The following module introduces students to concepts of media literacy and gender socialization, as well as the ways in which media shapes our culture. *The Mask You Live In* documentary instructional clips are used to expose students to concepts of how American culture shapes ideas around what it means to be a boy or man.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Pay conscious attention to the way media represents boys and men.
- Define key terminology relating to concepts of gender socialization including gender identities, stereotyping, masculinity, and femininity.
- Identify positive representations of male characters in film and television.
- Understand that when representations of boys and men are repeated over time, they can become accepted as reality.
- Understand how gender identities are shaped by society and culture.
**Key Vocabulary**

**Gender Identity** - A person’s private sense of and experience with being a boy or man, girl, or woman, or a gender that may or may not correspond with the individual’s biological sex.

**Stereotype** - A generalization, usually exaggerated or oversimplified and often offensive that is used to describe or distinguish a group or an individual from that group.

**Social Construction** - Social phenomena that are created, institutionalized, and made into tradition by communities. Over time, these constructs become accepted as reality.

**Manhood** - Being a man, male maturity.

**Maleness** - Characteristics of a male person.

**Masculine** - Exhibiting characteristics associated with being male.

**Feminine** - Exhibiting characteristics associated with being female.

**Reactive** - Showing a response to a stimulus.

**Gender Differences** - Presumed differences between males and females.

**Bifurcate** - To divide into two branches.

**Hyper-masculinity** - Exhibiting fanatical or obsessive characteristics associated with being male.

**Hyper-femininity** - Exhibiting fanatical or obsessive characteristics associated with being female.

**Introducing Terms**

(The Representation Project Definition)

“BEYOND THE MASK”

An action or behavior that exposes and expands the narrow definition of what it means to be a man.
WHAT YOU WILL NEED

THE MASK YOU LIVE IN INSTRUCTIONAL CLIPS

*Man Up: Masculinity is a Performance*

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

#BeyondTheMask Quiz

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS CAN BE FOUND AT THE END OF THIS UNIT

SUPPLIES

Student Journals
Pens

ADDITIONAL

Key Vocabulary Terms
Resource List (therepresentationproject.org)
OBJECTIVES
The purpose of this lesson is for students to identify positive representations of male characters in film, television, and video games. Students begin to understand that when representations of boys and men are repeated over time, they can become accepted as reality.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN
ASK your students to go online to therepresentationproject.org to complete the #BeyondTheMask quiz and rank male characters. If students do not have web access, they can complete the hard copy of the quiz located in the supplementary materials.

REMIND your students that media teaches us about gender identities.

ASK YOUR STUDENTS
Ask your students what the media teaches us about men.

Ask them to think about the ways their male character is represented and how that informs gender identities.

1) Do you know the definition of the term “gender identity?”
2) What does the media teach us about men’s identities?
3) Is the male character you selected a leader?
4) How did he obtain his leadership position?
5) Does he have a family? Children?
6) Is he the sole provider for his family? Is he affectionate towards his children? His spouse or partner?
7) How does he overcome difficult experiences that occur in his life?
8) Who does he go to when he experiences difficulties?
9) Does he solve the problem alone or with the help of others?

FACILITATE
Have your students identify a male character that they have seen either in television or in film.

Review the quiz responses with your students.

Have students think about the ways their male character is represented and how that informs gender identities.

Have students share their characters. Are there commonalities in the ways these males address difficulties? Do students respond to difficult situations in similar ways to their characters?

What does the character teach them about male norms? How are males to behave according to the character?

Did your students find any of the characters’ actions to be stereotypical?

Have they seen any films or television shows recently that stereotyped men and boys? Women and girls?

If they found the character to be stereotypical, did this make them feel uncomfortable? Why or why not?

Share available resources with your students.
#BEYONDTHEMASK QUIZ: GRADING MALE CHARACTERS AS ROLE MODELS

**FAVORITE CHARACTER’S NAME:**

---

**FILM OR TELEVISION SHOW HE IS IN:**

---

**QUESTIONS [CHECK ALL THAT APPLY]**

- The male character is open about his feelings.
- The male character nurtures those around him.
- The male character is affectionate.
- The male character does NOT use violence to solve his problems unless it is in self-defense.
- The male character does NOT use drugs and/or alcohol to numb his pain.
- The male character does NOT pressure, coerce, or intimidate his sexual partners.
- The male character does NOT get his sense of worth from dominance or aggression.
- The male character is a person of color or underrepresented minority and is not reduced to a racial stereotype.
- The male character has a disability but isn’t defined by that disability.
- The male character is gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, or transgender and is not reduced to a stereotype.

(Everything is worth one point and there are ten points possible)
Your favorite male character received a C. He has some work to do to positively represent manhood.

3 OR 4 POINTS

Congratulations, your favorite male character received an A! This male character positively represents manhood because he is caring, affectionate, and doesn’t use violence to solve problems.

7+ POINTS

Nice work, your favorite male character received a B! This male character does a good job of representing positive ways to be a male character.

5 OR 6 POINTS

Sadly, the male character got a D. Although he may be entertaining, he probably needs to be less violent or stop using drugs and alcohol to solve his problems.

1 OR 2 POINTS

Unfortunately this character gets an F because he fails to positively represent masculinity. He probably relies on aggression and dominance to accomplish his goals.

0 POINTS