English 11/English 11 O_2

Gender-Based Violence and Bystander Intervention
Teacher's Guide

NOVA SCOTIA
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English 11/English 11 O_2: Gender-Based Violence and Bystander Intervention Teacher's Guide

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Prepared by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

This is the most recent version of the current curriculum materials as used by teachers in Nova Scotia.

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Introduction and Purpose of the Guide

This guide supports the implementation of new English Language Arts outcomes in grades 10 to 12 that focus on gender-based violence (GBV), power, consent, intersectionality, and bystander intervention (BI) education. These outcomes are grounded in Recommendation C.17 of the Mass Casualty Commission, which calls for province-wide implementation of curriculum addressing gender-based violence and bystander intervention. Nova Scotia is responding to this recommendation by ensuring that all students from Primary to Grade 12 have opportunities to learn how to recognize, prevent, and respond to gender-based violence and related harms in developmentally appropriate ways.

In high school English Language Arts courses, this work takes the form of critical engagement with texts. Students examine how gender norms and power dynamics are constructed and reinforced through language and media. They explore how societal systems and cultural forces contribute to or challenge gender-based violence and reflect on bystander behaviour and social responsibility. Through literature, media, and class discussion, students develop critical literacy, empathy, and ethical reasoning.

Given the nature of this content, teachers should take care to get to know their students to establish trust in the classroom before beginning this work. Some students may have lived experience with trauma or violence, and engaging with this content may lead to strong emotional responses and the need for additional support. While teachers are not expected to be counsellors or trauma specialists, it is important that they be prepared to recognize when a student may need support and how to connect them with the appropriate school-based resources.

This guide includes practical tools for instruction, assessment, and differentiation, as well as important guidance on responding to disclosures. School-wide preparation and collaboration are essential; administrators, school counsellors, and student support teams should be informed when these outcomes are being taught so that wraparound supports are in place.

Resources listed in this guide are intended to support, not prescribe, teaching. Teachers are not required to use specific texts or learning experiences. Suggestions for teaching and learning are to help teachers implement this work in ways that are developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and aligned with curriculum outcomes.

Pedagogical Approach and Core Commitments

The outcomes related to gender-based violence in Grades 10-12 call for a thoughtful, intentional approach to teaching that centers around student well-being, inquiry, and critical thinking. These outcomes are not designed to ask students to share personal experiences or confront trauma, but to equip them with the skills to analyse, question, and reflect on how gender, power, violence, and silence are represented and reinforced in texts and society. This work draws on and reinforces critical literacy, ethical reasoning, and inclusive education.

Critical Literacy

Students are encouraged to read and view texts not only for content but for what is being said, who is saying it, whose voice is missing, and how those messages shape beliefs about gender, power, and harm. This approach supports students in becoming thoughtful and questioning readers, capable of analysing how texts reflect or challenge social norms.

In Practice
Students highlight how a text positions one character as having more control than another and explain how that shapes audience perception.

Culturally Responsive and Inclusive Teaching

A thoughtful approach to these outcomes includes an awareness of how identity, culture, and lived experience shape student perspectives. Students from historically marginalized communities, including Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, 2SLGBTQIA+, and newcomer students, may bring different perspectives and levels of comfort to this learning. It is important to encourage diverse voices while avoiding stereotyping. Teachers should challenge harmful narratives that certain groups "naturally" think or behave a certain way since this reinforces bias rather than inclusion. Teachers are encouraged to:

- Make space for diverse voices and ways of knowing
- Get to know the countries and cultures of their newcomer students
- Reflect on their own positionality
- Use texts that represent a range of identities and experiences

In Practice
A teacher invites students to compare how social norms related to gender differ across communities.

Skill-Based, Not Experience-Based

While the topic of gender-based violence may seem heavy, the focus of these outcomes is not on the details of violence but on the skills students need to question, interpret, and analyse how violence is represented or resisted in text and media. These skills, such as identifying power dynamics, evaluating social norms, or questioning author intent, can be developed through thoughtful discussion and the analysis of texts and media.

In Practice
Students analyse a public service announcement for how it frames consent and bystander roles, without needing to discuss real-world incidents.

Responding to Student Needs

Engaging with these outcomes may surface strong emotional reactions, especially for students who have experienced or witnessed gender-based violence. While the focus of this work is on critical thinking, not personal disclosure, teachers must be prepared to support students in ways that focus on student well-being and are respectful and trauma-aware. See Appendix A for more information on facilitating discussions around gender-based violence.

This section offers practical guidance for creating supportive classroom conditions. Knowing when and how to respond to distress and working collaboratively with school-based supports ensures a trauma-informed approach that prioritizes student well-being while maintaining appropriate boundaries for teachers.

If schools plan to send communication to families or anticipate questions from the community, see Appendix B for suggested language and strategies.

Creating Trauma-Informed Classrooms

Teaching about gender-based violence requires care, flexibility, and attention to student well-being. While teachers are not expected to act as counsellors or trauma specialists, they play a vital role in creating emotionally safe and reflective learning environments. Trauma-informed practice supports all learners, not only those with experiences of harm.

This section provides guidance for establishing a classroom climate that prioritizes respect, agency, and connection, important conditions for meaningful engagement with complex topics.

Guiding Principles

Trauma-informed teaching is based on the belief that:

- All students deserve to feel safe, respected, and in control of their learning.
- Emotional well-being and academic growth are deeply connected.
- Reflection, curiosity, and compassion help create thoughtful and supportive learning spaces.

The focus of this approach is to help students think critically about how gender, power, and violence are represented in texts and media, not on disclosing personal experiences.

Building a Supportive Learning Environment

Creating the right classroom environment is foundational for teaching topics related to gender-based violence. This work depends on trust, consistency and flexibility, and it begins well before a text is read or discussion begins. A safe, reflective space allows students to engage with challenging material without feeling exposed or overwhelmed.

Before instruction begins:

- Co-create classroom norms with students. Include expectations like: "We focus on ideas, not individuals," "Assume good intentions, but also take responsibility for your impact," and "We listen with respect, even when we disagree."
- Delay complex content until you've established routines and relationships.
- Preview texts and give advance notice of content that explores difficult real-world issues, along with structured opportunities for students to engage differently if they feel impacted.
- Set up clear pathways to support (e.g., where students can go for help, how to take a quiet moment, what a check-in looks like).

During instruction:

- Foster emotional well-being by offering multiple ways to engage with learning (e.g., visual responses, journalling, small group work). Framing participation as flexible, rather than optional, helps students stay connected to the learning while supporting their individual needs. Acknowledge emotional responses as valid, while reinforcing expectations around thoughtful participation.
- Use clear, respectful framing language: "This topic may bring up strong feelings. You can reflect through writing, sketching, or take a moment if needed."

After instruction:

- Offer time for quiet reflection after engaging with emotionally complex texts or media. This allows students to process their thoughts and feelings in a low-pressure way. This can take the form of journalling, sketching, or responding to a single prompt. Building in this pause not only supports emotional regulation but reinforces that reflection is a part of the learning, not separate from it.

To co-create classroom norms, see Appendix E: Building a Classroom Agreement.

In Practice
A teacher introduces a media clip that deals with coercion by saying, "This is a serious topic that might bring up different feelings for different people. You'll have time to reflect quietly through writing or sketching after we watch."

Responding to Disclosures or Distress

Teachers should be prepared for moments when a student shares something concerning or shows signs of distress. This may arise during class discussions, written reflections, or personal conversations.

- Listen without judgement or probing. Stay calm, present, and supportive.
- Be honest and transparent with students by letting them know that, while their voice matters and will be treated with respect, you may need to involve someone who can help ensure their safety and support. You could say: "You're in control of what you share, and I'll be with you if we need to involve someone to support your safety."
- Ensure privacy. If a student wants to talk, avoid rushed conversations at the end of class. Instead, find a quiet, private space or time to check in meaningfully.
- Follow your school's reporting and referral protocol. Make sure you know who to contact (e.g., school counsellor, admin, school support staff) and how to document a concern appropriately. In Nova Scotia, all school staff have a legal duty to report any suspicion that a child or youth under 19 may be at risk of abuse or neglect. This applies even if the information was shared confidentially or indirectly. Reports must be made to Child Protection Services directly.
- Document factually and securely. Record what is said, when, and how you responded.
- Check in privately with the student if needed.

See Appendix D for more information on dealing with disclosures.

In Practice
After a student submits a journal entry that raises concerns, the teacher consults the school counsellor, documents the concern, and checks in with the student with care and discretion.

