the teaching of [literacy](#), and to help teachers wishing to develop their pupils' knowledge of interdependence and equality, while encouraging them to consider the concepts of fairness, agency, rights, respect and social justice, and how individuals can make a difference.

Learning objectives

This resource is targeted particularly at Key Stages 2 and 3, with some opportunities for younger and older pupils. It will support teachers in developing:

- pupils' knowledge and understanding of gender equality, and some of the issues and challenges that girls and women face around the world today
- pupils' knowledge and understanding of global themes, including rights and social justice
- pupils' enquiry, critical thinking and discussion skills
- opportunities for pupils to consider their own and others' values.

It will also help teachers to investigate how women have: worked to make the world more just and sustainable; contributed to development, the reduction of poverty, and sustainability; and challenged injustice.

It supports the teaching of the National Curriculum through comprehension and composition in English. This includes:

- writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences, which develops literacy skills and active citizenship
- supporting ideas and arguments with any necessary factual detail, and checking credibility of sources.

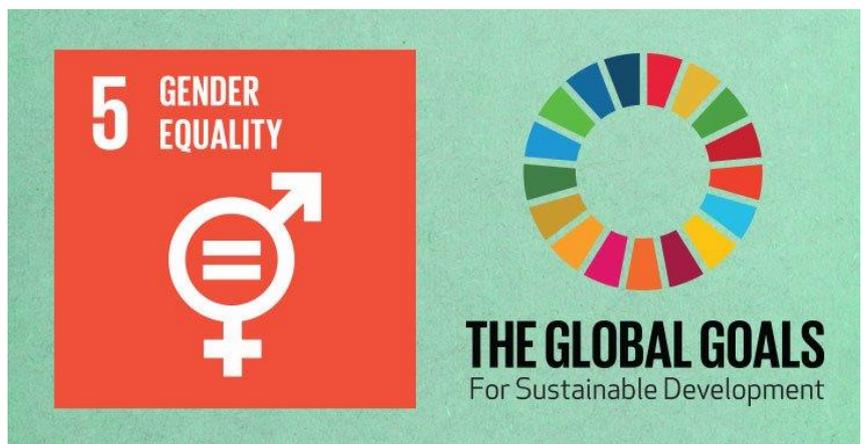
International Women's Day (IWD)

IWD is committed to: helping women and girls achieve their ambitions; challenging conscious and unconscious bias; calling for gender-balanced leadership; valuing women and men's contributions equally; and creating inclusive flexible cultures.

- Resources from the IWD campaign <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Resources>
- Timeline <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/About>

The Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the **Global Goals**, were launched in September 2015, with the targets due to be achieved by 2030. These aim to address the issues considered to be most important globally based on answers received from eight million respondents. Among the 17 Global Goals, Goal 5 has the target of achieving gender equality, and empowering all women and girls.



- Goal 5 news, facts and targets <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>
- Short film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R51ijgtRqZU>
- World's Largest Lesson <http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/global-goals/gender-equality/>
- Oxfam – How were women involved in shaping the SDGs, and who were these women? <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/blog/2016/03/are-the-sustainable-development-goals-good-news-for-women>
- UN Women website <http://www.unwomen.org/>, with this interesting [infographic](#)

Resources from the Global Learning Programme in England

[Comprehensive activities for gender equality](#) to support the World's Largest Lesson

GLP topic pages on [gender](#) and the [SDGs](#)

Global Dimension [GLP-tagged resources on gender](#)

Further resources and links

Worldfish <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4viXOGvuu0Y>

UN Women <http://www.unwomen.org/en>

UN Women YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/UNWomen>

Orange Day campaign <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/orangeday.shtml>

‘He named me Malala’

- Movie trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vE5gSHJkusU>
- Film and lesson plans: <https://www.docacademy.org/malala/> (login required). The resources explore the importance of girls’ rights to education and also explore the themes of forgiveness, refugees and having a voice. There is a separate activity toolkit, which includes suggestions that detail how school students can take action in relation to the lesson themes. Although the lesson plans are aimed at secondary students, much of the film would be appropriate for younger pupils (aged 9–11), and clips could be used in English, PSHE, citizenship and as stimuli for Philosophy for Children (P4C).

Awra Amba <https://go.lyfta.com/teacher-trial> Visit a northern Ethiopian village, where society is based on gender equality, thanks to an interactive documentary.

UN HeForShe:

- Campaign main page <http://www.heforshe.org/en>
- Emma Watson’s speech <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkjW9PZBRfk> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-29313027>

Picture books

The non-exhaustive list of resources below aims to support teachers wishing to develop their pupils’ understanding of the issues around gender equality through stories. Stories bring places, settings and experiences to life, and provide a supporting framework in which pupils can explore, record, explain, comprehend and envisage the changing world around them as they develop their understanding.

The following questions might support a more critical approach:

- Which problem is addressed in the book?
- What is the cause of this problem?
- What might be the cause of that cause? (looking deeper at underlying causes, which may not be explored in the book).
- What are the effects of this problem?
- What solutions do the characters try? What challenges do they face?
- What is missing or left out?
- In what ways does the book challenge common perceptions about gender inequality and its solutions?

Atkins, J., *Aani and the Tree Huggers*, Lee & Low books, 2000 – Young Aani and other women in her village defend their forest from developers by wrapping their arms around the trees.

Chin-Lee, C., *Amelia to Zora: Twenty-Six Women Who Changed the World*, Charlesbridge Pub. Inc, 2005 – An introduction to 26 diverse, 20th-century women who have made a difference in such varied fields as the arts, sports, journalism, science, and entertainment.

