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Gendered Language in the Classroom

LESSON PLAN FOR PRIMARY
YEARS

2021



Gender Action is an award programme that promotes and encourages an educational approach to challenge gender stereotypes. It supports and gives recognition to schools tackling gender stereotypes in their school policies.

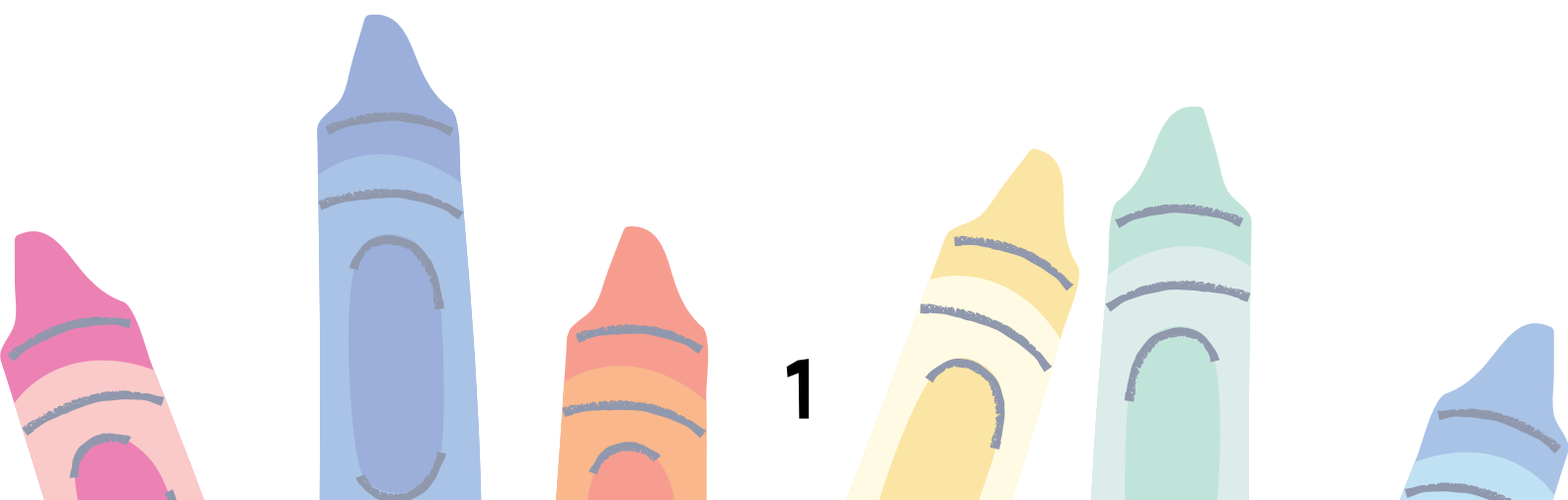
King's College London is a founding partner of Gender Action. As students of King's College London we have created a lesson plan to help schools in their process of achieving the Gender Action charter mark.

Project Overview

Our project focuses on the role of gendered language in the classroom setting. Our goal is to help primary schools assess how gendered their practices are and what gender biases are currently prevalent in the educational environment. It consists of a lesson plan in which:

- (a) Carers can become aware of their own unconscious gender bias when delivering lessons and interacting with children;
- (b) And students perform activities that can help the carer assess their perception of gender and gendered language.

These activities will be a kickstart to support the practitioner adjust/implement further work on gender in the educational setting.





Context

Primary years

At the ages of 3 and 5 years, children begin to focus on all kinds of differences and to develop their own gender identity. Almost immediately, by the age of 7, children are already gender aware.

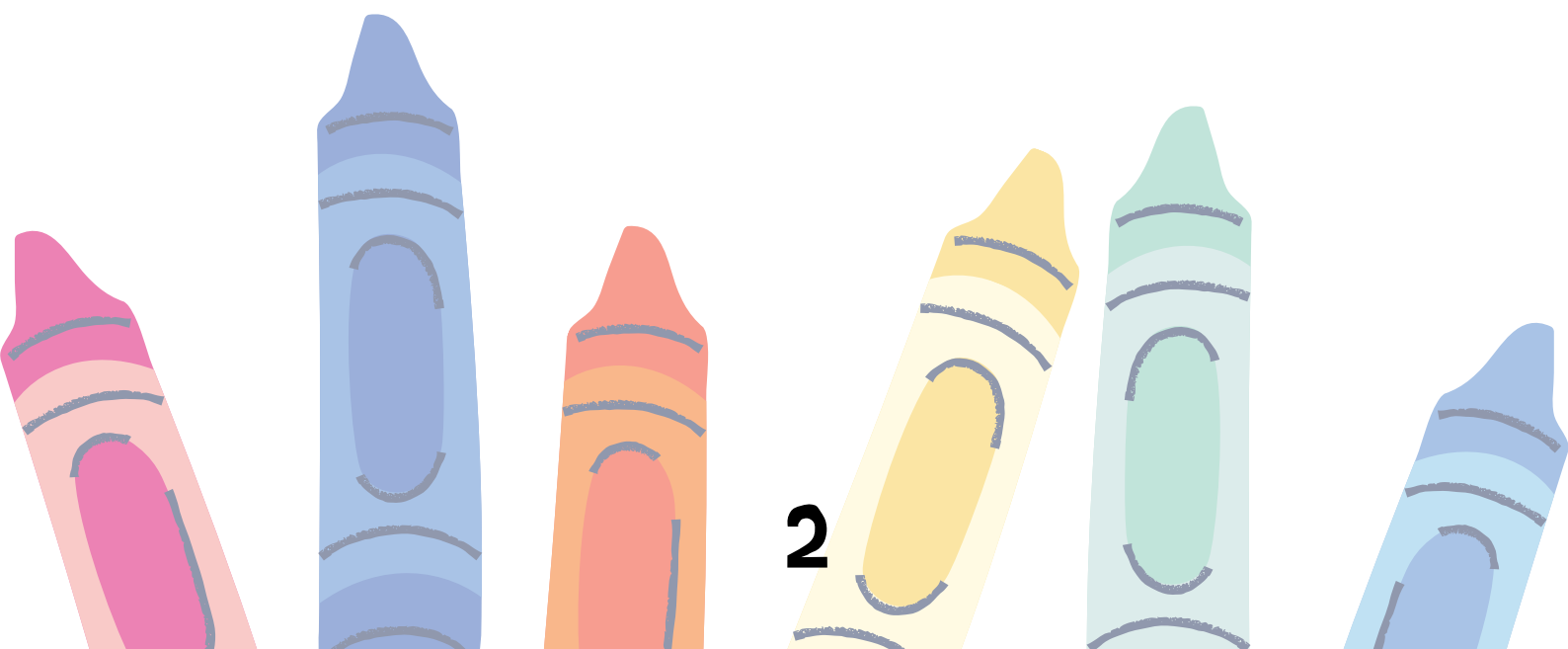
Assessing the prevalent gender awareness that children in primary years may have is key to start tackling the gender stereotypes with which they may grow up with.