Whole-School Readiness

Because of the potential for disclosures or emotional responses, school staff should be aware of when these outcomes are being taught. Teachers are encouraged to:

- Notify school counsellors, administrators, and/or school support staff in advance of teaching emotionally complex issues
- Collaborate with administrators to ensure that students are aware of mental health supports
- Ensure that all staff, especially new or substitute teachers, know the basic steps for responding to a student in need at your school

This work is most effective when it is supported by a whole-school approach, where students know they are safe, supported, and not alone.

Teacher Self-Care and Boundaries

Teachers may have lived experience with trauma or feel uncertain about navigating these topics. You are not expected to carry the emotional weight of this work without support.

- Reflect on your readiness before beginning. Use the reflective tool in Appendix C.
- Recognize signs of secondary stress or emotional fatigue (like emotional numbness, intrusive thoughts, or overwhelming fatigue).
- Reach out for support: colleagues, school counsellors, department heads, regional consultants, or the NSTU.

Taking care of yourself is part of taking care of your students.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

The gender-based violence outcomes can be addressed though multiple teaching approaches. Some teachers may choose to explore the outcomes as a stand-alone unit, while others may embed the learning throughout the semester across genres, themes, or media studies. Both approaches are valid and offer flexibility to meet the demands of different classrooms.

What matters most is that the work is developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and grounded in the literacy skills students are building, like analysing, questioning, inferring, and synthesizing.

Approaches to Teaching the Outcomes

The learning experiences can be structured in different ways:

- Unit Approach:
  Teachers may choose to dedicate a section of the course to exploring these outcomes thematically or through inquiry. This approach allows for concentrated time to build background knowledge, scaffold inquiry, and draw deeper connections across texts and contexts.
- Integrated Approach:
  Teachers may weave the outcomes into their existing curriculum by highlighting connections as they arise in texts or themes already in use. For example, while studying Othello, teachers might introduce one or two outcome-aligned guiding questions for student reflection or discussion.
- Text/Media Cluster Approach
  Teachers can engage students in focused analysis using short, high impact texts, such as social media content, public service announcements, or short stories to explore specific aspects of the outcomes over a few class periods.

In Practice
A teacher uses two short nonfiction articles, one on bystander psychology, another on media depictions of masculinity, and follows with a class debate and reflective journaling task.

Text Use and Selection

To support the teaching and learning of these outcomes, a selection of recommended aligned texts has been distributed to schools. These texts can be used as anchor texts, book club choices, or short-form study pieces that support inquiry into how key concepts like power, gender, consent, and social norms are represented in text and media.

Teachers are also welcome to select other texts, provided they are developmentally appropriate, inclusive, bias-evaluated and aligned with the outcomes.

Text selection should consider:

- Representation:
  Who is speaking in the text? Whose stories are being centered, and whose are missing?
- Complexity and accessibility:
  Can students engage meaningfully with the content? Are there supports in place for students with diverse learning needs?
- Connection to outcomes:
  Does the text offer opportunities to analyse power, question norms, or explore bystander roles? Does it invite critical thinking, or exploit emotions?
- Content sensitivity:
  Teachers should create space for reflection and response that avoids requiring or promoting personal disclosure, focusing instead on text-based analysis and student interpretation.

Using texts effectively may include:

- Pairing a fictional excerpt with a media text to explore contrast or context
- Offering short, varied texts (poems, op-eds, PSAs) for a layered discussion
- Encouraging students to examine how gender, consent, or power is constructed through language, character, or media technique

From Planning to Practice

Teachers have flexibility in how they integrate the GBV outcomes into their courses. The planning supports below are intended to help teachers map out inquiry, align with existing texts or themes, and ensure that scaffolding is developmentally responsive across grade levels.

In Practice
A teacher selects a poem from the provided set that explores gender roles, then asks students to compare it with a visual ad campaign to examine how messaging is shaped and reinforced across formats.

Suggested Planning Questions

- What outcome(s) and literacy skills will this learning experience focus on?
- What texts or media best support that focus, and are they accessible?
- What guiding questions will help students analyse, reflect, and think critically?
- What scaffolds (e.g., vocabulary, background knowledge, modeling, discussion tools) will students need?
- How will students show their skills and understanding, and how will I support growth?
- How will I differentiate the learning experience to meet the needs of all students?
- Who else needs to be involved or informed (e.g., administrators, school counsellors, student support workers, YMCA school settlement/YREACH staff and other settlement supports)?

Planning Framework

Planning Element	Notes
Learning Focus	Which outcome(s) are being addressed? What is the conceptual focus (e.g., power, consent, bystander behaviour)? How does this connect to reading, writing, or critical thinking skills?
Text(s)	Which texts (literary, media, multimodal) will anchor the learning? Are they accessible, developmentally appropriate, and representative of diverse voices?
Guiding Questions	What questions will drive inquiry, interpretation, and reflection? How will these questions support deeper thinking?
Instructional Strategies	What instructional methods will support students in thinking critically, engaging with texts, and expressing understanding, such as modeling, guided annotation, discussion protocols, visual mapping, or scaffolded writing? How will these strategies support diverse learners and build toward literacy outcomes?
Assessment Opportunities	How will students demonstrate their understanding of the outcomes? How will assessment methods remain text-based, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate across different readiness levels?
Support and Preparation	What support structures (e.g., student support workers, counsellors, YMCA school settlement/YREACH staff and other settlement supports, pacing adjustments) are needed to help students engage meaningfully with the learning?

Planning for Assessment

Assessment of the gender-based violence outcomes requires intentional, developmentally responsive planning. These outcomes ask students to engage with emotionally and intellectually complex topics, like gender roles, power dynamics, consent, bystander behaviour, and systemic violence, through a critical literacy lens. To support meaningful learning, teachers must consider students' cognitive, emotional, and social readiness when designing and assessing learning experiences.

The goal is not to assess each specific curriculum outcome in isolation, but to gather holistic evidence of student growth over time. Whether addressed through a stand-alone unit, inquiry, or an embedded approach, assessment should center student agency, promote critical thinking, and offer flexible ways for students to demonstrate their learning of the outcomes.

Planning Responsively Across Grades

A developmentally responsive approach ensures students encounter these outcomes in ways that reflect where they are intellectually, emotionally, and socially, and supports them in growing toward deeper analysis and critical engagement. It helps teachers select texts, frame questions, and structure assessments in ways that are accessible, supportive, and appropriately challenging.

Across the grades:

- English 10 students recognize how gender roles, stereotypes, and social norms shape relationships and influence decision-making.
- English 11 students expand their understanding through intersectional analysis and critical questioning of how overlapping identities affect experiences of violence and resistance.
- English 12 students evaluate systems, challenge cultural representations, and consider the responsibilities of authorship and content creation.

This progression means that assessment practices should also grow in complexity and depth, from identification and questioning, toward interpretation, evaluation, and synthesis.

A Balanced and Student-Responsive Assessment Model

Teachers are encouraged to use a triangulated approach to assess learning through:

- Conversations – class discussions, peer dialogue, and small-group conferences
- Observations – annotations in texts, ability to reference texts when speaking, contributions to discussions, and use of terms
- Products – analytical responses, portfolios, media critiques, creative work, and journals, etc.

A variety of assessment tools allows students to demonstrate their thinking in multiple ways while ensuring learning experiences remain text-based. It also allows teachers to monitor understanding, adjust their teaching, and provide timely, descriptive feedback.

Not all students will reach the same depth of understanding or develop the same skills at the same time. Teachers can adapt pacing, provide scaffolds (e.g., sentence starters, guiding questions, graphic organizers) and offer different opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

Success Criteria Across Grades 10-12

These sample criteria illustrate how understanding may deepen over time. Teachers may adapt or co-construct criteria with students as appropriate.

