

# "Fashion for Girls" and "Fashion for Boys"

## Fashion shows, to our liking!

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### Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

#### Background and Keywords:

Boys as well as girls are more than ever before exposed to consumer advertising messages coming from a variety of mass media sources. Businesses are well aware of the active involvement of children, at increasingly younger ages, in the consumer society, and therefore they take their preferences seriously when it comes to fashion and trademarks, *brands and labels*.

In this respect children and adolescents are re-enacting everything that adults consider to be important. Not only consumption-related issues, but also education has an impact on "children's decisions about how they dress and how they want to appear.

From a certain age onwards, decisions about the clothes they wear are left to them in the same way that adults make decisions about the clothes that they wear. (Oelkers 2005/a). Moreover, MESSNER (2000) stresses gender discrepancy in terms of the consumption patterns of children and youth, like in the case of adults: Barbie dolls and Lego transformers do not interest girls and boys in the same way at all, quite to the contrary.

Keywords:

Fashion for boys; fashion for girls; gender-related criteria in the choice of clothing articles; fashion clothing; trademarks, brands, labels; the consumption behaviour of children.

#### Similar topics:

Media influence; reflection on personal buying decisions; self-assessment.

#### Materials:

- Worksheet 1, Worksheet 2: Prepare a collage about "Fashions for girls" and "Fashions for boys";
- Chart for worksheets 1 and 2;
- Pictures for worksheet 2;
- Paper dolls for worksheets 1 and 2;
- Internet access with printing possibilities (one computer per group);
- Large brown or cardboard paper for the collages;
- Felt-tip pens;
- Scissors, glue, BlueTack.

#### Duration:

1 to 2 hours

**Number of participants:**

- Can be used with any classroom size (divided into small, homogeneous groups of three to four pupils)

**Age:**

- As of about 8 years of age (2nd academic grade)
- Well suited for classes such as mother tongue instruction, foreign language instruction, natural and social science studies and manual training, art class, media instruction, etc.), afternoon supervision, youth activities and project work.

**Aims:**

- Encourage communication (expression of feedback);
- Promotion of oral expression (free and personal expression of opinion);
- Promotion of self-assurance;
- Formulating hypotheses and expectations (typical "fashion for girls", typical "fashion for boys", what is typical?);
- Promotion of social skills (group work, reaching a consensus);
- Reducing clichés (typical for girls, typical for boys);
- Working on stereotypes (reducing stereotypes).

**(Short) explanation:**

Working in small, homogenous groups, the children should collect pictures of clothing articles in fashion for children, from various Internet pages. Then they should make a collage out of them. Lastly, they should compare their findings recorded on a chart.

Procedure: (important: Internet access and printing possibilities is required!):

1. The children should be broken down into homogenous groups of three to four participants of their choice.
2. They search the Internet for pages containing illustrations and pictures of various fashionable clothing articles for girls and boys (e.g. the OTTO-Catalogue <http://www.otto.de>, → CHILDREN → GIRLS sizes 92-188 or BOYS sizes 92-188).
3. They look through the pictures and discuss within their group about those they like best. Finally they choose about 10 to 12 articles of clothing and accessories for girls and boys respectively. They should have put together a complete "wardrobe" including the following: **accessories, dress-up fashion, trousers, jackets & Co., pullover & cardigans, skirts & dresses, shoes, shirts & sweatshirts.**
4. The illustrations should be printed out, cut out and pasted onto two collages entitled: "Fashion for girls" and "Fashion for boys". The children can use both of the paper dolls (the boy and girl) and decorate the collages in any way they like. **(Exercise 1)**
5. The collages made by the groups are affixed to the wall for comparison. Using the chart, the children clearly describe what the clothing articles for boys/girls look like and what colour is typical. **(Exercise 2)**

6. In the plenary session, the children should discuss the findings (differences and similarities between girls' and boys' fashion), with the teacher on hand to stimulate discussion (see reflection).

**Reflection:**

In the plenary classroom, the findings from the collages and the charts can be discussed according to the following aspects and impressions. (The teacher can orientate discussions to assist the children spontaneously coming up themselves with gender-specific differences/similarities.)

- Which articles of clothing can be worn by both girls and boys?
- Which can *only* be worn by girls or *only* worn by boys? Why?
- Which articles of clothing/colours/designs are typical for girls or for boys?
- Do some clothes "depend on a person's age"? Which ones are these?
- Which articles of clothing do you like best? Did the other groups make similar decisions?
- What do you think, which clothes would look good on you and which ones would not? Why?
- Is your choice of clothes influenced by what your friends say? If the answer is yes, how exactly?
- What is your favourite article of clothing? What do you feel at your best in?
- What do you find not in fashion? Justify your answer.
- Which brands are especially popular for girls/boys?

**Variations (continuation):****Suggestion 1:**

If Internet is not available, or for some other reasons the children are not able to work on the computer, then use worksheet 2 onto which different pictures of clothing articles would be included. The children can select from these pictures and prepare both of their collages. (This variation takes less time and can also be used with younger children.)

**Suggestion 2a:**

The children are asked to wear their favourite outfit including accessories (purse, belt, satchel, key chain, jewellery, sunglasses, sports equipment, etc) on a day decided in advance and to present them in the plenary classroom session. The questions outlined in the reflection can also be used in this case to provide feedback.

**Suggestion 2b:**

Similar to suggestion 2a, however the presentations will be done in pairs. The children can ask each other questions. This gives the pupils the opportunity of getting to know one of their classmates better or from a new perspective. (They can also give their classmate feedback on his/her clothes: i.e. Do they like them and why? Pair work is ideal for this.)