Language and Literature 10

Gender-Based Violence and Bystander Intervention
Teacher's Guide

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2024

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Language and Literature 10: Gender-Based Violence and Bystander Intervention Teacher's Guide

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.

This curriculum guide was developed with the aid of generative AI.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development wishes to express its gratitude to the Ontario Ministry of Education for granting permission to adapt its literacy curriculum in the development of this guide.

Table of Contents

Pedagogical Approach and Core Commitments 1
Responding to Student Needs 2
Approaches to Teaching and Learning 5
Planning for Assessment 6
Approaches to Supporting the Gender-Based Violence and Bystander Intervention Education Outcome in Language and Literature 10 10
GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts. 11
Scope and Sequence: Prior Learning Connections 11
Assessing the Outcome - Sample Suggestion: 12
Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will investigate how gender norms, roles and stereotypes are expressed. 13
Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will investigate the relationship between power dynamics and gender. 16
Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will question how depictions of gender roles and norms influence perceptions of consent in relationships. 19
Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will analyse how social norms influence the ways people respond as bystanders 21
Tying it all Together: 23
Appendix A: Facilitating Conversations About Gender-Based Violence 24
Appendix B: Communicating with Families and Communities 26
Appendix C: Reflective Practice for Teachers 27
Appendix D: What to do if a Student Discloses or Shows Distress 28
Appendix E: How to Create Classroom Agreements 30
Appendix F: Definitions of Key Terms 32
Appendix G: Resources 37

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 Recommendations from the Desmond Fatality Inquiry, which call 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).

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."

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: How to Create Classroom Agreements.

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 The Kite Runner, 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.

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.

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.

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:

- Language and Literature 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 Outcome in Language and Literature 10

The suggestions that follow are intended to support planning and implementation of the gender-based violence and bystander intervention education in Language and Literature 10. 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 will have the opportunity to examine a range of fiction, non-fiction and media texts to explore how issues related to gender-based violence are represented, reinforced, and resisted. Representations of gender roles, norms, and stereotypes are rooted in language and social structures, influencing how people think, act, and relate to one another. Through texts, learners investigate how gendered messages are communicated, how power dynamics – the ways power is distributed and negotiated within relationships and systems - shape interactions, and how societal expectations influence ideas of consent and bystander behaviour. This outcome invites learners to critically question how texts, like media, literature, advertisements, and digital content, shape our understanding of gender and contribute to broader social narratives. Learners develop skills in analysis and interpretation as they explore how these depictions impact personal and collective perceptions of gender-based violence. This outcome supports the development of language use, critical thinking, and reasoning.

Indicators

- 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.

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

- Identify and explain key terms and concepts like gender roles, stereotypes, bystander behaviour, power, power dynamics, social norms, privilege, consent, and agency.
- Describe how gender roles and stereotypes have been shaped by cultural, historical, linguistic, and media influences.
- Define power dynamics and recognize how they operate in relationships and social structures, especially in relation to gender, identity, and agency.
- Describe how societal norms and power influence understandings of consent.
- Recognize how social norms affect bystander responses to harm, injustice, and gender-based violence.

Understanding

- Explain how gender norms and stereotypes influence identity, opportunity, and relationships.
- Explain how power functions within gendered relationships and how it can shift based on identity, setting, or communication.
- Discuss how social pressures affect whether individuals conform, remain passive, or act as allies.
- Interpret how creators, characters, and public figures either reinforce or resist norms related to gender, power, and violence, and how this shapes audiences' perception.

Skill: Analyse

- Breakdown how gender roles and stereotypes are constructed through elements like language, character, structure, or visuals.
- Examine components of power dynamics, including status, silence, and authority.
- Deconstruct media or literary portrayals of consent by identifying cues, pressures, or role assumptions that complicate meaning.
- Identify and explain the factors that influence bystander choices, such as fear, conditioning or social roles.
- Interpret creator techniques (e.g. symbolism, tone, contrast) to reinforce or challenge dominant gender norms and power structures.