Language in the classroom

Most children spend up to 10 hours a day in the educational environment and interacting with teachers.

Imitation and instruction are vital components to children's development and how teachers interact with them will be taken on by the young students.

To start tackling gender stereotypes we have to start by addressing the use of gendered language in teacher-student interactions and classroom materials and activities.



Project ACTION PLAN

The following lesson plan is designed to be carried out over 1-2 weeks beginning with the teachers' self-assessment and followed by the activities for children.

First, we recommend teachers to carry out the following resources aimed at their personal practice in the classroom.

Observation Checklist

Description: This is an observation checklist for teachers to do a first assessment on how gendered is their language and attitudes in the classroom.

Instructions: If you feel comfortable, record yourself during class. Tick the observation checklist according to your personal practice in the recording. Bare in mind the results for the next self-assessment activity.

If you feel uncomfortable recording yourself you can ask a colleague to observe one of your classes, fill in the personal practice survey.

Personal Practice Survey

Description: This is a self-assessment questionnaire to monitor and evaluate your own practices.

Instructions: Having in mind the results from the observational checklist and based on the recording, answer the personal practice survey as honestly as possible about how you use gendered language in the classroom setting.

Repeat after finishing all the activities with the children to see if the results have changed! We also encourage you to repeat these two activities regularly to monitor your own practice.



Once educators assess their own gender biases, they can start working with children while being mindful of how they approach concepts and activities.

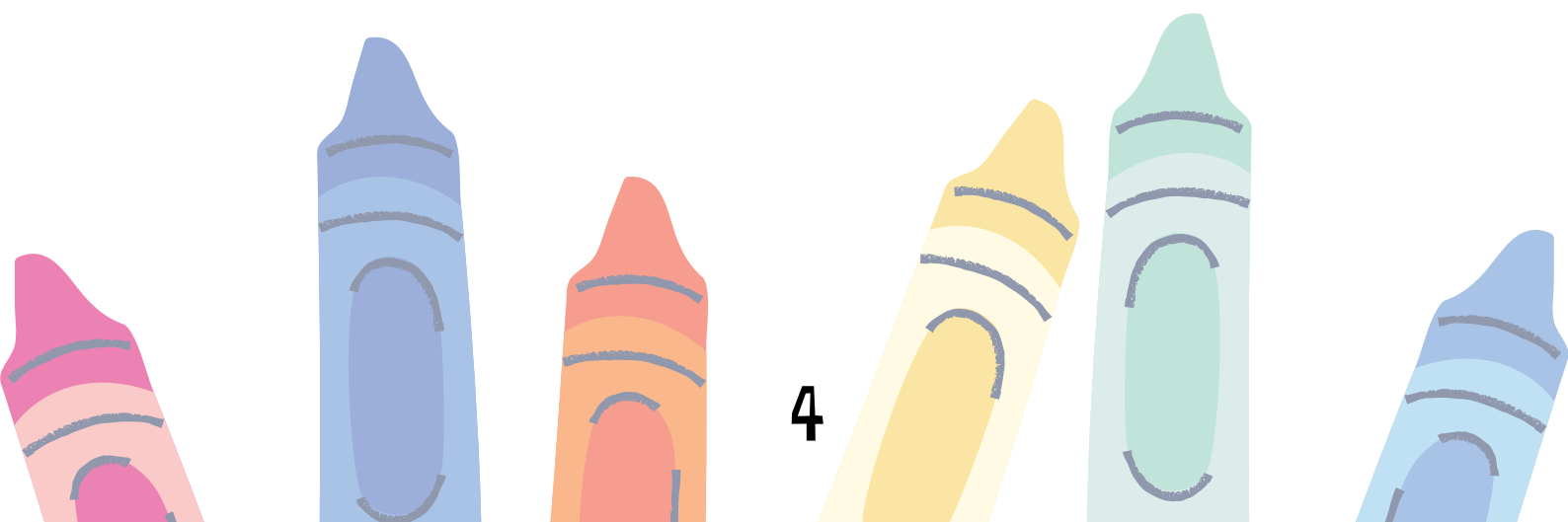
Adjectives

Description: The purpose of this activity is to get an initial idea on how much the children already associate certain adjectives to a specific gender. This activity can be carried out during circle time or at home with carers.

