

Lesson Plan

Lesson Title: Gender, Bias, and Fairness in School Sports

Time: 90-120 minutes

Materials: STATE, by Melissa Isaacson; Discussion, Research, Writing Topics; Social-Emotional Learning Questions; Character Development Organizer; Gender Equity in Sports Timeline Organizer; End-of-Book Assessment; End-of-Book Assessment Answer Key; Title IX Milestones; Further Reading List

Lesson Objectives:

- Analyze the theme of the text and study how that theme is developed throughout the story.
- Determine how characters changed and developed over the course of the story.
- Reflect on the topic through the text, personal experience, and background knowledge.

Standard Alignments:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- AASL: Learners display curiosity and initiative by: 1. Formulating questions about a personal interest or a curricular topic. 2. Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.
- C3 Framework for Social Studies: D2. His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

Focus Activity: On the whiteboard, draw four columns. Write “boys” at the top of one column, “girls” on top of a second column, “non-binary” at the top of a third column, and “everyone” on top of the fourth column. Ask the class: “In society, some customs are based on gender. What is a rule or tradition that mostly only girls are supposed to follow? What is a rule or tradition that mostly only boys are supposed to follow? Are there rules or traditions that apply to people who identify as non-binary? What are some rules or traditions that have no relation to gender at all, and that everyone is supposed to follow?” Write volunteers’ answers on the board.

Next, write the word “bias” on the board, and define it: “Bias is a typically unfair prejudice for or against a person, group, or idea.” Then ask: “Do you think the rules or traditions on the board are biased?”

Teach:

- Introduce the author: Melissa Isaacson was one of the first girls allowed to compete in high school athletics at the same level as boys. She then went on to become a sports journalist, covering Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls during their championship period.
 - Question to consider: This was an unusual job for a woman at that time. What kinds of bias do you think Isaacson faced in sports reporting?
- Prepare students to determine the theme of the story by having them note the more concrete details such as characters, setting, and plot as they read. Explain that these are stepping-stones to determining a story's theme.
 - Some main characters: Missy (author, student during the story), Shirley, Peggy, Connie (teammates), Mrs. Mulder (first coach), Mr. Earl (second coach)
 - Setting: high school in suburban Chicago, 1975-1979; Title IX had recently been passed
 - Plot: a high school's girls' basketball team wins the state championship
- Remind students that a book's theme is a message for readers, and it is developed throughout the story. Study the theme of bias and fairness in *STATE*. Engage students in discussion about this theme in the context of girls' and boys' high school athletics. Note the following turning points and discuss their significance:
 - Title IX is passed.
 - Niles West High School's first girls' basketball team is formed.
 - Girls compete against another school for the first time.
 - Girls are allowed to practice in "boys' gym" and use weight room.
 - Female coach resigns and is replaced with male coach.
 - Team wins state championship.

Guided Practice:

- Working together as a class, complete the Gender Equity in Sports Timeline Organizer comparing boys' and girls' athletics over time.
- Refer to this organizer as you discuss Title IX. What do students know about it? How would things be different without it?
- Have students work in pairs to choose one character from the book and discuss how this character developed over the course of the story in relation to the theme. Use the Character Development Organizer. Ask volunteers to share their answers.

Independent Practice: Assign students to write 3–4 paragraphs about how the characters in *STATE* are treated based on gender. Include examples from the story. Discuss your feelings about this, whether it's fair or biased, and how treatment of athletes has changed between the time this story took place and today.

Closure: Discuss what progress still needs to be made for athletes of all genders to be treated equally. On the board, list a few changes students hope to see in the future.

(Suggestions: equal treatment, respect, pay, stadiums/facilities, sponsorship, coverage in the media.)

Quiz: End-of-Book Assessment.

Extension Activities: Discussion, Research, Writing Topics; Social-Emotional Learning Questions; Title IX Milestones; Further Reading List.