Scope and Sequence: Prior Learning Connections

Healthy Living 9

Learners will:

- analyse ways to care for one's own sexual and reproductive health.
- develop communication skills that support the growth and maintenance of healthy relationships.
- reflect on the impact of gender norms, stereotypes, and biases within relationships
- evaluate responses to gender-based violence.
- investigate ways to prevent injury online and offline.
- develop bystander intervention skills across a variety of emergency and risk scenarios.

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
Gender Roles, Norms, and Stereotypes	▪ Recognizes and identifies gender roles, norms, and stereotypes are constructed and represented across a variety of texts and contexts. ▪ Identifies shared or conflicting expectations related to gender and their effects on identity, behaviour, and relationships.
Power Dynamics and Gender	▪ Describes how power functions in gendered relationships through language, status, silence, or control. ▪ Explores how power is reinforced, resisted, or negotiated by individuals or systems.
Perceptions of Consent	▪ Examines how texts portray consent, including verbal and non-verbal communication, pressure, and power imbalance. ▪ Questions how traditional gender norms complicate understandings of consent.
Social Norms and Bystander Behaviour	▪ Identifies how social norms and pressures influence how individuals respond to harm or injustice. ▪ Explores factors that lead to passive or active bystander behaviour in texts and real-world contexts.

Assessing the Outcome - Sample Suggestion:

Gender Roles, Power, Bystanders, and Consent: A Public Awareness Project

Overview for Teachers:

Students create either a public service announcement, social media campaign, or poster series to communicate key messages about gender roles, consent, relationships, and bystander behaviour. They should include references to texts they have studied, and critique or respond to real-world media portrayals.

Presentation Format:

Students will present their public awareness project to the class, or, if possible, to another class. They should include a written explanation, similar to an artist's statement, that summarizes their project's key message, explains how it connects to the texts they have studied, and discusses how it challenges or responds to media portrayals of gender, consent, relationships, and bystander behaviour.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.			
Gender Roles, Norms, and Stereotypes	Power Dynamics and Gender	Perceptions of Consent	Social Norms and Bystander Behaviour

Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will investigate how gender norms, roles and stereotypes are expressed.

This is about:

Exploring how gender expectations are communicated and reinforced through language, media, culture, and social interactions.

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. Embedding vocabulary and background knowledge instruction into your lessons proactively reduces barriers to learning, promotes inclusive practices, and enhances student engagement. 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:	
Gender Sex Gender Norms Gender Roles Gender Expectations Healthy Masculinity Toxic Masculinity	Stereotype Socialization Gender Identity Culture Bias Misogyny Intersectionality

Building Background Knowledge

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

- The social construction of gender. Gender roles are not natural or fixed, but shaped by culture, time, religion, media, and social institutions.
- How patriarchy and colonialism have influenced gender expectations and expression.
- That different cultures and communities express gender in varied ways (e.g. Two-Spirit identities in Indigenous cultures).
- How language can reinforce or resist stereotypes (e.g., word choice, tone, representation, etc.).
- How media (e.g. advertising, TV, music, social media, etc.) transmits powerful messages about what it means to be a man, woman, or non-binary person.
- Ways to question assumptions, identify bias, and recognize underlying messages in texts.
- The concept of positionality (i.e. how one's background, identity, and experience shape one's perspective).
- The impact of gender stereotypes and societal expectations on different groups. For instance, Black girls often face hyper-sexualization and adultification, where they are perceived as more mature and less innocent than their peers, which may lead to different treatment when it comes to reporting gender-based violence.

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

SCO: Students will investigate how gender norms, roles, and stereotypes are expressed.

Ongoing Assessment: What am I looking for?

Students can:

- Identify examples of gender norms, roles, and stereotypes in different texts, media, and real-world situations.
- Explain where gender expectations come from and how they have been shaped by culture, communities, history, or society.
- Describe how language and imagery are used to reinforce or challenge gender norms and stereotypes.
- Reflect on these gender expectations impact people's identities, opportunities, or choices.