Instructions: Read out loud the following adjectives: sensitive, gentle, strong, kind, clever, brave. For each adjective ask the children to first raise their hands if they believe it's a 'girl thing', then if they believe it is a 'boy thing', or finally if it applies to both. Write down the results. We recommend using online spreadsheets such as Microsoft Excel to make the data processing and sharing easier.

Next steps: To further the discussion carers can use the following questions:

- Why do you think 'x' adjective is a girl/boy/all thing?
- Is this always true or are there cases in which this is different?
- Can you think of examples of how 'x' adjective applies to everyone?



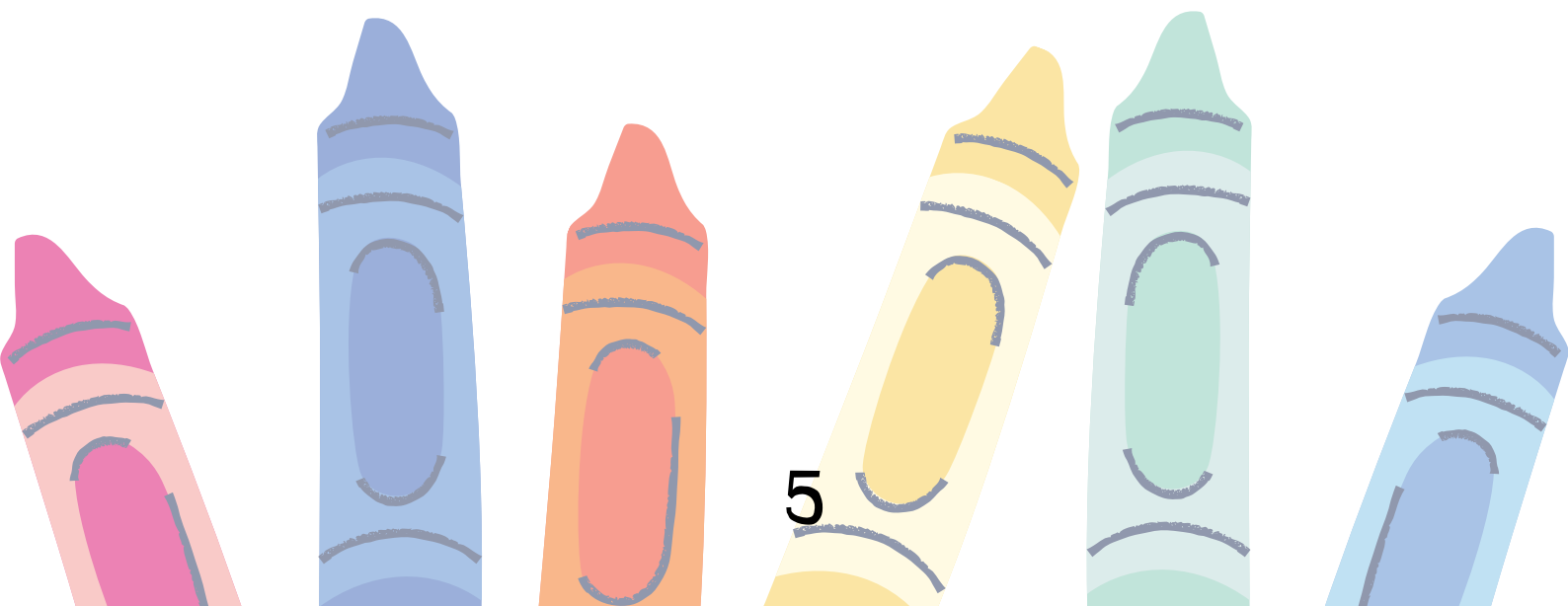
Animal Worksheets

Description: The purpose of this activity is to see if the association of the adjectives used in the previous activity to a certain gender influences how children perceive living things – animals in this case. The activity is divided in two, each one of them should be carried out in different days to avoid students from being influenced by the first activity

Instructions:

1. The first activity shows the name of animals without adjectives. Instruct the children to look at the animals. Which ones do they think are female and which ones male? Ask them to cross the name of those they think are boys. Circle the ones they think are girls. And do nothing if they think they can be both. Invite the children to colour the animals when they are done!
2. The second activity shows the name of the same animals with some of the adjectives used in the 'adjectives activity'. Ask them to repeat the same instructions as in Activity 1.

Next steps: To end these activities carers can play children the following audiobook which challenges gender stereotypes using animals: [How to be a lion](#) by Ed Vere (If the link does not work, the audiobook is available on YouTube by searching the name of the book)



Drawing Activities

Description: The purpose of these activities is to assess how children perceive themselves, and what their understandings of gender are. There is flexibility as to how this activity is carried out. The children can complete the drawings individually at home, sitting only near children of their gender or someone of an opposite gender. These activities should be carried out on a different day as the previous activities. It is up to the educator to carry out the three drawing activities on the same day or different days.

