

# Masculinity

## Secondary Lesson Plan

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### Source

*The Big Picture*

### Learning area

English

### Level

Middle secondary

### Description

*The Big Picture* develops students' skills in viewing visual texts with critical understanding and appreciation. It provides explanations of key concepts, a wide range of student activities and a large number of images, including sixteen full-colour pages, for student discussion and exploration. There are four chapters: 'News and photojournalism', 'National identity', 'Gender' and 'Sport'. 'Masculinity' is one of the units from chapter 3. *The Big Picture* provides images which students can use to complete the suggested activities for the unit.

### Purpose

To develop students' awareness of the way in which visual texts reflect ideas about masculinity.

### Duration

Approximately 45 minutes

### Possible outcomes

These activities contribute to the achievement of the following Reading and Viewing outcomes:

- **Contextual understanding**  
6.6 Considers the contexts in which texts were or are created and how these are reflected in texts.
- **Linguistic structures and features**  
6.7 Compares linguistic structures and features of texts to highlight their similarities and differences in form and meaning.  
7.7 Identifies and comments on the impact of techniques intended to shape readers' and viewers' interpretations of and reactions to texts.

## Materials required

Magazines for cutting up.

## Procedure

## Explanation

*Provide the following information to students*

A couple of decades ago it was safe to assume that people shared fairly similar ideas about what it meant to be masculine. This is no longer the case. Masculinity as an idea and as an image is an arena in which different views of men, male roles and masculinity struggle to be accepted as the new norm. There are different and often conflicting images of men and masculinity circulating. In popular film we can find traditional macho images of men, men dressed as and behaving as women, and men struggling to find their own identity. There is no one acceptable and universal definition of masculinity. Similarly television is now representing a much wider range of male types than it once did.

In 1987, a researcher made the following list of attributes of the typical television male:

- confidence in oneself
- lack of fear
- the ability to take control in a situation
- the ability to control other people
- the ability to look after oneself
- being a leader
- being dependable
- being successful

(Adapted from John Fiske (1987), *Television culture*, Methuen, London, pp. 261– 3)

## Activity 1

Students test these ideas and the extent to which they have changed by applying them to male characters on television with whom they are familiar. In small groups students list five or six male television personalities or characters from current or recent programs whom everyone knows. Try to get a broad range of male characters, for example:

- a daytime soap opera male
- a quiz show host
- a news reader or current affairs host
- a character from a situation comedy
- a character from a drama
- a sports reporter
- a character from an American, an Australian and a British television drama

Students discuss each character in terms of the attributes listed above. Which characters most closely fit the stereotype and which characters are very different from the stereotype? What types of shows feature characters like the men described above? Students try to make general statements about the similarities and differences in the representation of men between:

- daytime and evening television
- drama and comedy
- news and drama
- programs made by/for different cultures/cultural groups

Students summarise their findings by writing an answer to the question: To what extent has the typical television male changed since 1987? Support your answer with reference to the examples you have discussed.

### **Related products**

- [Teaching Viewing and Visual Texts: Secondary](#)
- [In the Picture](#)