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning

- Use identity wheels or reflection prompts (e.g. what messages have I received about gender throughout my life?) to help students consider their own experiences and assumptions before analysing external representations.
- Deconstruct ads, music videos, or social media posts using questions like: What gender roles are shown? Who has power? Who is passive? What's being normalised or excluded?
- Use a text set (e.g. poems, short stories, articles, song lyrics, novels, biographies, non-fiction texts, etc.) that portray different gender expectations. Have students annotate examples of gender norms, roles, or stereotypes across texts.
- Have students create a digital collage representing how gender roles and stereotypes are used in the media today and include a written explanation connecting choices to cultural messages, power, and impact.
- Create two-voice poems or monologues exploring conflicting gender expectations.
- Present a scene, image, or excerpt and ask: Whose voices or experiences are missing? What stereotypes are reinforced? What's being questioned?
- Build classroom anchor charts to define gender roles, stereotypes, and examples of resistance. Maintain a class wall or digital board where students post recurring stereotypes they find in texts, with sticky notes or comments showing how those messages have evolved or been challenged.
- Pair a traditional text with a modern reinterpretation that challenges its gender roles.
- Have students take on the role of a character from a text who embodies or resists a gender stereotype. In "hot seat" interviews, classmates ask the character questions about their beliefs, decisions, and experiences with gender norms.
- In small groups, students can create visual timelines showing how gender representation has shifted over decades in film, song, literature, or advertising. Include key historical or cultural moments (e.g., suffrage, #MeToo, marriage equality). Students can also compare timelines across cultural contexts or identities (e.g., Indigenous vs. Western depictions of masculinity). Teach students how to convey information visually by modeling layout, emphasis, use of symbols, and concise captioning. Encourage reflection on how design choices shape meaning and influence audience understanding of gender norms.
- Provide word banks, bilingual dictionaries, and visual glossaries for EAL students, as well as sentence stems for discussion and writing (e.g. The text reinforces the idea that…, This stereotype suggests that…, The author challenges gender norms by…). Graphic organizers are also helpful.

Suggestions for Ongoing Assessment: How can I gather evidence?

Text Annotation with Reflection Journal

What it looks like:

- Students annotate texts to highlight examples of gender roles or stereotypes, language or visuals that reinforce or challenge norms, and power dynamics between characters or groups. They then write a reflection to the prompt: What messages about gender are being communicated in this text? How do they connect to real-world expectations?

Think-Pair-Share + Teacher Observations

What it looks like:

- In pairs before a whole class discussion students respond to prompts like: Where do we see gender expectations shaping a character's choices? Is this stereotype being reinforced or resisted? How do you know? Teachers can assess discussions using a checklist with "look-fors" like uses vocabulary accurately, makes connections between text and real-world messages, and begins to question underlying assumptions and power structures

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.			
Gender Roles, Norms, and Stereotypes	Power Dynamics and Gender	Perceptions of Consent	Social Norms and Bystander Behaviour

Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will investigate the relationship between power dynamics and gender.

This is about:

Exploring how power functions within and across gendered relationships, and how factors like identity, communication, and social structures shape who holds power and how it is used or resisted.

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:	
Power Power Dynamics Dominant Voice Patriarchy Resistance Silencing	Privilege Oppression Agency Intersectionality Conformity

Building Background Knowledge

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

- Power as a social concept. Power isn't just about control; it's about access, influence, and visibility. It exists in relationships, systems (e.g. education, law, media) and structures (e.g. patriarchy), and it can be visible (e.g. laws, rules) or invisible (e.g. biases, expectations, body language). It is also context-dependent, shifting depending on situations or roles.
- Patriarchy and colonialism have historically granted more power to white, cisgender men and marginalized others. People can hold privilege in some areas and be marginalized in others. Some groups experience gendered power dynamics more differently due to race, class, ability, sexuality, etc.
- Power is expressed through language, tone, silence, body language, and who is allowed and not allowed to speak. Silencing, interruption, and tone-policing are examples of how gendered power plays out in conversations. Media and texts often normalize power imbalances in how people are portrayed or whose voice is prioritized.

