

# **Transgenderism**



**a talking points lesson plan**

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## Introduction

What does transgender mean? Use your own words to explain what it means.

Does your country have transgender people? How are they regarded by others?

What do you think of transgender people?

## **Born in the Wrong Body**

### ***Read Simon's account below:***

I knew I was in the wrong body from the age of five.

Some people say it is impossible to know at that age. But for me, it was like a lightning bolt of truth. I just knew at that precise time that I wanted to be a girl.

I don't think I really spoke to my mum about it back then. At five, I was too young to be able to form in words what I was thinking. But I did tell her that I didn't like dressing in boy's clothes. I said I preferred girl's clothes.

It was the same with toys too. At Christmas time, my mum and dad bought me things like a football, an action man and other boy-related toys and games. I didn't like any of them.

My cousin — a girl — got things like dolls and dollhouses and toy cosmetics. I saw her toys and the clothes she wore and I just thought they were amazing.

All the colours and the way they seemed to shine in the light. I just wanted to play with her toys and wear her clothes.

My aunt caught me in my cousin's room when we were about ten years old. I was playing with my cousin and trying on one of

her dresses. I had this hair slide that she always wore and put it in my hair. I just loved the way I looked.

But my aunt didn't see it that way. She spoke to my mum and I was not allowed to go into my cousin's room anymore. Every time we visited their house, I had to stay downstairs where they could see me.

Then things took an even bigger change at school. When I became a teenager, I realised that I was not the same as the other boys.

While they all played football and talked about computer games with guns and shooting. All I wanted to talk about was the clothes that girl singers wore or things that the girls talked about.

The boys in my school were pretty cruel — they said I was gay. But then I would confuse them by talking about how pretty some of the girls were in our class.

I was still attracted to girls — but I wanted to be one too.

I left school, then I went to university. But I hated it so I left.

I went back home for a while then moved to the city to get a job and see what I could do with my life. While I was there I met these other people who also believed they were born in the wrong body.

That is when I found out I was trans.

I read up about it and found that it was very common. I then found out that I could get an operation and I could become a woman.

So that is what I did.

I had to tell my parents about it. My mum was upset but I think she kind of knew all along. My dad was just a bit confused by it all. But he's coming round.

Now I live my life as a woman and I could not be any happier.

## Reading Comprehension Questions

How old was Simon when he first knew he might be transgender?

Did he tell anyone?

What did he tell his mother that he liked to do?

Did Simon like the gifts he received at Christmas?

What toys did he prefer to play with?

What happened when Simon was ten years old? Tell the story in your own words.

How was Simon's school life? Was he happy at school?

How long did Simon stay at university?

What did he do after university?

What did he find out in his new life in the city?

What important decision did Simon make at this time?

How did his parents feel about it?

Is Simon happy with his new life?

## Essential Vocabulary

a lightning bolt of truth	at that precise time	to form in words
to prefer	Christmas time	action man
boy-related	cousin	doll
dollhouse	cosmetics	amazing
to shine	hair slide	teenager
cruel	gay	to confuse
pretty	attracted	trans
common	operation	upset
confused	coming round	could not be happier

### Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Notebook**—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

***“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”***



## Discussion Questions

What do you think Simon means to be born in the wrong body?

Do you think this is possible? Why/why not? Explain your reasons.

Try to describe Simon's life as he grew up? What do you think his life was like?

How do you think his parents felt about him? What emotions did they go through?

Did Simon's aunt do the right thing by not allowing him to play with his cousin? Why/why not?

What do you think Simon's life was like at school?

Why do you think he left university after only one year?

When Simon told his parents that he wanted an operation to become a woman, how do you think they responded?

In the end, Simon says he is very happy. Do you believe he is? Explain your reasons.

Are there many transgender people in your country? How are they viewed in your culture?

Why do you think people are born this way?

What rights do transgender people have in your country? Do they have any?

If someone you knew told you they were trans, how would you respond? Would you stay friends with them and help them? Or forget all about them? Why?

Is it possible for a person to change their gender? Can an operation help them to become a man or a woman?

Should transgender people be allowed to do any job in the world? Why/why not?

## Debate: Transgender or Not?

*This is a debate exercise.*

Divide the class into two groups of equal number. Choose a student to act as chair for the debate. This person should ensure there is order during the debate and to make sure all people have the chance to speak.

### **The Debate**

There are a growing number of transgender people in your country. They are demanding to be heard and have equal rights as everyone else.

The two teams today are to discuss whether to accept trans people into society or not.

### **Team A**

You believe that transgender people should have no rights, just because they claim to be trans. You think that science says that people cannot decide what gender they are. People are born as male or female – and that is it.

There is no such thing as being transgender. They have a mental illness. Of course, they should be treated for this. But other people should not show sympathy for them – or agree – that they are transgender.

### **Team B**

You believe that to be transgender is a real issue and something that society needs to learn.

Trans people have great trouble fitting into society and we need to understand them and express great sympathy for their situation.

A modern society should embrace all kinds of people – including trans people.

In your teams, spend some time thinking about what you all want to say in the debate. Organise your thoughts and ideas so they make sense.

***Then when you are ready – begin the debate!***

## Role Play

*This is a role play activity.*

There are two characters in this role play.

### Friend 1

One of your good friends has told you in confidence that they believe they were born in the wrong body.

They have told you that they think they are transgender.

You are very surprised to hear this news and a little confused. So now you are talking to another friend about this.

You want to figure out what to do.

### Friend 2

A good friend of yours has told you about someone you both know very well. This person has come out as transgender.

You are very surprised to hear this news.

But now you are discussing how to deal with this friend.

Do you stay friends with this person or not?

In pairs, choose the character you wish to be in the role play.

Practise what to say in your role play. Then when you are ready, show your role play to the rest of the class.

## Writing

In this writing exercise, you are going to write a letter.

Imagine you are one of Simon's parents in the story at the beginning of the lesson. You could be his mother or father – it doesn't matter.

Now express how you feel about Simon becoming a woman.

Maybe you have come to terms with it and have accepted it. Or maybe you cannot accept it at all and you never want to see Simon again.

There could be many different emotions that you are experiencing as his mother or father.

In the letter, tell Simon how you feel.

When you have finished writing your letter, read it out in front of the class. Or you can give it to your teacher for review.

## Credits

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