Focus Area	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Gender Roles, Norms, and Stereotypes	I can identify how gender roles and stereotypes are shown in a text. I can describe how these norms affect characters.	I can analyse how gender roles and stereotypes influence power or relationships. I can explain how gender interacts with other identities (e.g., race, class) in a text.	I can critique how texts reinforce or resist gender expectations. I can evaluate how social or cultural norms are being challenged or upheld.
Power and Control	I can describe who holds power in a relationship or situation. I can identify how power shows up in dialogue, silence, or behaviour.	I can analyse how authors use language, structure, or perspective to show power. I can connect power dynamics in texts to real-world patterns.	I can evaluate how systems (e.g., patriarchy, colonialism) contribute to control or silence in texts. I can reflect on how cultural context affects how power is portrayed or understood.
Consent and Communication	I can question how consent is communicated or ignored in texts. I can identify when social norms affect decision-making or relationships.	I can evaluate how texts reflect or challenge assumptions about consent. I can analyse how gender roles or stereotypes influence understanding of consent.	I can evaluate how texts represent survivors and those who cause harm. I can analyse how those portrayals shape cultural attitudes about consent and harm.
Bystander Intervention	I can describe what influences someone to speak up or stay silent. I can explain how peer pressure or norms affect action.	I can evaluate what encourages or prevents intervention in a situation. I can reflect on how identity and context influence bystander choices.	I can analyse how bystander intervention is portrayed in complex or systemic contexts. I can evaluate a character's responsibility or impact in a situation involving harm.

Final Assessment: Scaffolded, Text-Based, and Reflective

Final assessment should allow students to demonstrate what they know and understand without requiring personal disclosure. Learning opportunities should be based on the texts they explore in class and offer students the opportunity to analyse, interpret, and synthesize ideas related to the gender-based violence outcomes.

Assessment across grades should reflect a clear developmental progression. In Grade 10, students are working to identify, describe, and begin to question how gender roles, power, consent, and bystander intervention are presented in texts. By Grade 12, students are expected to critique systemic factors, evaluate authorial choices, and reflect on the implications of representation. This progression should be mirrored in the design of the final assessment.

Assessments should remain rooted in close reading and evidence-based interpretation, while also allowing space for creativity, collaboration, and reflection. Teachers can scaffold summative experiences to build from smaller checkpoints, class discussions, and formative reflections, gradually supporting students toward deeper analysis and more complex demonstrations of understanding.

Supporting Planning Across the Grades

- To ensure the final assessment is purposeful, responsive, and aligned with trauma-informed practice, teachers are encouraged to:
- Anchor assessment in textual analysis, not the students' lived experience. Students should be interpreting how texts represent ideas rather than disclosing personal stories or reflections on trauma.
- Use familiar entry points like discussions of point of view or media analysis to frame inquiry in ways that are accessible and meaningful.
- Adjust scaffolding to reflect grade-level expectations and student readiness. Earlier grades may require more modeling, guided questions, or sentence frames; later grades may take on more independent inquiry and synthesis.
- Offer structured choice in how students demonstrate understanding, e.g., through writing, speaking, or multimodal expression.
- Build in time for reflection, using strategies like exit tickets or quiet journaling before and after group discussions. These support diverse processing styles and help surface deeper thinking.

Tools to Support Developmentally Responsive Assessment

- Anchor charts with outcome-aligned sentence frames (e.g., "This character reinforces gender roles because…") to scaffold writing and discussion.
- Learning logs or mind maps to track evolving understanding of important concepts such as power, identity, or resistance.
- Exit ticket prompts for regular reflection and formative feedback, like "Something this text made me question…" or "One idea that challenged my thinking was…."
- Rubrics and success criteria aligned to outcome themes and tailored to grade-level expectations. These can be co-constructed with students or provided as part of assignment scaffolding.
- Self-assessment tools such as visual scales, reflection frames, or checklists to help students track their growth and engage with the learning process intentionally.

Approaches to Supporting the Gender-Based Violence and Bystander Intervention Education Outcomes in English 11/English 11 O_2

The suggestions that follow are intended to support planning and implementation of the gender-based violence and bystander intervention education in English 11/English 11O2. They offer starting points for designing learning experiences and engaging students in critical inquiry about gender roles, power, consent, and bystander behaviour. These are not mandatory or exhaustive but are meant to help teachers plan in the context of their students and their learning needs.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.

Rationale

Learners examine how gender-based violence is shaped by the intersection of multiple identities and social systems. Through a variety of fiction, non-fiction, and media texts, learners explore how factors such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, culture, and community interact to influence lived experiences of violence, power, and resistance. This outcome allows learners to consider how overlapping systems of privilege and oppression affect how people are represented, treated, and understood in society and texts. Learners question how societal norms and expectations contribute to or challenge gender-based violence. They analyse how authors and creators reflect or resist real-world attitudes and explore how representation in texts affects public discourse. Learners also investigate the complexity of responding to incidents of gender-based violence as a bystander, considering the social, cultural and systemic factors that influence a person's opportunities and willingness to act. This outcome supports the development of critical literacy, empathy, and analysis.

Specific Curriculum Outcomes

Students will:

- Investigate the relationship between intersectionality and gender-based violence.
- Question how societal norms contribute to the perpetuation or prevention of gender-based violence.
- Analyse the ways authors reflect or challenge real-world attitudes towards gender-based violence.
- Evaluate the factors that impact a bystander's opportunity to intervene.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.

The following provides examples of the knowledge, understanding, and skills that students develop as they work towards the outcome.

Knowledge

- Define forms of gender-based violence, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and technology-facilitated abuse.
- Identify key terminology, such as consent, victim-blaming, toxic masculinity, intersectionality, patriarchy, and bystander intervention.
- Describe how culture and history shape gender roles and perceptions of gender-based violence.
- Explore bystander intervention strategies and the consequences of action or inaction.

Understanding

- Interpret how authors use textual elements and techniques to shape messages about gender-based violence and social norms.
- Evaluate how creators influence understanding and empathy through representations of gender-based violence.
- Examine how identity and oppression intersect in experiences of violence.
- Reflect on the complexities of power, silence, complicity, and resistance in stories about gender-based violence.

Skill: Analyse

- *Breakdown* how gender-based violence is explored across various types of texts using elements like narrative structure and point of view.
- *Examine* how texts portray dialogue, silence, and interactions to reveal power imbalances and gendered dynamics.
- *Deconstruct* critical arguments in texts and media to assess how they represent or distort experiences of gender-based violence.
- *Identify* and explain the impact of authorial choices and real-world implications of bystander actions or inaction.
- *Interpret* techniques, such as symbolism, contrast, and tone, to reveal how texts challenge or reinforce norms around gender and violence.

Scope and Sequence: Prior Learning Connections

English 10

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.

SCOs: Students will

- Investigate how gender roles, norms, and stereotypes are expressed.
- Investigate the relationship between power dynamics and gender.
- Question how depictions of gender roles and norms influence perceptions of consent in relationships.
- Analyse how social norms influence the ways people respond as bystanders.

Success Criteria:

To assess student learning in relation to the outcome, teachers can use the following criteria when reviewing evidence gathered from observations, conversations, and products.

Before sharing criteria with students, teachers can phrase it in student-friendly language or use it as the foundation for co-constructing criteria with students.

Components	Criteria
Intersectionality	▪ Identifies characters or real people in texts whose experiences of gender-based violence are shaped by multiple aspects of identity (e.g., race, class, sexuality, ability) ▪ Explains how texts reveal the role of intersecting identities in shaping how individuals are perceived, treated, or supported by others.
Societal Norms	▪ Identifies language, imagery, or narrative choices in a text that reflect or critique societal norms about gender and violence. ▪ Constructs critical questions about how the text reinforces or resists norms that enable or disrupt gender-based violence.
Reflecting and Challenging Real-World Attitudes	▪ Analyses how authors use tone, character development, or plot to reflect or challenge public attitudes towards gender-based violence. ▪ Supports interpretations with evidence from texts and connects to real-world social or media messages.
Factors of Bystander Intervention	▪ Identifies how bystander behaviour is portrayed in texts, including motivations, conflicts, or consequences. ▪ Evaluates how context (e.g., setting, power dynamics, relationships) affects the character's decision to act or remain passive.

Assessing the Outcome - Sample Suggestion:

Text & Power: A Panel Discussion on Gender-Based Violence and Representation

Overview for Teachers:

Students will examine how a chosen text reflects or challenges real-world power dynamics and gender-based violence. They will demonstrate their understanding through a panel discussion and a portfolio of evidence that includes analytical and reflective components.

Panel Discussion:

Each student will take part in a group panel. During the panel, students will deliver a 3-5 minute presentation sharing their analysis of how their text explores themes like power, societal norms, intersectionality, and gender-based violence. After each presentation, students will engage in a discussion, responding to questions from their peers and reflecting on different perspectives.

