Words Shape Roles

Read how everyday wording can shape expectations about gender.

S.5.3 "Examine how language can reflect and reinforce traditional gender roles."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words that suggest who belongs in a role, and circle actions that may show how those words affect people's choices or participation.

The Career Fair Signs

1. At the school career fair, students could try short tasks from several jobs. A flyer invited "future engineers and their wives" to visit the bridge-building booth. At the same table, a volunteer told a group, "Every engineer should bring his design to the judges." No rule kept girls from joining, and several girls built bridges. Still, one student asked why the flyer seemed to picture engineers as husbands. Another wondered whether "his" was meant to include everyone. The volunteer had copied the words from an old event script without thinking about who might feel addressed.

2. Across the room, the health-care booth needed people to plan a response to a pretend emergency. Its sign read, "Girls, be our caring helpers. Boys, take charge of the rescue team." A girl who wanted to direct the team paused, then signed up to hand out supplies. A boy who wanted to comfort the pretend patient joined the rescue team instead. Neither student was told to switch tasks. The sign did not describe every student's interests, but both students saw it before choosing. Later, the booth organizer replaced it with "Choose a role: team leader, care partner, or supply coordinator."

3. During a planning meeting after the fair, students discussed how to invite more volunteers next year. When Maya proposed a new schedule, one classmate called her "bossy." Minutes later, Leo made a similar proposal, and the same classmate called him "a natural leader." Maya spoke less for the rest of the meeting, though Leo kept offering ideas. The group wrote down both proposals. Before printing next year's announcements, the students decided to check whether their descriptions matched people's actions or depended on who was speaking. They also asked volunteers to review signs before putting them up.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What assumption about engineers do “future engineers and their wives” and “his design” suggest? How does another detail in the paragraph challenge that assumption?

2. How might the health-care sign reinforce gender roles even though no one had to follow it? Use both students' choices as evidence.

3. Maya and Leo made similar proposals. How did the different descriptions of them frame their actions, and what happened next?

4. How does the replacement health-care sign change which students might see each role as an option?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a neighborhood cooking class. Write a two-sentence announcement that assigns different tasks to girls and boys, rewrite it without gender rules, then explain in two sentences how the first version might affect students' choices.

Words Shape Roles

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline words that suggest who belongs in a role, and circle actions that may show how those words affect people's choices or participation. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What assumption about engineers do “future engineers and their wives” and “his design” suggest? How does another detail in the paragraph challenge that assumption?	**The wording suggests engineers are men. Several girls built bridges, showing that girls also took part.**
2	How might the health-care sign reinforce gender roles even though no one had to follow it? Use both students' choices as evidence.	**The sign links girls with helping and boys with leading. The girl chose supplies instead of directing, while the boy chose the rescue team instead of comforting the patient.**
3	Maya and Leo made similar proposals. How did the different descriptions of them frame their actions, and what happened next?	**“Bossy” casts Maya's proposal negatively, while “a natural leader” praises Leo's similar action. Maya then spoke less, while Leo kept offering ideas.**
4	How does the replacement health-care sign change which students might see each role as an option?	**It names roles without assigning them to girls or boys, so any student might see any role as an option.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Girls should decorate the cakes. Boys should operate the ovens. Everyone can choose decorating or oven work after safety training. The first announcement presents decorating as girls' work and oven work as boys' work. Students who want the other task might hesitate to try it.

Accept interpretations grounded in the passage that distinguish a suggestion from a rule. For the open task, look for two gender-assigned tasks, a revision open to everyone, and an explanation of how wording could influence choices.