



## Working Towards Gender Equality: Education Underlined by Equality

Gender inequalities and gender biases, both blatant and subtle, are causing girls and boys to be raised in separate societies, with separate expectations, and widely diverging treatment based on gender. This is not preparing children for their future together or enabling them to fulfill their own potential. Parents and educators can help reverse this trend by helping children to learn a variety of interests and skills. To help children avoid gender bias, it is important to first understand how children learn gender roles.

Children learn about the concept of gender through socialization. The designation of pink for infant girls and blue for infant boys begins the social process which teaches girls to be passive, dependent, and submissive and boys to be active, independent and dominant. Through the ways they are held, spoken to, played with, and dressed, infants learn societal expectations for gender-appropriate behavior. By the age of five they see gender as a fixed and permanent characteristic of the social world, learning gender roles and gender stereotypes from their parents; their toys; television; children's literature, and especially schools and teachers.

Books and literature help to mold children's views of gender role expectations. Most children's television shows portray males and females in stereotypical gender roles and television commercials aimed at audiences of children bolster gender role stereotypes by portraying boys with cars and guns and girls with dolls and anything pink. UNA Wales believes that reading the right book can be a transformative experience, and it is the intention of both organisations to help children start their reading journey on the right path.

Studies have shown that as girls reach adolescence, their brave, forthright child selves often disappear, to be replaced by young women who are unsure of themselves and who hesitate to take the lead. These books were chosen not only for their positive messages, but also for their engaging, high-quality writing. Boys should be encouraged to read these books too, to see strong girls and women in action.

Below is a list of books, relevant to age, which UNA Wales believes would place gender equality at the forefront of classroom activity. It is proposed that the week commencing the 19 November, until Friday 23 November, should be utilised as a week celebrating gender equality. This week has been chosen, as it falls around the 20 November: Universal Children's Day, and the 25 November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. By recognising that there is still a

great need to push for gender equality in all aspects of life, and by giving Wales' children an education not tainted by gender stereotypes, together we can stamp out gender discrimination in schools for good.

Support UNA Wales in our campaign of 'working towards gender equality', and take part this November and beyond!

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**[The Night Pirates](#)** by Peter Harris

Fiction, ages 3-5. One night, young Tom is awoken by noises outside his house. He peeps out of the window and what should he see but GIRL PIRATES stealing the front of his house! Tom joins their pirate adventure across the high seas to an island where some rather lazy and silly grown-up pirates are guarding their treasure. Tom and the girl-pirates make a surprise attack and are soon off on the seas once more with the treasure!

**[Drum, Chavi, Drum!](#)** by Mayra Dole

Fiction, ages 4-6. Chavi loves to drum, and wants to drum at the Calle Ocho street festival in Miami. However, her music teacher thinks that girls should not drum, so she is not chosen to be in the parade. She disguises herself, attends the festival, and shows off her drumming skills, thereby earning herself a place on the school float. English and Spanish text. (Children's Book Press)

**[Princess Backwards](#)**, by Jane Gray

Fiction, ages 4-6. A cute, funny book about a princess named Fred who lives in a land where everything is done backwards. Except that she has trouble doing things backwards and everyone makes fun of her and calls her Princess Backwards! However, when a dragon threatens the kingdom Fred saves the day by running forwards and throwing water at it. The dragon becomes her lifelong friend because all he ever wanted was a big drink of water! (Second Story Press)

**[My Mother the Mail Carrier](#)**, by Inez Maury

Fiction, ages 4-6. Lupita's mother is a mail carrier, and Lupita sure is proud of her! Mother is strong enough to carry a whole sack of mail and brave enough not to be scared of dogs on her route. The pictures are full of details to keep a child's interest. (Feminist Press)