Portfolio of Evidence:

Students will also submit a portfolio that shows the depth and development of their thinking. This will include a written or multimodal analysis of their text, focusing on at least one theme: intersectionality, societal norms, depictions of consent, bystander response, or narrative perspective. The portfolio should also contain a response log with reflections on class discussions and peer feedback, as well as self-assessment based on success criteria. Students may also include creative or planning artifacts that contributed to their learning.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.			
Intersectionality	Societal Norms	Reflecting and Challenging Real-World Attitudes	Factors of Bystander Intervention

Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will investigate the relationship between intersectionality and gender-based violence.

This is about:

Exploring how overlapping aspects of identity, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, shape individuals' experiences of gender-based violence and the ways they are represented or treated in texts.

Supporting all Students: Teaching Vocabulary and Background Knowledge

Explicitly teaching vocabulary and background knowledge before engaging students in new learning ensures that all students, regardless of prior knowledge, first language, or learning preferences have equitable access to the content. Pre-teaching critical vocabulary involves identifying vocabulary vital to learning content and explicitly teaching this vocabulary increases all students, but particularly EAL students' access to academic content.

Vocabulary

You can choose the new vocabulary most relevant to your lesson each day to teach, for example:	
Intersectionality	Social Norms
Gender-Based Violence	Privilege
Systemic Oppression	Marginalization
Power Dynamics	Bias
Victim-blaming	Allyship
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirited People (MMIWG2S)	Consent

Building Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is best taught in context. Over the course of the learning, you can introduce:

- The concept of intersectionality to understand how overlapping identities (like race, gender, class, and ability) shape people's experiences and how systems respond to them.
- The different types of gender-based violence (physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, and technology-facilitated) and the idea that GBV is rooted in power and disproportionately affects those facing systemic barriers.
- How power operates not only between individuals, but also through institutions (media, law, education, policing), using concepts like patriarchy, colonialism, systemic racism, and ableism.
- The idea that texts both reflect and shape social views, encouraging students to notice how choices in narration, structure, and imagery influence the portrayal of gender and violence.
- How social norms and expectations influence behaviour, including how they can normalize violence or discourage people from intervening, and how silence or complicity can be shaped by context.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.

SCO: Students will investigate the relationship between intersectionality and gender-based violence.

Ongoing Assessment: What am I looking for?

Students can:

- Define intersectionality and explain how it helps people understand different lived experiences.
- Identify how overlapping identities, like race, gender, class, sexuality, or ability, shape how people experience gender-based violence.
- Describe how systems, like justice, education, or media, respond differently to people based on their intersecting identities.
- Analyse how characters or real people in texts are affected by both gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination.
- Reflect on how stories reveal patterns of inequality and help people understand the impacts of intersectionality.

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning

- Provide a mini-lesson on intersectionality using relatable examples. Anchor intersectionality in real-world examples by sharing headlines, news stories, or statistics about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, anti-trans violence, or disparities in reporting violence among marginalized groups.
- Guide students to notice when a text explicitly or implicitly addresses multiple identities (e.g., race and gender together), and how that impacts how characters are treated or understood.
- Provide students with excerpts from different sources (e.g., news articles, survivor testimonials, fiction) that describe experiences of gender-based violence. Ask students to annotate the text, highlighting where identity (race, gender, class, ability, etc.) is referenced explicitly or implicitly and write margin notes about how those factors may impact the experience or response.
- Have students create a "media audit" by comparing two news articles about violence—one involving a white woman, the other involving a woman from a marginalized group. They analyse tone, detail, image use, and framing, then write a critical reflection on what this reveals about media bias and intersecting identities.
- Using a short story, news article, or real-world case, students create an identity web for a character or real person, mapping how aspects like race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability intersect. Students use different icons to show how each identity affects their experiences with gender-based violence.
- Show clips from documentaries, interviews, or narrative films that center characters with multiple marginalized identities and pause to ask: How do these overlapping identities shape how the character is treated? What systems are affecting their experience? Discuss patterns students notice across different texts.
- For EAL students, provide visual glossaries with pictures and translated definitions if possible. Use word banks for key terms like privilege, discrimination, and intersectionality, on assignments. Use fictional characters, anonymous stories, or case studies to explore identity and injustice before asking for personal reflection. Use sentence starters or sentence frames like:
  - Because someone is _____ and _____, they might experience_____.
  - This person is treated differently because….
  - Gender affects this situation but so does….

Suggestions for Ongoing Assessment: How can I gather evidence?

Critical Reading Journal

What it looks like:

- Students keep a journal where they regularly respond to texts, focusing on how intersecting identities affect experiences of gender-based violence. Teachers can assess students' ability to identify identity factors, recognize systemic influences, and support their ideas with text evidence.

Identity-Impact Map

What it looks like:

After working with a text, students create a quick "Impact Map" showing how a character's or real person's intersecting identities (race, gender, class, ability, etc.) influenced their experience of gender-based violence. Students visually link identity traits to barriers, opportunities, and outcomes in the story using arrows, icons, or short notes.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.			
Intersectionality	Societal Norms	Reflecting and Challenging Real-World Attitudes	Factors of Bystander Intervention

Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will question how societal norms contribute to the perpetuation or prevention of gender-based violence.

This is about:

Investigating how the unspoken rules and expectations of society, like beliefs about gender roles, relationships, power, and behaviour, can either allow gender-based violence to continue or help prevent it. Students will example how norms (for example, ideas about masculinity, victim-blaming attitudes, or silence around violence) influence how people act, how institutions respond, and how violence is understood. They will also be encouraged to question norms critically by asking: Who benefits from this norm? Who is harmed? What would need to change to make society safer and more equitable?

Supporting all Students: Teaching Vocabulary and Background Knowledge

Explicitly teaching vocabulary and background knowledge before engaging students in new learning ensures that all students, regardless of prior knowledge, first language, or learning preferences have equitable access to the content. Pre-teaching critical vocabulary involves identifying vocabulary vital to learning content and explicitly teaching this vocabulary increases all students, but particularly EAL students' access to academic content.

Vocabulary

You can choose the new vocabulary most relevant to your lesson each day to teach, for example:	
Societal Norms	Victim-blaming
Gender Roles	Bystander Effect
Stereotypes	Toxic Masculinity
Perpetuation	Consent
Prevention	Complicity
Normalization	Patriarchy

Building Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is best taught in context. Over the course of the learning, you can introduce:

- What societal norms are. Norms are unspoken rules that shape what is considered "normal" or "acceptable" in a society, such as expectations around gender roles and emotional expression. They guide behavior automatically and are learned, not natural, and they can change over time.
- How norms can perpetuate gender-based violence. Harmful norms, like excusing aggressive behaviour or blaming victims, can normalize violence and discourage people from challenging harmful actions or speaking out.
- How norms can help prevent gender-based violence. Positive norms that promote respect, consent, and bystander action can disrupt cycles of violence and create safer, more equitable communities.
- Power, gender, and violence. Norms about who holds power often reflect and reinforce broader systems like patriarchy and racism, increasing risk for some groups and shaping who is protected and believed.
- How texts and media reflect, reinforce, or challenge societal norms about gender and violence. Students should learn to question whose behaviour is normalized, who is silenced, and what messages are being sent.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.

SCO: Students will question how societal norms contribute to the perpetuation or prevention of gender-based violence.

Ongoing Assessment: What am I looking for?

Students can:

- Identify examples of societal norms related to gender, relationships, and power in texts, media, or real-world examples.
- Explain how certain norms can excuse, minimize, or normalize acts of gender-based violence.
- Recognize when a character, text, or real-world figure challenges harmful norms or promotes prevention.
- Analyse how silence, blame, or complicity in texts or media are influenced by unspoken expectations.
- Pose critical questions about who benefits from certain norms and how they could be changed to promote violence.

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning

- Have students brainstorm everyday societal expectations (e.g., boys shouldn't cry, girls are polite) and discuss where these messages come from. Connect the conversation to how such norms influence reactions to violence or silence.
- Use a short text, film clip, or news article, and ask students to identify which social norms influence characters' or people's actions or responses to gender-based violence. Guide them to notice who is helped, harmed, or silenced.
- Present students with a fictional or real-world scenario involving gender-based violence and have them rewrite it changing a harmful norm to a positive one. Discuss how changing a norm could change the outcome.
- Co-create a classroom chart tracking harmful and positive norms from texts, media, or real life. Discuss how different norms contribute to either the continuation or prevention of violence.
- After reading or viewing a text, have students answer quick prompts like: What norm influenced behaviour? Who benefits? What would change if the norm shifted? This builds regular habits of questioning and analysis.
- After reading a text or discussing a real event, have students write a short reflection imagining how the situation might have changed if a different social norm had been in place. Focus the reflection on whose experiences would have been different and how.
- For EAL students, in small groups explore norms through photos, images or comic strips, and then ask, what is expected here? Who benefits? Who is silenced? When reading or viewing, pause frequently to unpack meaning and invite discussion, matching terms to scenes. Provide students with sentence frames or sentence starters like:
  - People expect _____ because….
  - This norm could lead to harm because….
  - If this norm were different, then….

