

What Girls Want

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and keywords:

Jari Sinkkonen reports on the survey conducted among elementary schoolchildren in Finland and England on the lives of boys and girls. It reveals that it is difficult to be a boy nowadays. Emerging sexuality creates tensions during the prepubescent period. Boys want to go out with girls, find a girlfriend, be popular with girls. They are usually totally incapable of doing so. According to Steve Biddulph, most boys aged between 13 and 14 have doubts about whether a girl will ever like them. If pre-pubescent or pubescent boys do not learn how to 'treat girls properly', their sexual energy may turn into anger and aggression against women. The signals that boys observe in their surroundings and in the various media frequently give a far too distorted image of the kind of boy girls like, namely an athletic, broad-shouldered, cheeky, trendily dressed boy, hence a so-called 'cool macho'. What a difference between this and the suggestion made by S. Biddulph to explain to boys that girls are looking for a good-natured, attentive partner with whom they can feel safe and secure.

Similar topics:

Social competence, empathy, first love.

Materials:

The Estonian children's film (2005) Röövlirahnu Martin /Der magische Kater/ Mat The Cat

Plot: After moving to the country, ten-year old Martin finds it difficult to get used to his new surroundings. His greatest rival at school is Kevin, a spoilt, rich boy, who manages to court Maria's favour with all his fantastic possessions. Martin, on the other hand, appears to be really disaster prone. His grades are not the best and this makes his single mother unhappy.

So Martin withdraw "into his own world", a wooden house on a huge cliff. He can hardly believe his eyes when a tomcat addresses him. The bizarre creature, which can actually speak and occasionally also turns into a strong boy and does magic, becomes his friend. It is not long before the two are inseparable and together they succeed in winning Marta's heart and even solving Martin's school problems as well.

- Worksheets
- 5 photos (copied several times)
- Speech and thought bubbles (stickers)
- Pencils
- Glue sticks
- DVD with the film (2 film sequences: sequence 1: 39.39 – 40.27 minutes; sequence II: 40.27 – 42.09 minutes)
- Slips of paper (pink, blue)
- Blue, pink box

Duration:

3 to 4 teaching units of 45 minutes each

Number of participants:

from 4 boys upwards (and girls)

Age:

From the age of 9

Aims:

- to express what is happening on the photos;
- develop imagination and empathy;
- improve the understanding of one's own gender and the opposite gender;
- compare one's own production with the original, find and name differences.

(Short) explanation:

Each boy thinks for himself initially what girls must feel, think and want when they find themselves alone in a room with a boy. (The teacher keeps the associograms. He compiles a summary associogram on a poster during the group work and hangs it up after the poster presentation).

The children then form groups. Each group receives an envelope with photos and a worksheet with questions. The groups compile a photostory with thought and speech bubbles. The posters with the photostories are hung up in the room and presented by the respective group. The teacher must ensure that no vulgar or offensive language, *inter alia*, is used.

The teacher hangs the associogram up and comments on it.

The appropriate film sequence is then shown. The boys complete a table (AB 3) after watching the film sequence.

The teacher moderates and leads the ensuing discussion, and the differences between the photostories and the film are scrutinised.

The boys are then given the opportunity to correct the associogram if they have changed their mind after watching the film sequence. The boys then say how the story might continue.

The next film sequence in which a furious boy leaves home is watched together. The teacher moderates the discussion by the whole group.

At the end the boys can act as advisors and keep the relevant advice "in a box". The teacher then reads the advice out loud.

Reflection:

The following are used for the reflection:

- The associogram compiled by the teacher: what and how the group has thought?
- After watching the film sequence AB 3: How did we imagine it? How was it in the film?

Variations (Continuation):

Ideal for classes.

The group of girls is given the same tasks. The boys then look at the results of the girls' work (associogram and posters) and vice versa. The teacher helps them to find and discuss the differences.