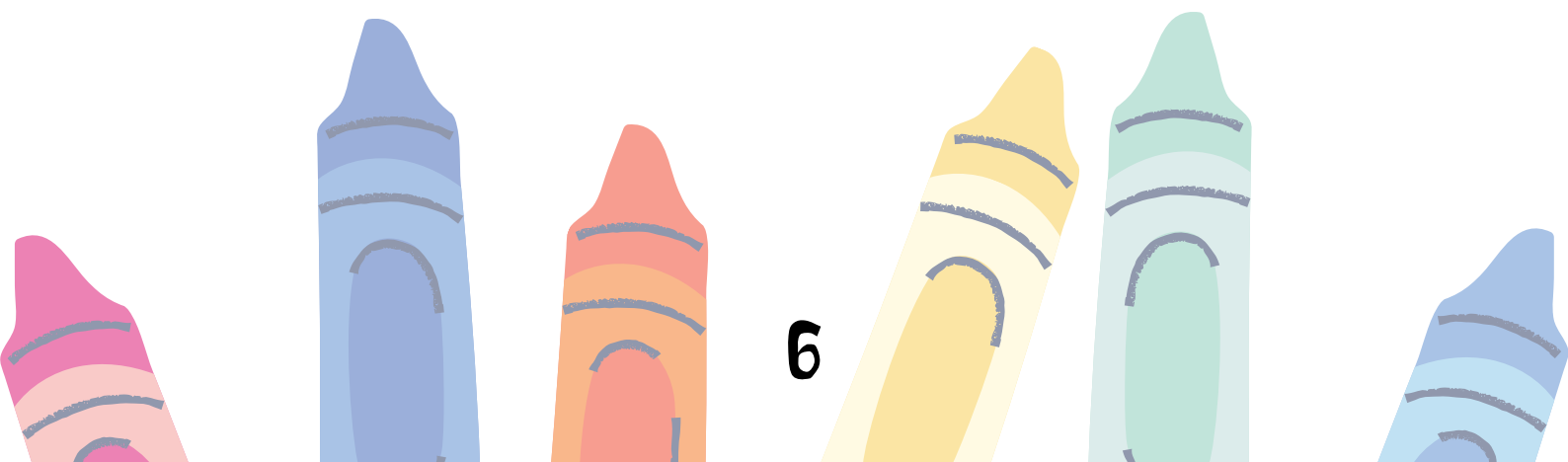
Instructions:

1. In the first activity, the children are given three boxes in which to draw a gender-neutral person, a boy and a girl.
2. In the second activity, a larger space is provided to draw themselves.
3. In the third activity, ask the children to decorate the outline of a snow person, and ask them what gender their snow person is.

Next steps: To further the activity prompt children to tell you why they drew each person, themselves and the snow figure the way they did.

Classroom Displays

Description: The purpose of this activity is to create resources for the classroom setting to reinforce the message that adjectives can be associated with all genders. It is recommended that everyone in the classroom participates in the activity together.



Instructions: On each of the six adjectives provided, there are three boxes to be decorated by the children. Read the adjectives aloud with the class, and ensure the children understand the meaning. Pictures have been provided to help young children understand the meaning. The boxes can be cut out and stuck around the classroom individually, or all three of the set can be kept together on the A4 sheet to be displayed.

Use any materials – e.g. colouring pencils crayons or paint. Let the kids use their creativity!

The displays can also be used as prompts by educators to go back to and initiate discussions. The phrases on the displays can also be used to ask children how they would enact or portray these phrases.



Once these resources are completed we recommend that the educator/school/carer goes to the [Gender Action Award website](#) for further steps and resources to tackle their gender stereotypes.



Resources for Teachers



Self-assessment & Evaluation





How gendered is your classroom?

Observation Checklist

Check the boxes that apply to your personal practice in the classroom

- Do you address children differently? – e.g. boys as 'mate' or girls as 'sweetie'.
- Do you interact more with one gender than the other?
- Do you ask boys and girls to perform different tasks? – e.g. ask boys to move desks, and girls to clear up.
- Are sanctions different for boys and girls?
- Do you address students as 'girls and boys' or something that includes all of them? – e.g. folks, children
- Have you ever made gender assumptions about roles and professions? – e.g. "can you ask mummy to sign the form?" or "did you go see the doctor so that *he* could tell you what's wrong?"
- Do you have books that challenge gender stereotypes?
- Is there anything in your classroom that reinforces gender stereotypes – e.g. "boys' toys" or "girls' cloakroom" signs.

Personal Practice Survey.

Please answer the following series of questions about your use of gendered language in the classroom



What gender do you identify as?

What is the classroom ratio of girls to boys?

Do you treat boys and girls differently? How?

Are there words that you use only for girls? Which ones?

Are there words that you use only for boys? Which ones?

Who do you interact more with?

Are there certain activities that you encourage girls or boys to do?
Which ones?

Do you use gender neutral language to address the children? How?

Do you split the children up based on gender?

Do you tell children off differently based on their gender?

Have you considered your use of gendered language before?

Are you surprised by your answers?