Suggestions for Ongoing Assessment: How can I gather evidence?

Norm Spotting Log

What it looks like:

- Students keep an informal log or tracker where they record examples of societal norms they notice in texts, media, or discussions (both harmful and positive).

Cause and Effect Map

What it looks like:

- Students create a quick cause-and-effect map showing how a specific societal norm influenced a character's, community's, or institution's response to gender-based violence in a text or real-world example.

  Example:

  Norm: Boys shouldn't show weakness.

  Effect: Male character stays quiet about abuse.

  Further Effect: Situation escalates without intervention.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.			
Intersectionality	Societal Norms	Reflecting and Challenging Real-World Attitudes	Factors of Bystander Intervention

Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will analyse the ways authors reflect or challenge real-world attitudes towards gender-based violence.

This is about:

Closely examining how authors portray gender-based violence in their texts, and how those portrayals either reinforce or challenge the real-world beliefs, stereotypes, and social norms surrounding gender-based violence. Students will analyse whether a text supports harmful ideas (like victim-blaming) or pushes back against them (by highlighting injustice, centering survivors, or questioning systems of power) by considering how authorial choices influence the audience's understanding of gender-based violence.

Supporting all Students: Teaching Vocabulary and Background Knowledge

Explicitly teaching vocabulary and background knowledge before engaging students in new learning ensures that all students, regardless of prior knowledge, first language, or learning preferences have equitable access to the content. Pre-teaching critical vocabulary involves identifying vocabulary vital to learning content and explicitly teaching this vocabulary increases all students, but particularly EAL students' access to academic content.

Vocabulary

You can choose the new vocabulary most relevant to your lesson each day to teach, for example:	
Authorial Intent	Bias
Framing	Subtext
Resistance	Social Commentary
Representation	Romanticization

Building Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is best taught in context. Over the course of the learning, you can introduce:

- How texts reflect or shape society. Texts are not neutral; they mirror the attitudes and norms of the time they were created and can influence how audiences think about important issues like gender, violence, and justice.
- Common harmful narratives about gender-based violence. Many traditional narratives reinforce dangerous myths, such as blaming survivors, excusing those who cause harm, minimizing or romanticizing emotional abuse, or glorifying violence.
- How authors use techniques to reflect or challenge attitudes. Authors make deliberate choices, such as how they develop characters, build tone, frame events, or select a narrative point of view, that either question or uphold societal beliefs about gender-based violence.
- Historical and social context. Attitudes toward gender and violence have shifted over time and vary across cultures and communities; students should understand that what was once seen as "acceptable" or "normal" is not universally true.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.

SCO: Students will analyse the ways authors reflect or challenge real-world attitudes towards gender-based violence.

Ongoing Assessment: What am I looking for?

Students can:

- Identify how a text portrays gender-based violence, including any messages about victims, those who cause harm, or bystanders.
- Describe whether the author reflect, reinforces or challenges real-world beliefs and stereotypes about gender-based violence.
- Explain how authorial choices, like tone, point of view, and characterization, shape the audience's understanding of gender-based violence.
- Use evidence from the text to support their interpretations about how attitudes are reflected or challenged.
- Question the impact of the text, whether it reinforces harmful ideas or encourages critical thinking and social change.

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning

- Choose a short passage from a novel, poem, or article and have students highlight words, tone shifts, or imagery that reveal attitudes toward gender, violence, or justice.
- Have students create a chart where they track specific authorial choices, like point of view, symbolism, motif, tone, imagery, and explain how each one either reinforces or challenges beliefs about gender-based violence.
- Select two texts (e.g., a news article and a poem) that present gender-based violence differently. Ask students to compare how each reflects or challenges societal attitudes.
- After reading, have students connect the story's portrayal of gender-based violence to a real-world event or issue, discussing similarities or differences in public attitudes.
- Students choose a character involved in a situation of violence and analyse how they are framed, sympathetically, critically or neutrally, and what that suggests about societal norms.
- Teach a mini-lesson about framing (e.g., who gets a voice, how events are presented) and then have students reframe the scene to either challenge or reinforce societal norms about violence.
- Provide headlines about real-world violence and ask students to analyse the language: does it excuse, minimize, or raise awareness? Have them rewrite the headlines to shift the framing.
- For EAL students, begin with short excerpts or visuals to help students identify whether the author agrees, critiques or questions a real-world belief. Use graphic organizers like T-charts or 3-column organizers to help students map what happens in a text, what belief it connects to, and what the author is saying about it. Provide sentence frames or sentence starters like:
  - The author uses _____ to show that….
  - This scene reflects real-world beliefs about _____ because….

Suggestions for Ongoing Assessment: How can I gather evidence?

Authorial Choices Response Sheet

What it looks like:

- After reading texts or passages, students complete a quick response sheet where they identify one or two authorial choices (like tone, point of view, or characterization) and explain how these choices either reinforce or challenge real-world beliefs about gender-based violence. Teachers can review these sheets regularly to monitor students' ability to link textual elements to social commentary. Attitude Shift Graphic Organizer

What it looks like:

- After reading a text, students complete a graphic organizer where they map how attitudes toward gender-based violence are reflected or challenged at different points in the text. They identify examples, note the author's choices (tone, imagery, point of view), and briefly explain the impact on the reader.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.			
Intersectionality	Societal Norms	Reflecting and Challenging Real-World Attitudes	Factors of Bystander Intervention

Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will evaluate the factors that impact a bystander's opportunity to intervene.

This is about:

Examining what influences whether a bystander chooses to intervene or stay silent when witnessing harm, injustice, or gender-based violence. Students will consider that a bystander's opportunity to act isn't just about personal courage; it is shaped by many factors like social pressure, fear of retaliation, group dynamics, perceived authority, or social norms. They will evaluate how these barriers or supports appear in texts and real-life situations and reflect on how different factors increase or decrease the chances of someone stepping in to stop or disrupt harm.

Supporting all Students: Teaching Vocabulary and Background Knowledge

Explicitly teaching vocabulary and background knowledge before engaging students in new learning ensures that all students, regardless of prior knowledge, first language, or learning preferences have equitable access to the content. Pre-teaching critical vocabulary involves identifying vocabulary vital to learning content and explicitly teaching this vocabulary increases all students, but particularly EAL students' access to academic content.

Vocabulary

You can choose the new vocabulary most relevant to your lesson each day to teach, for example:	
Bystander	Active Upstander
Upstander	Social Pressure
Passive Bystander	Retaliation
Reluctant Upstander	Diffusion of Responsibility

Building Background Knowledge

Background knowledge is best taught in context. Over the course of the learning, you can introduce:

- The Bystander Effect. It is a psychological phenomenon where the more people who witness harm, the less likely any one individual is to intervene. Inaction isn't necessarily about not caring; it can be a predictable social behaviour influenced by group dynamics.
- Barriers to intervention. Fear of retaliation, uncertainty about what's happening, social pressure, the belief that it's not one's place, or normalization of harm can prevent people from acting.
- Social norms and silence. Social expectations often discourage people from challenging authority, exposing harm, or acting differently than the group.
- Factors that encourage intervention. Bystanders are more likely to act when they feel personally responsible, confident in what to do, supported by others, or empowered by a sense of justice or moral courage.
- How authors and creators often depict bystanders and their choices in ways that reflect broader social attitudes about courage, responsibility, or complicity.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.

SCO: Students will evaluate the factors that impact a bystander's opportunity to intervene.

Ongoing Assessment: What am I looking for?

Students can:

- Identify social, emotional, and situational factors that influence a bystander's decision to act or stay silent.
- Explain how fear, social pressure, or power dynamics might prevent intervention.
- Describe examples from texts or real-life events where bystanders faced barriers or supports to acting.
- Analyse how different contexts (e.g., who is involved, where it happens) impact a bystander's ability or willingness to intervene.
- Evaluate what might help bystanders overcome barriers and act against harm or injustice.