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

SCO: Students will investigate the relationship between power dynamics and gender.

Ongoing Assessment: What am I looking for?

Students can:

- Identify examples of power dynamics in relationships and explain how they relate to gender roles and expectations.
- Describe how language or silence is used to maintain or challenge power in gendered interactions.
- Recognize how power functions differently for people based on gender and other aspects of identity (e.g. race, class, sexuality).
- Explain how authors, creators, or characters reinforce or resist power imbalances related to gender in texts or media.

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning

- Use real-life scenarios to introduce power dynamics. Present everyday examples and ask: Who holds power? How is it communicated? How does gender influence this dynamic?
- Analyse dialogue from texts or media. Choose scenes from short stories, novels, plays, or films. Have students analyse: Who speaks most? Who interrupts or stays silent? How does body language reflect power?
- Create personal or character-based positionality maps (e.g. gender, race, class, ability) to reflect on how multiple identities shape power. Discuss how power can shift based on context.
- Compare advertisements (e.g. some targeted to men, some to women). Ask students: How are gender and power portrayed? Who is active and who is passive? Who makes decisions? Students can create a media piece that challenges traditional power portrayals.
- Examine an image (e.g. political cartoon, photo, ad). Ask students: Who is centered? Who is in the background? What indicates status or dominance? How might this be different if the genders were switched? How can these images be changed to show a power balance?
- When reading or viewing texts, students can track who has or demonstrates power at points or who remains silent at pivotal moments.
- Engage in a silent discussion. Post prompts around the classroom like: When do people stay silent and why? How can silence give power? How can it take it away? How can body language, tone eye contact show who has power in a situation? What are signs that power is changing in a friendship or relationship? What causes those changes? Students can respond using sticky notes or adding to chart paper.
- Discuss how certain words, tones, or speaking patterns (e.g. interruptions, passive voice, politeness) reflect power. Students could analyse speeches or interviews with this lens in mind.
- For EAL students provide sentence stems like “This character holds power because…”, “The power dynamic shifts when…”, “Gender affects this situation because…”. Co-create anchor charts for vocabulary words like power, privilege, silencing, and agency. Use graphic organizers to track examples of power and gender across multiple texts.

Suggestions for Ongoing Assessment: How can I gather evidence?

Power Mapping Task

What it looks like:

- Students create a visual or written map showing how power functions in a relationship or scene, highlighting who holds power, how it's communicated, and how gender influences the dynamic. They can include the role of language, silence, social norms, and power shifts in the power dynamics.

Microblog or Media Response Post

What it looks like:

- Students write a short response (150-200 words) to a media clip, social media post, or article analyzing how power and gender are portrayed and whether power is reinforced or challenged.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.			
Gender Roles, Norms, and Stereotypes	Power Dynamics and Gender	Perceptions of Consent	Social Norms and Bystander Behaviour

Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will question how depictions of gender roles and norms influence perceptions of consent in relationships.

This is about:

Exploring how media and literary portrayals of gender roles and expectations shape the way people understand, interpret, and respond to consent in relationships.

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 lesson content and explicitly teaching this vocabulary, in advance, to increase EAL/FAL students' access to the academic content.

Vocabulary

You can choose the new vocabulary most relevant to your lesson each day to teach, for example:	
Consent Coercion Boundaries Romanticization	Power Imbalance Double Standards Social Conditioning Normalization

Building Background Knowledge

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

- What is meant by consent. Consent is a clear, ongoing, and enthusiastic "yes" and not just the absence of "no." It must be freely given and can be withdrawn at any time. Non-verbal cues, tone, and power dynamics affect consent.
- The concepts of coercion, pressure, silence, and manipulation.
- The notion that texts are not neutral, as they reflect and shape societal values. Repetition of certain portrayals can normalize problematic ideas (e.g. romanticizing persistence).
- Characters' or people's actions around consent often reflect power imbalances or gendered assumptions. Power imbalances can be based on age, gender, status, or social expectations. Teach students to consider who holds power in a relationship or scene and how that influences consent.
- Agency, the ability to act freely, can be shaped by gender norms.