Resources for lesson delivery

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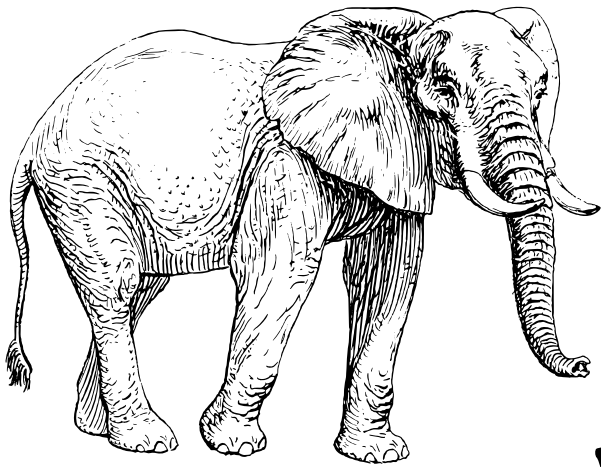
Activities & Hand-outs



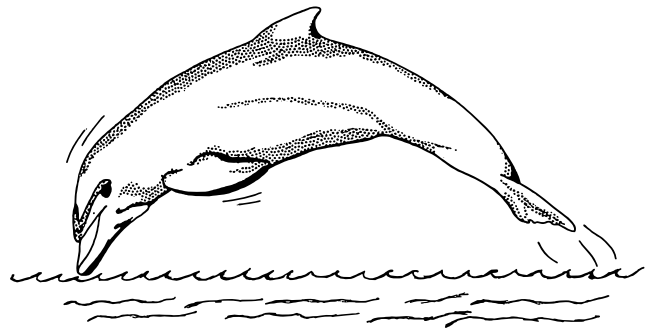
ANIMAL KINGDOM

Activity 1.

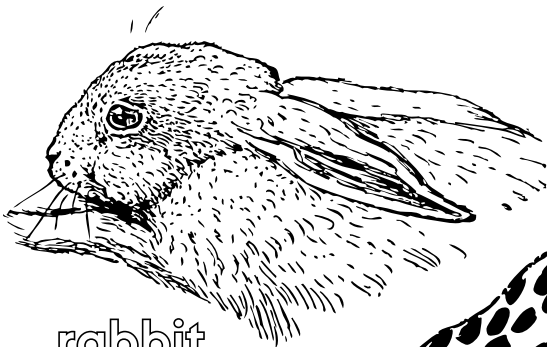
Look at these animals. Circle the name of the animal you think are girls. Cross the name of the ones you think are boys. And leave them blank if you think they can be both. Feel free to colour them when you are done!



elephant



dolphin



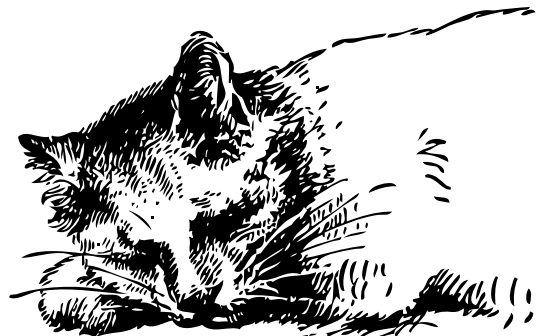
rabbit



giraffe



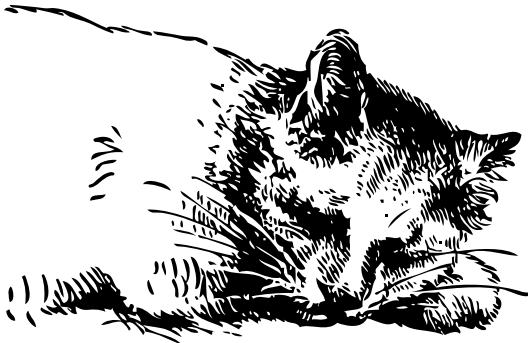
Bear



cat

Activity 2.

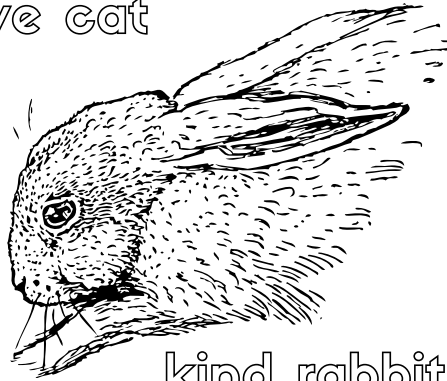
Look at these animals. Circle the name of the animal you think are girls. Cross the name of the ones you think are boys. And leave them blank if you think they can be both. Feel free to colour them when you are done!