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning

- Select excerpts from texts where bystanders could have acted (or did act) and have students analyse what factors from the text (e.g., fear, social pressure, setting) impacted their choice.
- Ask students to identify a critical decision point for a character and annotate the text with notes about internal and external pressures that shaped their action or inaction.
- After reading two texts or two characters' reactions in the same text, students compare how different factors (like power dynamics, social roles, or fear) influenced each character's opportunity to intervene.
- After analyzing a bystander moment in a text, students reflect on how the factors present (like peer pressure or authority) would affect their own willingness to intervene in that situation.
- Have students analyse how systems (e.g., school rules, family expectations, community norms) in a text either supported or discouraged a character's ability to intervene against harm.
- Ask students either individually or in small groups to create an alternative version of a scene from a text where one factor changes (e.g., the character has peer support or the setting changes) and explain how this would affect the bystander's ability to act.
- Provide a quote about bystander responsibility and have students connect it directly to a character's actions (or silence) in a text, explaining how societal pressures influenced the character.
- For EAL students, show images or short videos of bystander situations. Have students name what is happening and identify visible and invisible factors (e.g., who's around, who holds power, what might happen if someone speaks up). Provide cause and effect charts to help students break down what factors are present (e.g., fear, group size, relationship to the victim) and how each factor might increase or decrease the likelihood of intervention. Use sentence starters or sentence frames like:
  - One reason someone might not intervene is….
  - In this situation, the bystander is more likely to act because….
  - Compared to _____, this situation involves more _____, which affects the decision to intervene.

Suggestions for Ongoing Assessment: How can I gather evidence?

Character Interview

What it looks like:

- Students "interview" a character from a text by creating written responses to questions like: What pressures did you feel when you witnessed harm? What stopped you from intervening? What might have helped you act differently?

Rank and Defend

What it looks like:

After reading about a bystander moment, students rank a list of possible factors (fear, loyalty, authority, group norms, confusion, etc.) from most to least influential in the character's decision. They then write a short explanation defending their rankings using evidence from the text.

Tying it all Together:

Throughout their work on this outcome, students investigated how intersectionality shapes experiences of gender-based violence and questioned how societal norms contribute to the perpetuation or prevention of harm. Students gathered evidence by analysing how authors reflect or challenge real-world attitudes towards gender-based violence, evaluating the factors that impact bystander intervention, and critically examining a variety of texts to deepen their understanding of individual and systemic influences.

Assessing the Outcome - Sample Suggestion:

Text & Power: A Panel Discussion and Portfolio on Gender-Based Violence and Representation
Students examine how a chosen text reflects or challenges real-world power dynamics and gender-based violence. They demonstrate their understanding through a panel discussion and portfolio of evidence that shows their ability to connect themes of power, societal norms, intersectionality and bystander response.

To support their panel discussion and portfolio, students can:

- Analyse Authorial Choices: Draw on their text annotation and close reading activities to explain how authors reflect or challenge societal attitudes toward gender-based violence through tone, characterization, symbolism, narrative structure, or point of view.
- Investigate Intersectionality: Use identity webs, character maps, or cause and effect charts to illustrate how overlapping identities (e.g., race, gender, class, ability) shape experiences of harm, silence, or resistance.
- Examine Societal Norms: Reflect on their "norms audit" charts or discussions to question how social expectations perpetuate or prevent violence, and how these pressures appear in their selected texts.
- Evaluate Bystander Dynamics: Reference text-based tracking of bystander opportunities, noting barriers or supports that influenced action or inaction, and critically assess what conditions might have enabled intervention.

This approach ensures that students demonstrate how their learning from each specific indicator contributes to their ability to critically analyse gender-based violence and representation across a variety of texts. They can engage in reading, analysis, discussion and reflection processes to organize and communication their findings.

Appendix A: Facilitating Conversations About Gender-Based Violence

Conversations about gender-based violence require careful planning and facilitation. These outcomes ask students to think critically about complex and emotionally charged topics, like power, identity, voice, and silence. As with any literary-based inquiry, students should be challenged to engage deeply with texts and ideas. But teachers must also ensure that the learning environment is supportive, developmentally appropriate, and never asks students to disclose personal experiences.

The guidance below offers strategies for leading thoughtful, inclusive conversations across English 10–12.

Before Conversations

1. Prepare the groundwork:
   - Co-create discussion agreements with students.
   - Be explicit about what is not up for debate (e.g., the reality of violence, the dignity of identities).
   - Use the language of settled questions (i.e. facts, rights, or lived realities are not up for debate. For instance, people have the right to bodily autonomy) and open questions (i.e. interpretive, analytical, or ethical questions that invite thoughtful discussion. For instance, what motivates the bystander to say silent in this passage?).

2. Consider readiness:
   - Is the group ready?
   - Have I modeled thoughtful questioning?
   - What supports will help quiet or hesitant students participate?

3. Signal support:
   - Let students know you expect complexity.
   - Reassure them personal disclosure is not expected.
   - Communicate to support staff that this topic is being addressed.

During Conversations

1. Create space, not pressure:
   - Invite participation but don't require it.
   - Use low-stakes sentence starters or sentence frames to prompt entry.

2. Focus on the text, not the personal:
   - Ground discussions in texts, not lived experiences.
   - Gently redirect if discussion becomes too personal.

3. Monitor tone and impact
   - Pause and redirect if harm occurs.
   - Use respectful redirection strategies.

4. Stay in the role of teacher, not counselor
   - Show care without acting as a mental health professional.
   - Refer disclosures or distress to appropriate support staff, unless required by Duty to Disclose.

Tools and Strategies

- Discussion Agreements: Co-construct norms that promote curiosity and respect. See Appendix E.
- Guiding Questions: Use clear, outcome-aligned questions. See GBV At-A-Glance document.
- Protocols: Use silent conversation, paired talks, journalling before discussion.
- Settled vs. Open Questions: Focus inquiry on analysis - don't debate human dignity.

If a Problem Arises

- Respond, don't react: Pause the conversation. Redirect without shaming.
- Focus on learning: Name harm as a growth opportunity.
- Know your limits: Refer out when needed.

Phrases and Prompts for Classroom Use

Sentence Starters for Students

- "One thing I noticed in the text is…."
- "This line made me think about…."
- "A question I have after reading is…."
- "This reminds me of something we read before…."

Teacher Redirection Prompts

- "Let's slow down and think about how that might land with someone."
- "I hear you working through something. How might we phrase that differently?"
- "Let's stay anchored in the text and explore ideas together."

Appendix B: Communicating with Families and Communities

Because these outcomes address topics related to gender, power, and harm, transparent communication with families and communities is important. Clear, proactive messaging can build trust and help prevent misunderstanding.

Purpose of Communication

- To reassure caregivers that content is literacy-based, age-appropriate, and trauma-informed
- To invite understanding of how students will explore social norms, power, and representation in text
- To clarify that learning will focus on analysis, not personal experience

Suggested Language for School or Teacher Use

Below is an example of a possible communication that could be shared with parents/caregivers:

As part of the English Language Arts curriculum, students are exploring how texts represent gender roles, power, identity, and social norms. This work supports the development of critical literacy skills and is aligned with provincial curriculum outcomes related to gender-based violence and bystander intervention education.

Students will not be asked to share personal experiences. All learning is based on the analysis of texts, including fiction, nonfiction, media, and visual texts, guided by their teacher. The learning is age-appropriate and focused on developing students' ability to question, interpret, and reflect on how messages are communicated through language and story.

This is not a health unit. Instead, students are encouraged to think critically about representation, voice, and the ways texts shape our understanding of the world. By building students' ability to recognize harmful norms, analyse power, and reflect on ethical decision-making, these outcomes contribute to healthier relationships and more respectful communities, now and into the future.

If you have questions about the curriculum or how this learning will be supported in class, we welcome the conversation.

Teachers may wish to coordinate with administrators or student support staff when sending communication home.

Appendix C: Reflective Practice for Teachers

Engaging students in learning related to gender-based violence requires professional reflection. Teachers bring their own identities, experiences, and comfort levels to this work, and each of these factors can influence how classroom conversations unfold. Reflection is a valuable tool to support thoughtful facilitation, responsiveness, and care.

Reflective Questions for Teachers

Use individually, with colleagues, or during professional learning sessions.

Personal Lens

- What are my own beliefs and assumptions about gender, power, consent, and bystander intervention?
- How do my identities shape how I understand and navigate these topics?

Classroom Readiness

- What supports (e.g., classroom agreements, discussion protocols) do I already have in place?
- Where might I need to adjust my approach or scaffold learning?
- What kinds of questions or resistance might I anticipate, and how will I respond?