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

SCO: Students will question how depictions of gender roles and norms influence perceptions of consent in relationships.

Ongoing Assessment: What am I looking for?

Students can:

- Identify how gender roles and norms are portrayed in texts or media.
- Explain how these portrayals affect the way people perceive consent.
- Describe how traditional gender expectations can create confusion or pressure in situations involving consent.
- Describe how traditional gender expectations can create confusion or pressure in situations involving consent.
- Question whether the messages in a text support healthy, respectful understandings of consent.

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning

- Analyse media clips by showing short film or TV clips (e.g. romantic comedies, music videos, advertisements) that portray dating or relationship dynamics. Discuss questions like: What gender roles are shown? How is consent communicated or not? Is anyone pressured or silent?
- Explore common tropes like "persistence = romance" or "no means try harder" that are often present in classic films, Disney movies and fairytales, or YA novels.
- Deconstruct dialogue between two characters. Have students annotate where consent is clearly communicated, assumptions are made based on gender, or where pressure, silence, or miscommunication occurs. They could then rewrite the scene demonstrating clearer, more respectful communication.
- Present various relationship scenarios involving communication, mixed signals, or assumptions. In small groups, students can sort them into categories, clear consent, unclear consent, or no consent, and explain their thinking.
- Read excerpts from fiction or nonfiction texts where gender roles impact character behaviour in relationships. Discuss how gender expectations influence how these characters give or interpret consent.
- For EAL/FAL students use word banks and anchor charts for key vocabulary. Use sentence stems like "This message suggests that…", "Because the character is _____, they are expected to…"

Suggestions for Ongoing Assessment: How can I gather evidence?

"Consent in the Text" Tracking Tool

What it looks like:

- Students collaboratively or individually track how gender roles and consent are portrayed in texts or media using a class anchor chart or graphic organizer. They note who holds power, how consent is communicated or not, and whether portrayals reinforce or challenge healthy understanding of consent.

Perspective Response

What it looks like:

- Students write a short response from the perspective of an audience member or critic, reflecting on how a text or media example portrays gender and consent. They can consider what messages are being sent about consent, how gender roles influence the message, and whether the portrayal is harmful, helpful or mixed.

GCO: Students will analyse issues related to gender-based violence through a variety of texts.			
Gender Roles, Norms, and Stereotypes	Power Dynamics and Gender	Perceptions of Consent	Social Norms and Bystander Behaviour

Specific Curriculum Outcome: Students will analyse how social norms influence the ways people respond as bystanders

This is about:

Examining how societal expectations and unwritten rules shape whether people choose to speak up, stay silent, or take action when they witness harm or injustice.

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 Passive Bystander Active Bystander Upstander Social Norms	Peer Pressure Complicity Bystander Effect Diffusion of Responsibility

Building Background Knowledge

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

- Social norms as the unwritten rules or expectations about how people "should" behave. Explain norms differ by context, culture, gender, and peer group. Discuss how norms can promote positive behaviour or harmful behaviour.
- The concept of a bystander and distinguish between passive and active bystanders and upstanders. Discuss the idea that bystanders are not neutral; doing nothing can still have consequences.
- How peer pressure, fear of judgement, or desire to fit in can prevent people from intervening even if they believe something is wrong. Introduce the concept of conformity and why people follow the group, even when it goes against their values and causes harm.
- How power dynamics can affect who feels able to speak up (e.g. bystander vs. authority figure). Introduce the importance of individual responsibility even when others fail to act. Discuss the idea that courage and ethical actions are skills and not inherent traits some people possess.

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

SCO: Students will analyse how social norms influence the ways people respond as bystanders

Ongoing Assessment: What am I looking for?

Students can:

- Identify examples of social norms that influence how people act in different situations.
- Describe different ways people respond as bystanders and what influences their choices.
- Explain how social pressure and group expectations can lead people to stay silent or go along with harmful behaviour.
- Reflect on how bystanders can challenge harmful norms and take action to support others.