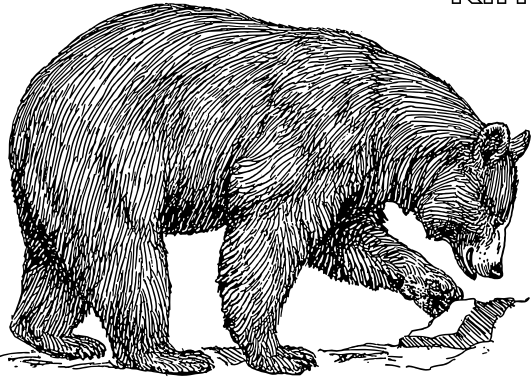
sensitive cat



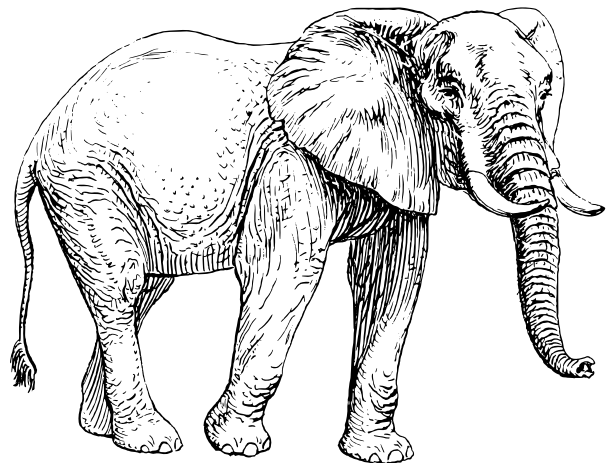
clever giraffe



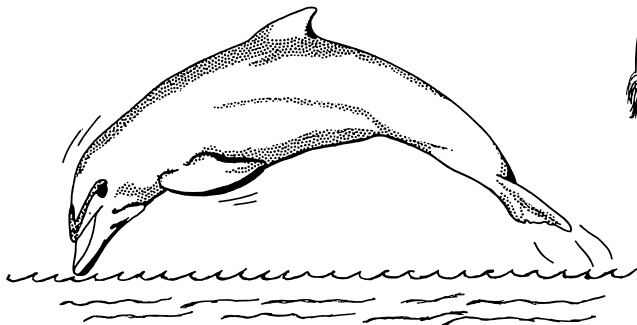
kind rabbit



gentle bear



strong elephant



brave dolphin

Name _____

Date _____

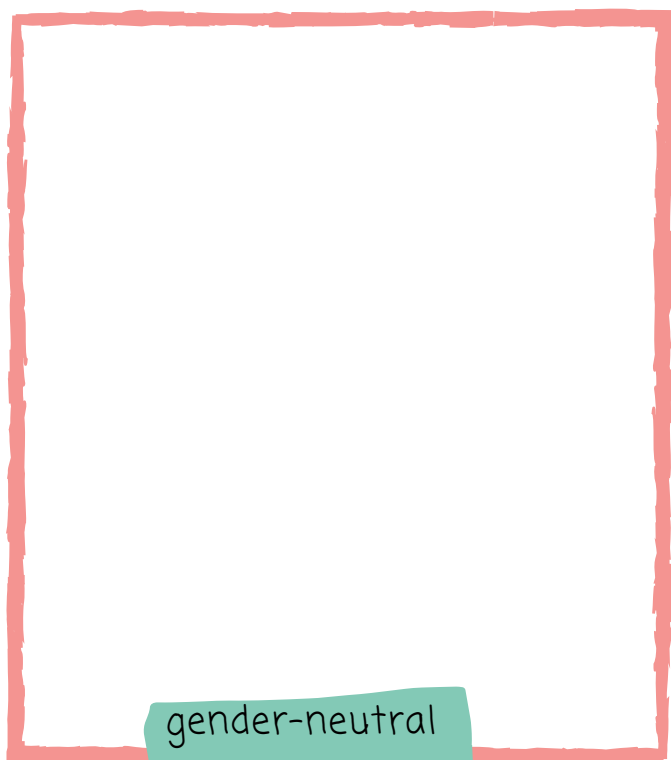
Age _____

Teacher _____

WHO ARE WE?

Activity 1.

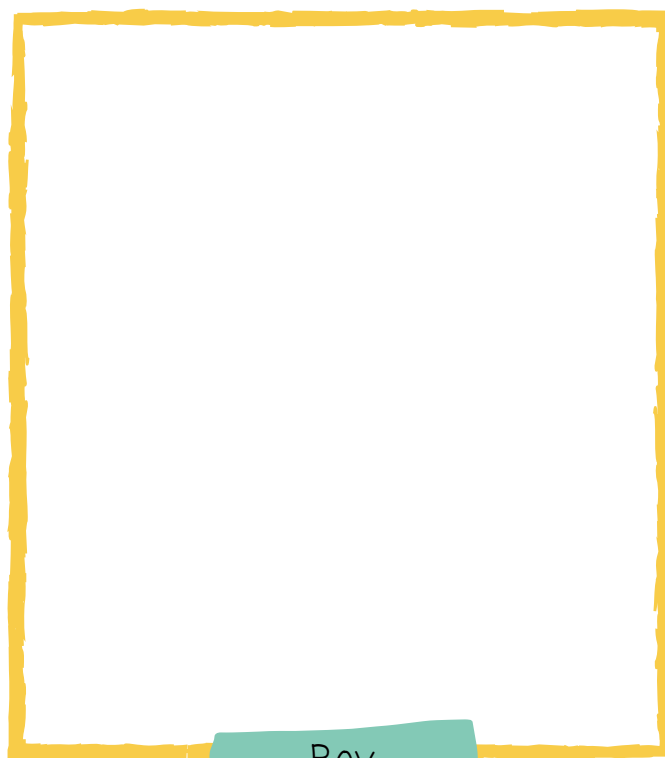
Use the outlines below to draw a gender-neutral person, a boy, and a girl. You can use any materials – e.g. pencils, crayons or paint. Use your imagination!