Support Structures

- Who can I turn to if a conversation becomes difficult?
- What will I do if a student becomes distressed or discloses something concerning?

Ongoing Growth

- What do I need to learn more about?
- What feedback or reflection will help me improve my work next time?

Creating space for honest reflection supports not just individual readiness, but also the long-term sustainability of this work within schools.

Appendix D: What to do if a Student Discloses or Shows Distress

Remember: It can be unsettling when a student discloses personal information about harm they have experienced or are experiencing, but teachers don't need to have all the answers. Their role is to respond with care, clarity, and compassion, and to connect the student to support. Students need trust, privacy and a sense of control.

1. Create a Safe, Private Space to Talk

If a student seems like they want to talk, find a quiet, private place. Avoid crowded settings like hallways or the end of class. Leave the door slightly ajar.

You can say:

- "I'm happy to talk. Would here work, or would somewhere quieter be better?"
- "If you want to talk, I can make time now or a bit later – whatever works for you."
- "We can find a quiet space – whatever feels more comfortable for you."

2. Be Honest About Your Responsibility Early

Before the student shares too much, let them know you may need to talk to someone who can help. Let them know that if they tell you or you suspect they are being harmed, then you have a legal responsibility to notify Child Protection Services.

You can say:

- "I want you to feel safe sharing this. If you share something that makes me worry about harm or someone being hurt, I'll need to connect with someone who can help you get support."
- "You're in control of what you choose to share. I just want you to know if you do share something that sounds like someone is at risk, I'll need to bring in someone who can help keep them safe."

3. Listen without Judgement

Let them talk at their own pace. Avoid interrupting, reacting with alarm, or asking too many questions.

You can say:

- "You can share as much or as little as you'd like."
- "I'm here to listen, and I believe you."

4. Avoid Probing or Investigating

Don't ask for timelines, names, or proof; just enough information to recognize a concern.

You can say:

- "What you've shared is enough to know that support might be helpful."

5. Give Limited but Meaningful Choice

Explain next steps and offer the student options whenever possible.

You can say:

- "I need to connect with [counsellor/admin], but we can go together if you want."
- "Would you prefer to be there when I speak to them, or would you rather I talk to them and keep you updated?"
- "You're not in trouble, and we'll go at a pace that feels okay for you."

6. Follow the Reporting Process

Inform school support staff (e.g., school counsellor, student services, admin) or Child Protection Services, if applicable. Document the concern factually and privately.

You can say:

- "I'm going to talk to [name]. They'll be able to support you in a way I can't."
- "We'll make sure this is handled respectfully."

7. Follow Up (If Appropriate)

Check in with the student later, casually and without pressure.

You can say:

- "Just checking in – how are things going today?"
- "I'm here if you need anything."

Take Care of Yourself Too

- These conversations can stay with you. If you're feeling unsettled or overwhelmed, you deserve support too.
- Debrief with a colleague, school counselling staff, or school leader
- Step away briefly if needed – take a walk or get fresh air
- Speak with your admin if this is a part of a pattern affecting your well-being
- Remind yourself: You acted with care and integrity – that matters.

What Not to Do

- Don't promise full confidentiality
- Don't ask for details or proof
- Don't ignore or minimize the concern
- Don't try to solve the problem alone

Appendix E: How to Create Classroom Agreements

Creating classroom agreements with students is a foundational step in preparing to engage with emotionally complex content. Agreements foster a shared sense of well-being, respect, and accountability, and are most effective when they are built collaboratively.

Purpose of Classroom Agreements

- Establish shared expectations for respectful dialogue and participation
- Create a learning space where students feel seen, heard, and safe
- Set boundaries for how students and teachers will engage with challenging topics
- Reinforce values like empathy, curiosity, and critical thinking

Step-by-Step Guide to Co-Creating Agreements

1. Introduce the Purpose

- Begin by explaining why classroom agreements matter, especially for discussions that involve identity, injustice, or personal reflection

> *You might say:*
> "We'll be exploring real-world issues that can feel personal or emotional. Our goal is to make this a space where people feel safe to think deeply and honestly. Let's work together to decide what we need from each other to make that happen."

2. Brainstorm Together

Invite students to reflect individually or in groups on questions like:

- Think about a class you had where you felt safe to express yourself and respected. How was the class set up to allow that to happen?
- What makes a class feel uncomfortable or unsafe?
- What do you need to do to speak up or step back when things get hard?

Record suggestions on the board or in a shared document. Encourage language that's inclusive, specific, and doable.

3. Offer examples for Inspiration

If students need a starting point, share examples of norms such as:

- We challenge ideas, not people.
- We assume good intent and take responsibility for impact.
- Everyone gets a turn – no one dominates.

Let students revise or expand on these to fit your classroom community.

4. Narrow it Down Together

Work with the class to narrow the list to 5-7 key agreements. Aim for statements that are:

- Clear and student-owned
- Focused on action or mindset
- Realistic to uphold consistently

Have students vote, group similar ideas, or create categories (e.g., listening, speaking)

5. Post and Revisit

Once finalized:

- Have all students sign the agreement
- Display it visibly in the classroom
- Refer back to it before engaging with complex topics
- Invite students to revisit and revise as needed

Remind students that this is a living agreement, not a one-time set of rules.

Tips for Implementation

- Model agreement-following in your own behaviour
- Gently redirect when norms are not upheld ("Let's come back to our agreement about listening with respect")
- Use the agreement as a touchstone for classroom repair when needed

What If the Agreement is Broken?

When a student doesn't follow a classroom agreement, it's an opportunity for restoration, reflection, and learning, not shame. Instead of thinking in terms of discipline, consider what will help repair trust, and recommitment to the learning community.

Restorative Approaches

- Redirect respectfully. ("That comment doesn't align with the agreement we made about avoiding personal assumptions. Let's try that again another way.")
- Check in privately. (I noticed [the behaviour]. Can we talk about how that affected the group and how we can move forward?")
- Revisit the agreement as a class. Sometimes the moment is teachable for everyone. Pause to reconnect with the agreement. ("Let's take a moment to look at the norms we created. Which one might help us reset right now?")

Focus on Learning, Not Guilt

If a student causes harm, guide them to reflect:

- What impact does this have?
- How can I make it right?
- How can I rejoin the group in a respectful way?

Encourage consequences that reinforce the learning, such as:

- Listening to perspectives they may not have considered
- Writing a reflection
- Recommitting to the class norms aloud or in writing

When to Involve Others

If a behaviour is repeated, causes harm, or threatens emotional safety, loop in your school's administration, student support team, and/or the student's parent/caregiver. Document incidents and follow your school's process but do so with a restorative mindset whenever possible.

Appendix F: Definitions of Key Terms

The following definitions are created using student-friendly language for use in the classroom.

Active Bystander	A bystander who takes steps to help or stop a harmful situation.
Active Upstander	Someone who confidently takes action to support others and challenges wrongdoing.
Agency	The ability for people to make their own choices and take action without being forced or controlled by others.
Allyship	Actively supporting and standing up for people who face discrimination or unfair treatment.
Attitudes	A person's feelings or thoughts about others, situations, or ideas that influence how they behave.
Authorial Intent	The purpose or message an author aims to convey through their work. Understanding authorial intent can provide insight into the themes and perspectives presented in a text.
Bias	A preference or dislike for someone or something, that can often be based on stereotypes.
Boundaries	Limits people set for themselves to feel safe and comfortable.
Bystander	Someone who sees something wrong happening and can get involved or take action.
Bystander Effect	The phenomenon where people are less likely to help when others are around, thinking someone else will step in.
Characterization	The method by which an author develops characters, revealing their personalities, motivations, and complexities through actions, dialogue, and descriptions.
Coercion	The persuasion of an unwilling person to do something by use of force or threats.
Colonialism	When settler governments take over Indigenous lands and try to control them by forcing their own laws, systems, and culture onto the people who live there. This includes setting up rules and institutions that support the ongoing occupation of the land and the control of Indigenous Nations. Colonialism also shapes how people think, both within and outside those communities, in ways that continue to support this control.
Complicity	Being involved in or supporting wrongdoing, including by staying silent or not taking action.
Conformity	Changing a person's behavior or beliefs to match those of a group, often to fit in or be accepted.
Consent	Permission for something to happen, or agreement to do something; to give permission for something to happen.
Cultural Norms	Shared beliefs or behaviours that are considered typical or acceptable in a particular group or society.
Culture	The shared beliefs, values, customs, and behaviours of a group or society, which influence and are reflected in texts.