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning

- Using a short story, news article or classroom scenario, students create a visual web that maps a person or character's relationships, actions, and silences. Include dotted lines or mute icons to show where a person or character could have acted but didn't.
- Present a variety of fictional or real-life scenarios (e.g. bullying, exclusion, harassment, online hate) and ask students to sort by passive bystander, reluctant upstander, active upstander. Discuss what social norms might influence each type of response.
- Show film or tv clips or excerpts from novels or news articles that involve bystanders and pause at key moments to ask: What pressures are influencing the bystander? What norm is keeping them silent? What would you do, and why?
- After reading a story or novel, watching a film, or exploring a real event, students create a profile of a bystander in the text, including what they did or didn't do, what social norms influenced their behaviour, and what alternative actions they could have take. They can then create a resistance profile for someone who defies harmful norms.
- Co-create an anchor chart with students titled "Social Norms that Silence or Empower Bystanders." Have students add examples from texts, media, or real life.
- Set up a gallery walk with chart paper and assign each student a persona (e.g. silent bystander, someone who regrets not acting, someone who spoke up, someone who was harmed). Students respond to the prompt on each chart paper using "I" statements from that perspective. The prompts could be: "What stops me from speaking up, even when I want to?", "When I stay silent, I tell myself…", "If I speak up, I hope that…", "The cost of silence can be…", "Courage looks like…"
- For EAL students, use visual prompts, like photos, video clips, and comic strips, to introduce bystander situations before using text-heavy examples. Remember to turn on closed captioning for films. Model norms using real-life school-based examples. Provide time for small-group discussions with sentence starters or sentence frames before whole-class discussions, like:
  - In this situation, the person didn't act because….
  - A social norm that influenced this is….
  - If I were in this situation, I would….

Suggestions for Ongoing Assessment: How can I gather evidence?

Bystander Role Reflection Cards

What it looks like:

- After reading a text or viewing a media clip, students take on the perspective of a character who witnesses harm and complete a short reflection card. They can respond to prompts like "What stopped me from acting?" or "What social expectations influenced my choice?" Bystander Spectrum Line with Justification

What it looks like:

- Students place a character or person on a "Bystander Response Spectrum" (e.g. Passive-Hesitant-Upstander). They then justify their placement by explaining how social norms, peer pressure, or internal conflict shaped the response.

Tying it all Together:

Throughout their work on this outcome, students explored how gender roles and norms are expressed in texts and society, and how these gender expectations shape power in relationships. They examined how depictions of gender influence perceptions of consent, and how silence, pressure, or social expectations can complicate communication. Students also analysed how social norms impact bystander behaviour, recognizing the factors that influence whether someone speaks up or stays silent.

Assessing the Outcome - Sample Suggestion:

Gender Roles, Power, Bystanders, and Consent: A Public Awareness Project

Students create a public awareness product (e.g., public service announcement, social media campaign, or poster series) to communicate key messages about gender roles, consent, healthy relationships, and bystander behaviour. Their project should include references to texts studied in class and offer a critique or response to real-world media portrayals related to these themes.

To support their public awareness project, students can:

- Draw on textual evidence: Use examples from literature, nonfiction, and media texts studied to support their messages and highlight how gender roles and power dynamics are portrayed.
- Critique media norms: Analyse and respond to common stereotypes, tropes, or silences in real-world media that influence perceptions of consent, relationships, and social responses.
- Connect ideas: Show how gender norms and power dynamics intersect with bystander action or inaction, and these patterns affect relationships and social responses.
- Include an artist's statement: Write a brief explanation that summarizes their project's key message, explains connections to texts studied, and discusses how the project challenges or affirms social norms and media portrayals.
- Reflect on Impact: Consider the purpose of their project: What message do they want audiences to take away? How can media be used to disrupt harmful norms or promote healthier understandings?

This task allows students to demonstrate how their learning across the four specific curriculum outcomes comes together in a creative, critical, and socially engaged way.

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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