gender-neutral
person



Girl



Boy

Name _____

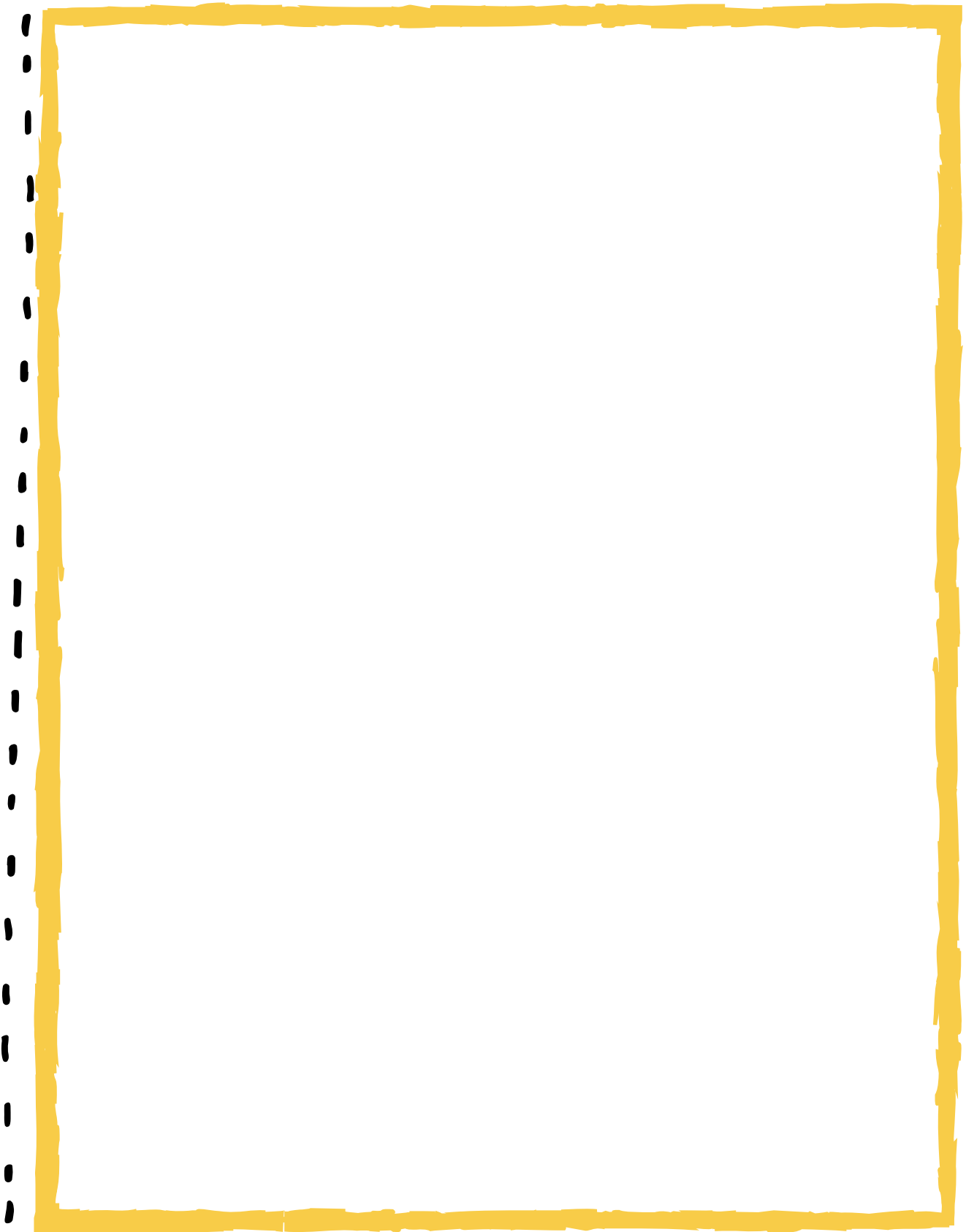
Date _____

Age _____

Teacher _____

Activity 2.

Use this outline to draw yourself!



Name _____

Date _____

Age _____

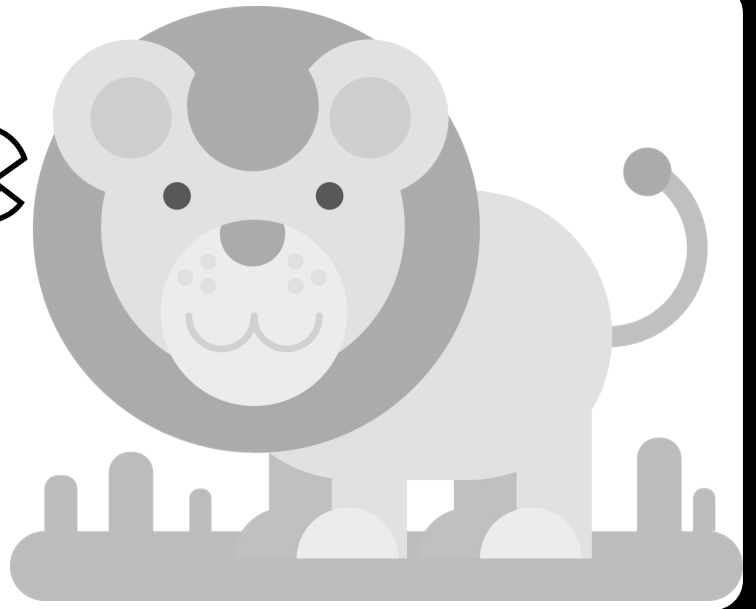
Teacher _____

Activity 3.

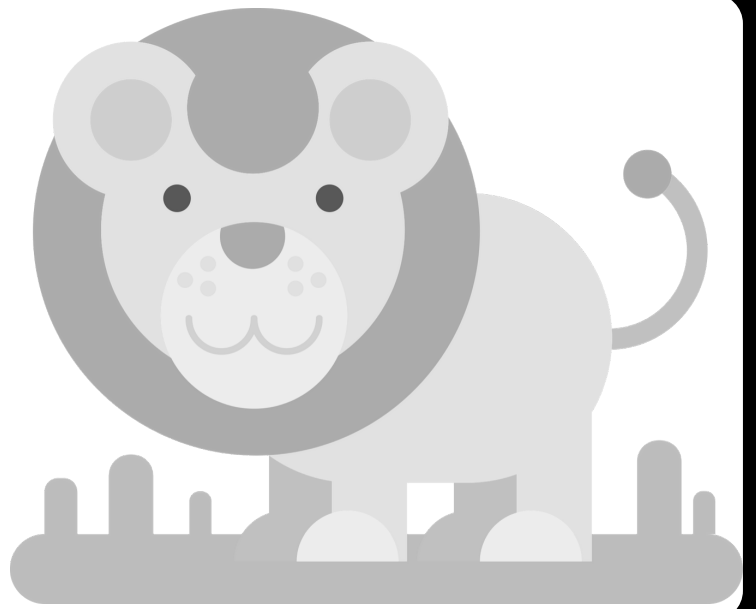
Use this outline to draw yourself as a snow figure! Use your imagination!



