

# U-niquely You Self-Portraits

## EXPLORING GENDER THROUGH SELF-PORTRAITURE

### PURPOSE OF PROJECT

When we become familiar with gender we see that most of us express gender somewhere on a continuum. What is commonly represented in popular media for “girl” and “boy” is far too limiting to adequately acknowledge the rich and layered experience we have in real life. Polar perspectives do not allow for the immense nuance that is the strength and resilience naturally built into human experience and expression. Drawing our understanding of gender expression from our own experience helps us to:

1. become familiar with our relation to gender and perceive things beyond polarity
2. acknowledge what is “real” in contrast to perpetuating “cultural myths” without awareness,
3. empathize with others from an immediate and personal position,
4. embody a more inclusive perspective for ourselves and others,
5. expand our capacity to interrupt oppressive gender perspectives while helping to support equality in our communities.

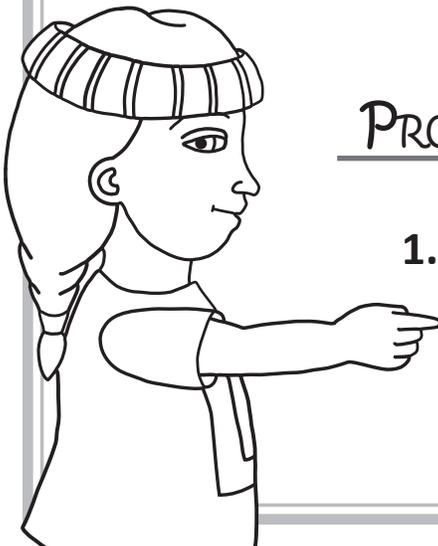
### MATERIALS

- » 2-3 sheets of paper (per student)
- » a colorful medium: pens, crayons, watercolors, pastels, etc.

30-40MINS

By focusing on creating and then viewing art about the vastness of gender expression, the educator can support a classroom experience that speaks more than words.

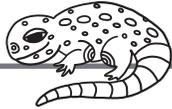
### PROCESS



1. Begin by writing on the board *girl* and *boy*. Leave a column open between these two words also. Brainstorm with the class about what activities should go under each heading. Focus on activities specifically. If the class decides an activity does not fit specifically in one or the other, write it in the middle column.

CONTINUED ON BACK >>>

## PROCESS CONTINUED



2. After you have had fun creating these lists, look at the individual activities and see who in the class likes doing them. Notice which activities are *girl*, *boy* and which fall outside of these categories in that they could be both. Question if one's gender could physically prevent someone from being able to do one of the *girl* or *boy* activities.
3. Feel free to notice that some activities may be more common or less common to a specific gender. Draw attention to seeing that there are many different ways to be and in fact there are as many different ways to be as there are students in the class. Everyone is the same in some ways and everyone is U-nique in some way.

*Guide Artists in the Following Steps:  
(for each step encourage the children to use color).*



4. Take a piece of paper and fold it in half. On one side draw yourself doing an activity that currently is commonly considered to be a "girl" activity.
5. On the other side of the paper draw yourself doing an activity that is commonly considered to be a "boy" activity. Cut paper in half dividing the two portraits.
6. Now take a new piece of paper, at the bottom (or the top) write in bold letters I AM U-NIQUE! Or just UNIQUE! You may have to write this on the board for younger children to copy. Explain that this is an important thing to learn and remember. Each person is completely different than everyone else and each person has something special that only they can do in the special way that they do it.
7. Brainstorm for a moment if necessary to find what each child's unique activity is, then instruct them to draw their self doing their special thing. This could be anything.
8. Display the very special **U-nique Art Show** in the classroom. Do not post any of the pieces of art from one student together, but mix them up. Mix all of the portraits up and if possible display them in one continuous line, in a circle around the room.
9. With the children, play a game of following the images with their eyes and noticing all the changes, the different activities and the different colors. Are there similarities? Are there differences? Notice again that there are as many different ways to be as there are students in the classroom.



Imagery on this handout is from the  
**GENDER NOW COLORING BOOK**  
and

**GENDER NOW ACTIVITY BOOK**  
**SCHOOL EDITION.**

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