**[The Paper Bag Princess](#)**, by Robert Munsch

Fiction, ages 4-6. Princess Elizabeth wears expensive clothes and plans to marry Prince Ronald. When a dragon burns up her castle and clothes and carries Ronald away, Elizabeth dons a paper bag to rescue him. She outwits the dragon and enters its lair, but Prince Ronald turns up his nose at her attire. She promptly leaves him to his fate. (Annick Press)

**[The Goat Lady](#)**, by Jane Bregoli

Nonfiction, ages 6-8. This is the true story of Noelie Houle, a poor elderly woman who raised goats in rural Massachusetts. Her neighbors did not see Noelie's determination and selflessness. They only

saw her run-down house and her unruly animals. Then, a neighbor who is also a portrait painter created portraits of Noeli, which were shown in the town hall. The portraits helped viewers to see Noeli's strength and character, and to appreciate her way of life. (Tilbury House Publishers)

[Riparia's River](#), by Michael Caduto

Fiction, ages 6-8. Four children (two girls and two boys) discover that their favorite swimming hole is smelly and overgrown with slimy green stuff. A mysterious woman who calls herself "Riparia" shows them that the water has become polluted due to herbicides and fertilizers from a nearby farm. With Riparia's guidance, the children work with the farmer to solve the problem. This book combines an environmental message with an example of youth leadership and initiative. Highly recommended!(Tilbury House)

[Dragonskin Slippers](#), by Jessica Day George

Fiction, 7-9. Fifteen-year-old Creel is floored when her aunt suggests they sacrifice her to a dragon to attract the attention of a marriageable knight. But when the dragon appears, Creel bargains for her life - and ends up with an unusual pair of blue slippers.

[Sarah's Boat](#), by Douglas Alvord

Fiction, ages 8-10. Sarah's grandfather teaches her how to sail a small boat, and Sarah decides to enter the town's Labor Day race to see if she can beat Tommy Watkins, who made fun of her boat. Filled with diagrams and details about sailing. (Tilbury House Publishers)

[Before the Lark](#), by Irene Bennett Brown

Fiction, ages 8-10. Jocey has a harelip, and in 1888 Kansas City she's teased mercilessly. She flees to her father's abandoned farm with her grandmother, and manages to raise crops and make a living for them both. When neighbors are kind to her she decides to seek out friends instead of hiding herself. Then she hears about an operation to fix her mouth, and she travels alone to the hospital and gets the operation. Jocey's strong sense of self despite people's reaction to her face is inspiring. (Blue Heron Publishing)

[Women of the Lights](#), by Candace Fleming

Nonfiction, ages 9-11. True-life stories of the daring and difficult lives of several women lighthouse keepers, many of whom rescued men from the ocean and kept the lighthouses shining despite storms and earthquakes. (Albert Whitman Publishers)

[I am Lavina Cumming](#), by Susan Lowell

Fiction, ages 9-11. After her mother dies, 10-year-old Lavina Cumming must travel alone from Arizona to California in 1905 to live with her aunt and be raised as a "young lady." Lavina misses her exuberant Arizona life of riding horses and killing rattlesnakes. Her survival skills come in handy during a San Francisco earthquake when she helps rescue her aunt and cousin. Despite her homesickness, Lavina decides to stay in California to study and eventually become a teacher. A very satisfying read. (Milkweed Editions)

[How Ella Grew an Electric Guitar](#), by Orly Sade and Ellen Neuborne.

Fiction, ages 8-10. A fun introduction to financial literacy. In the process of figuring out how to earn money to buy an electric guitar, eleven-year-old Ella learns about the stock market, running a small business, marketing, and business loans.

[The Moon Over Crete](#), by Jyotsna Sreenivasan

Fiction, ages 9-11. Eleven-year-old Lily travels back in time 3,500 years to ancient Crete, where women and men were equal. Lily has to figure out how to warn the Queen about an impending fatal attack by patriarchal warriors. A fast-paced adventure and one of the only children's novels that deals with sexism head-on and helps kids imagine a world of equality. (Smooth Stone Press)



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