

After reading EXCEPT WHEN THEY DON'T out loud, try these writing/discussion activities with your students:

1. Make a list of "boy" stereotypes and "girl" stereotypes. Then write a story with a main character who does not fit with these gender stereotypes. Maybe you will write a story about a girl who is a football star, or a boy who has the lead role in a ballet. Maybe you will write about a boy who loves wearing necklaces to school, or a girl whose favorite toys are cars. Remember: your character should have lots of sides to his or her personality, just like every real person does! A girl who loves football might also love pink and be great at math and have five pet cats. A boy who loves wearing necklaces might also be the president of the school student government and play soccer at recess and play the drums in the school band.

2. Can you think of a time in your own life when you felt like you couldn't do something because of your gender? Maybe you couldn't get the sparkly red shoes at the shoe store because they were "girl shoes." Or maybe you couldn't sign up for wrestling because "that's for boys." Or if you can't think of a memory like that, imagine that you have a friend coming to you with a secret. Your friend wants to paint his nails, but he is embarrassed to ask his mom to borrow her nail polish, because nail polish is just for girls. Or maybe your friend wants to cut her hair really short, but she is worried everyone will say she has a "boy" haircut. What advice would you give your friend? How could you help?

3. Imagine that you are the owner of a toy store. There are dolls, tea sets, trucks, trains, markers, robots...every toy you can imagine. What if a customer came up to you and said, "I want to buy presents for a little girl and a little boy. Can you give me some advice?" What questions would you ask the customer? How would you decide which toys to recommend?

4. Starting in elementary school, sports teams are usually separated by gender. There are girls soccer teams and boys soccer teams, girls basketball teams and boys basketball teams. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea? Why?

5. Imagine 100 kids (50 boys, 50 girls) growing up with human parents and 100 kids (50 boys, 50 girls) growing up with alien parents. The alien parents just arrived on earth and don't know about our human gender stereotypes. Do you think the kids raised by aliens would grow up wearing different types of clothes and liking different activities than the kids raised by human parents? Why or why not?