Part 2: Theoretical Background and Further Information

Sexuality is influenced by many cultural factors, which are in turn affected by social factors. The traditional purpose of male and female sexuality is to produce offspring, and different societies have different rules governing the moment from which and the conditions under which sexuality may be practiced.

The period of development from a child to an adult is characterised by growth, increases in weight, hormonal changes and the formation of secondary sexual characteristics. Genes and hormones play an important role during the onset of puberty. Development is, however, also largely dependent on environmental influences, healthy food, stress, friends, family and social milieu. Moreover, sexual development is influenced by a variety of cultural factors.

Sexuality is part of the personality of every human being and shows whether he is in harmony with his own body, how he perceives the other gender and his relationship to other people. Sexuality and sex education are of course not just a vital issue in puberty, they play an essential role throughout life. The sexual conduct of an individual is invariably determined by his parents – even if sexuality is treated as taboo – and sexuality is largely determined by experiences in early childhood, and religious ideas, social and cultural background, an individual's own convictions, value systems and views.

The onset of puberty between the age of 11 and 14 alters the psyche and in particular the physical appearance of young people at breakneck speed. Girls and boys experience spurts of growth, increase in weight and a wide range of physical changes. The difficult period of puberty is easiest for adolescents to cope with if the physical changes take place simultaneously. Adolescents are perturbed by any deviations. Boys whose development is retarded are frequently rejected and their self-esteem plummets. In many cases this results in them smoking and drinking alcohol in front of their schoolmates to gain acceptance and attention.

When puberty commences and the body changes, many adolescents do not feel at home in their "new skin". Adolescents often appear to be disoriented. Eating disorders and drug abuse are typical for this age group as well as unpleasant acne. Teenagers often express the problems that they experience in becoming adults in a wide variety of ways: girls react in an overtly "silly" and rebellious manner, boys are slightly aggressive or completely withdrawn.

Boys largely take their cue from male role models. It is very important to them to maintain a cool exterior; they rarely talk to their friends about their first love and feelings, and also prefer to hide them from their parents. It is very important for boys who are in love to be strong and have 'everything under control'. Boys are consequently more insecure than girls as far as their first love is concerned.

Since it is difficult for teenagers to verbalize their feelings and thoughts, to understand the members of the opposite sex better and accept the way they act, schools also need to find ways of dealing with this issue.

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Worksheet 1

Write down all your thoughts. Then fold the page over and give it to the teacher. You don't need to write your name on the page.

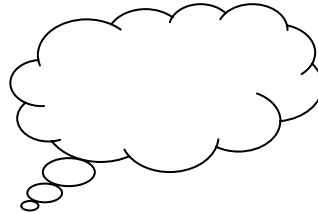
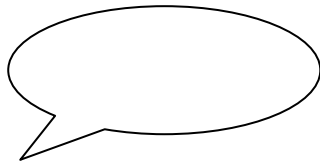


Worksheet 2

Compile a photostory

You will be given 5 photos.

1. Decide as a group the possible sequence for the pictures.
2. Then describe the situation. Where is it happening?
3. What happened shortly before?
4. What is she feeling?
5. What is he feeling?
6. Use thought bubbles to reproduce the thoughts of the individuals.



7. What are the individuals talking about together?
8. How do you think the story will continue?

Worksheet 3

Compare your photostory and the situation in the film sequence:

In our photostory		In the film sequence	
The boy's feelings and thoughts	The girl's feelings and thoughts	The boy's feelings and thoughts	The girl's feelings and thoughts

Are there any differences? What are they?

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Help from the teacher after the 2nd film sequence; discussion with the entire group

- Did you have any idea that that this could happen?
- Why is the boy furious?
- How does he offend the girl?
- Do you understand why the girl is crying?
- Is she only really crying because Kevin has said that he is not going to take her with him any more?

Worksheet 4

Individual work

Do you want to say anything to the two individuals or give them any advice?
Then write down your advice for the boy on the blue paper and on the pink paper for the girl.