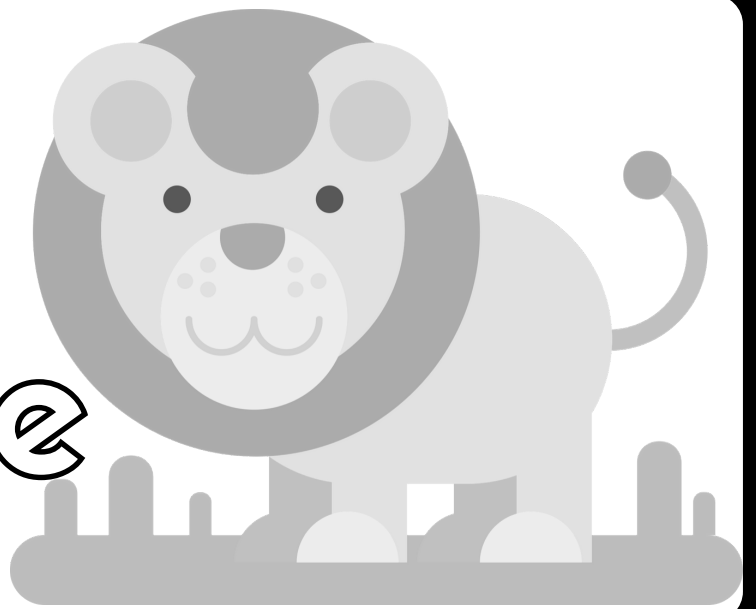
girls are
brave



boys are
brave



we are
all brave





boys are
clever



girls are
clever



we are all
clever

boys
are
kind



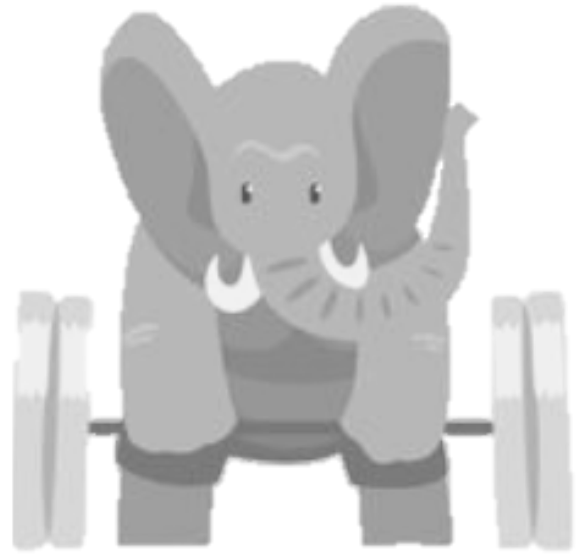
girls
are
kind



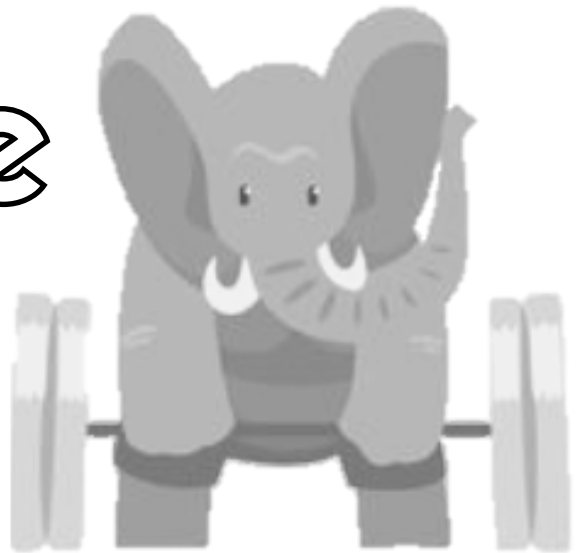
we
are all
kind



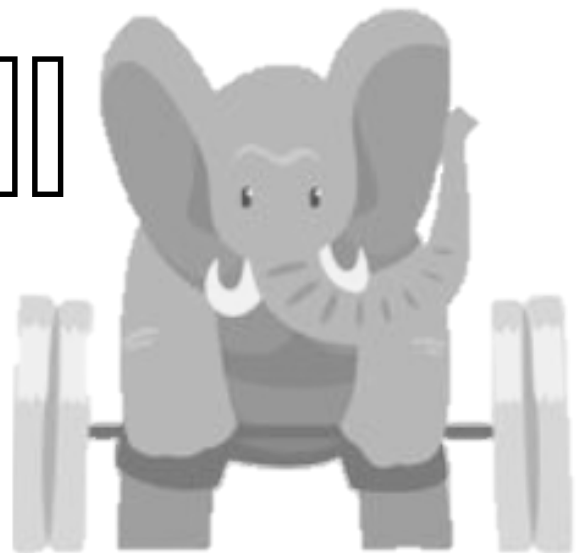
girls are
strong



boys are
strong



we are all
strong



boys are
gentle



girls are
gentle



we are
all
gentle



boys are
sensitive



girls are
sensitive



we are all
sensitive