Favilli, E. and Cavallo, F., *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*, Timbuktu Labs, 2016 – Crowdfunded by Kickstarter, this children's book contains 100 bedtime stories about the life of 100 extraordinary women past and present, illustrated by 60 female artists from all over the world.

Kohn, C. and Delgado, F., *¡Sí, Se Puede! Yes, We Can!: Janitor Strike in L.A.*, Cinco Puntos Press, 2009 – A bilingual fictional story set against the backdrop of the successful janitors' strike in Los Angeles in 2000.

Novola, C., *Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai*, Frances Foster, 2008 – The story of one woman's effort to change the fate of her land by teaching many to care for it.

Ross, M., *16 Fearless activists*, Chicago Review Press, 2015 – A realistic look at the game-changing decisions, high stakes and bold actions of women and girls around the world working to improve their personal situations and the lives of others.

Shetterly, M., *Hidden Figures*, Young Readers' Edition, Harper Collins, 2016 – The true story of four African-American female mathematicians at NASA who helped achieve some of the greatest moments in the US space programme.

Striking Women.org., *Striking Women, Striking Out, Jayaben Desai 1933–2010*, Matters of the Earth, 2016 – Online graphic novel about Jayaben Desai, a prominent leader of the strikers in the Grunwick dispute in London in 1976.

Winter, J., *The World is not a Rectangle*, Simon & Schuster, released in August 2017 – Non-fiction picture book about Zaha Hadid, the famed architect, her life and triumph over adversity.

Winter, J., *Malala A Brave Girl from Pakistan/Iqbal A Brave Boy from Pakistan*, Simon & Schuster, 2015 – Two brave young heroes of Pakistan who stood up for the right to freedom and education

Winter, J., *Nasreen's Secret School*, Beach Lane Books, 2009 – On empowering young girls through education in Afghanistan.

Winter, J., *The Librarian of Basra*, HMH Books for Young Readers, 2005 – The true story of a librarian's struggle to save her community's priceless collection of books and a reminder of how, throughout the world, the love of literature and the respect for knowledge don't know any boundaries.

The GLP [World Book Day resource](#) offers further guidance and lists of stories with a global dimension.

Activity 1: WikiProject 'Women in Red'

In November 2014, just over 15% of the English Wikipedia's biographies were about women.

WikiProject 'Women in Red' hopes to redress this imbalance by increasing information about notable women by turning red links (links to a page that has not yet been created) into blue ones (a completed page). You can find out [more information about the Women in Red WikiProject here](#).

Women in Red have brought the figure up to 17.4% as of early January 2018. But that means, according to Wikidata Human Gender Indicators ([WHGI](#)), that only 263,000 out of 1,513,000 biographies are about women.

Women in Red holds focused 'Edit-a-thons' (events that both aim to grow the number of female editors and add women who deserve to be recognised to Wikipedia) each month that anyone can join.

You can listen to this [BBC interview on the Wiki Gender gap](#) on *Women's Hour* (from 16:30 mins).

Starter

Discuss how many pupils know about, and use, Wikipedia. How have they used it?

You could use this overview of [how to make contributions to Wikipedia](#) and show pupils some videos of contributors talking about the impact their contributions have had.

Main activity

Choosing global women to add to Wikipedia

Ask pupils to choose from the red links on [BBC 100 Women Laureates](#) or from Global Citizen's [12 female activists you didn't know are changing the world](#).

Discuss sources

Ask pupils how they can find out more about these women? Are we able to get in touch with them and ask them questions to inform our Wiki page?

Here is some [help with identifying reliable sources](#).

Research

Get pupils to work in groups to research and gather sources on the woman they chose.

Write your article – How to become a Wikipedia editor

[Watch this video](#) with your pupils to help them become Wikipedia editors. Then, follow the following steps:

1. Create an account on Wikipedia and log in – you could set up a class account.
2. Your person of choice has to be someone notable, e.g. have done something important. Ask your pupils first to reflect on what 'important' means and agree on some criteria (global impact, achievements, fighting for social justice, for a more just a sustainable world, etc.)

3. Check your chosen person is not already listed.
4. Read the guidance on writing your first article:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Your_first_article
5. Sources: books, studies, online links YES! Celeb mags, blogs, gossip NO!
6. No copy/paste – use your own words.
7. Save and submit.

Let us know about your success! Email us at glp@pearson.com to share your articles once they've been published.

Activity 2: What about the library?¹

This activity enables teachers to investigate the books pupils can access in their school library. Through being on the library shelves, books are being recommended to the pupils by the school. The library audit gives teachers an overview, enabling them to determine which books provide a balanced view of the world, locally and globally.

You could inspire your pupils with the story of 11-year-old Marley Dias. Her [#1000blackgirlbooks appeal](#) grew from her frustration of only being given stories 'about white boys and their dogs'. She started her own collection of books with representations of black girls. Take a look at this [list of books featuring black girls](#).

Download the [RISC's 'What about the library?' activity](#).

Start by considering the extent to which the books:

- reflect both traditional and contemporary lives, urban and rural environments, rich and poor and those in between, in all continents
- emphasise similarities and acknowledge differences between people and places
- celebrate the contributions and achievements of both women and men, and from societies around the world.

RISC suggest an audit of the whole library. To mark International Women's Day, you could ask pupils to look at the non-fiction section, and compare the number of biographies of men and women.

Idea for further activities:

Key Stage 2: Make a list of missing biographies of women and ask the school to buy them or fundraise for them.

Key Stages 2/3: [#BeBoldForChange](#) Follow IWD 2018's theme and write a persuasive letter to your school's librarian or head teacher to convince them to buy more books about women.

¹ Activity based on RISC's How do we know it's working? <http://www.risc.org.uk/toolkit>