Diffusion of Responsibility	When individuals in a group feel less responsible to act because they believe someone else will.
Discrimination	Discrimination is the exclusion or unfair treatment of a person or group of people based on different traits such as sex, gender, religion, nationality, ethnicity (culture), race, or other personal characteristics. People who experience discrimination are prevented from enjoying the same rights and opportunities as other people.
Dominant Voice	The perspectives or opinions that are most heard or valued in a society, often overshadowing others.
Double Standards	When different rules or expectations are applied unfairly to different people or groups.
Empathy	The ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling.
Ethical Responsibility	The obligation of creators and audiences to consider the moral implications of narratives, including the impact of representation and the messages conveyed.
Femininity	Qualities or behaviours traditionally associated with being female, like gentleness or nurturing.
Framing	The way a story or argument is presented, which influences interpretation and understanding. It can set the context or perspective from which the narrative is told.
Gender	Refers to the roles, behaviours, expressions, and identities that society have associated with girls, women, boys, men, and gender-diverse people.
Gender-Based Violence	Any form of violence, discrimination, or harassment inflicted on a person because of their gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender.
Gender Expectations	Beliefs about how people should behave based on their gender.
Gender-Diverse	People whose gender identity or expression doesn't fit traditional categories of male or female.
Glorification	Praising or making something seem better or more important than it really is.
Healthy Masculinity	Expressing male identity in positive ways, like showing emotions and respecting others.
Hegemonic Masculinity	A cultural ideal of manhood that promotes dominance over others and discourages traits seen as "weak."
Honour	A sense of pride or respect, often tied to cultural or family expectations.
Identity	Who a person is, including the parts of themselves that shape how they see the world and how others see them. This can include things like their culture, race, gender, beliefs, language, family, and experiences.
Intersectionality	The idea that each person has many parts to their identity – like race, gender, class, or ability – and these parts combine to shape how they are treated in society. Some people may face unfair treatment or have more privilege depending on how these parts of their identity are viewed by others or by systems like schools, laws, or workplaces.
Intervene	To step in and take action to stop or change a situation.

Marginalization	When individuals or groups are pushed to the edge of society and denied full participation or rights.
Masculinity	Qualities or behaviours traditionally associated with being male, like strength or assertiveness.
Misogyny	Negative attitudes towards women, girls, and the feminine, like hatred, disrespect, or unfair treatment, just because they are female or express femininity. This can include things like discrimination, violence, or treating women like objects. Misogyny can come from men, but sometimes women can also show these beliefs toward other women or themselves.
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirited People (MMIWG2S)	A community-based, grassroots movement to raise awareness and create social change in response to the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Women, Girls and 2-Spirit People in Canada. MMIW2S is related to historical and ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples.
Narrative Framing	A literary technique where a main narrative sets the stage for one or more embedded stories, providing context and influencing interpretation.
Narrative Perspective	How the narrator sees and understands what is happening. It's shaped by their personality, background, beliefs, and feelings.
Normalization	Making something seem normal or acceptable, even if it's harmful.
Obedience	Following rules or instructions from someone in authority.
Omission	The deliberate exclusion of information, representation, or details in a narrative which can focus attention or influence interpretation.
Oppression	Unfair treatment or control over a group of people, limiting their rights and freedoms.
Passive Bystander	A bystander who chooses not to act, even when they know something is wrong.
Patriarchy	A social system in which men/masculinity are considered/viewed as primary authority figures, central to organization, and where men/masculine people hold authority over women/femme people, children, and property.
Peer Pressure	A feeling that one must do the same things as other people of one's age and social group to be liked or respected by them.
Perception	The way characters or audiences interpret events, actions, or other characters within a narrative, often influenced by personal experiences and biases.
Perpetuation	Continuing or maintaining something, often a harmful practice or belief.
Point of View	Who is telling the story (first-person, second-person, third-person limited, third-person omniscient).
Portrayal	The depiction or representation of characters, settings, or events, shaping audiences' understanding and emotional responses.
Power	The ability to influence or control others.
Power Dynamics	The ways power is shared or contested between individuals or groups.
Power Imbalance	When one person or group has more power or influence than another.

Prevention	Steps taken to stop something harmful from happening.
Privilege	Unfair advantages some people have just because of certain traits – like their race, gender, or background – that are valued more by society. These advantages give them more access to power, opportunities, or safety, often without even realizing it, while others may face more barriers.
Real-World Impact	The influence texts can have on society, including shaping public opinion, inspiring social change, or reflecting cultural values.
Reinforce	To strengthen or support existing ideas, beliefs, or behaviours through repeated or emphatic presentation in a narrative.
Reluctant Upstander	Someone who wants to help but feels unsure or afraid to take action.
Representation	The ways texts depict people, culture, ideas, and experiences, which can affirm or challenge societal norms and stereotypes.
Resistance	Actions taken to oppose or challenge injustice or oppression.
Romanticization	Making something harmful – like abuse or control – seem exciting, loving, or heroic. In texts, this can happen when unhealthy behaviour is shown as a sign of true love, which can confuse people about what's okay in a relationship and make abuse seem normal or even desirable.
Sensationalism	The use of exaggerated or shocking elements in texts to provoke strong emotional reactions, sometimes at the expense of accuracy or depth.
Sex	The biological traits – like body parts, hormones, and chromosomes – that people are born with.
Sexism	Prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender, particularly against women and girls.
Shame	A painful feeling of humiliation or distress caused by awareness of wrong or foolish behaviour.
Silencing	The act of excluding or supressing certain voices, perspectives, or narratives within texts, often reflecting broader societal power dynamics.
Social Commentary	The use of text to critique or reflect upon societal issues, norms, and injustices, encouraging readers to consider and question the status quo.
Social Conditioning	The process by which people learn behaviours and beliefs from their culture, family, and society.
Social Norms	Shared expectations or informal rules among a set of people (a reference group) as to how people should behave.
Social Pressure	The influence people feel from society as a whole, including media, culture, school, family, and community, about how we should act, dress or think.
Socialization	The way people learn what's expected of them in society – like how to act, speak, or dress – based on messages we get from family, school, media, and culture. This includes ideas about gender, like who's expected to do chores or work certain jobs. These expectations can lead to unfair treatment or inequality between groups.

Societal Norms	The rules or expectations that most people in a society follow, even if they're not written down. These norms tell people what is seen as "normal" or acceptable, like how to behave in public, what roles people should play, or how they should look. Not following these rules can sometimes lead to judgement or exclusion.
Stereotype	An oversimplified and often untrue idea about a group of people, based on things like race, gender, or age. Stereotypes assume everyone in that group is the same and can lead to unfair treatment or discrimination.
Subtext	The underlying or implicit meaning in a text, not directly stated but inferred through context, dialogue, and symbolism.
Survivor	Describes someone who has experienced interpersonal violence. This term can be preferred to "victim" as it reflects the reality that many individuals who experience abuse cope and move on with personal strength and resourcefulness.
Symbolism	The use of symbols – objects, characters, or events – to represent larger ideas or concepts, adding deeper meaning to the narrative.
Systemic Oppression	When unfair treatment is built into laws, policies, and practices of a society.
Systemic Violence	Harm caused by societal systems that disadvantage certain groups, even without physical force.
Tone	The author or creator's attitude toward the subject matter or audience, conveyed through word choice, style, and perspective.
Toxic Femininity	When harmful or limiting ideas about how girls or women should behave are seen as "normal" or expected. This can include always putting others first, staying quiet to avoid conflict, or acting helpless to gain approval. These messages can make it harder for people to express themselves freely or stand up for their needs.
Toxic Masculinity	Harmful behaviours and attitudes associated with traditional male roles, like suppressing emotions or using aggression.
Upstander	A person who stands up for others by speaking out or taking action against harm or injustice.
Victim-blaming	When someone says or suggests that a person who was hurt or harmed is partly or fully to blame for what happened to them. This often happens in cases of violence and can make people feel ashamed or afraid to speak up. Victim-blaming helps keep unfair systems – like sexism or other kinds of discrimination – in place by shifting attention away from the person who caused the harm.
Voice	The distinct style or personality expressed in a text, encompassing the author's or narrator's unique use of language and perspective.
Witness	In the context of violence, a witness is a person who sees or hears about a violent act, or is told about a violent act.

Appendix G: Resources

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