



Pedagogical Pathways: *The Duchess of Malfi*

Gender

Objectives

Before, while, and after reading *The Duchess of Malfi*, these activities can help learners to:

- Establish definitions of “gender” and “sex”
- Gain a historical perspective of gender issues
- Explore and compare the notion of gender through *The Duchess of Malfi* and the Beyoncé song “If I Were a Boy”
- Support their ideas using textual evidence

Guiding Questions

1. What does it mean to be “male” or “female,” both in *The Duchess of Malfi*, as well as in today’s society?
2. How is this evidenced in the two texts?

Materials

- Writing surface for Semantic Maps warm-up activity
- Computers/laptops for the webquest
- Gender Matrix worksheet
- Audio/Visual system for listening to and watching the music video

Activities

Pre-reading: Semantic Maps

To warm up, let's brainstorm associations we have with the terms "male" and "female". You can use examples from your daily life, pop culture, etc.

- Suggested themes
 - Raising children in gender roles (toys & colors)
 - Roles in society
 - Adjectives
 - Physical & behavioral characteristics
- Connection to other leading female characters in fiction.
 - Who are they?
 - What do they have in common?

Pre-reading: Webquest

Now, let's explore actual gender roles in place during the Early Modern Era using a webquest. (Example Webquest in Appendix)

- Class debriefing.
 - What were typical roles for men and women during the Early Modern Era?
 - How did this vary by class?
 - When did people typically marry?

Pre-reading: Discussion of the title, *The Duchess of Malfi*

- Duchess vs. Duke.
 - Why is it the Duchess of Malfi and not the Duke of Malfi?
 - What does this tell us about the story to come?
- Hollywood casting.
 - What actress would you cast as the Duchess?
 - What makes you think this actress is a good fit for the role?

- **This activity can be revisited after students have read the text. Ask students if their decision of casting has changed? And if it changed, why?
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While reading: Gender Matrix

- Using a matrix (see example in Appendix)
 - Model for students, either in class or on their handout, what you expect the filled-out matrix to include (we recommend doing this in class)
 - Students will take notes on the words in the text that they associate with gender and compare them with gender norms from the Early Modern Era, as researched in their pre-reading activity.
 - Small-groups compare matrices, potentially followed by a large group discussion
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Post-reading: *The Mash-up - The Duchess of Malfi vs. "If I Were a Boy" by Beyoncé*

- Textual comparison of *The Duchess of Malfi* and "If I Were a Boy."
 - Students read "Were I a man" passage (very end of Act 3, start where Bosola reenters the scene) and compare with the song "If I Were a Boy" using a matrix OR doing a close reading.
 - Lyrics to "If I Were a Boy" and the matrix can be found in the Appendix
- Portrayal of gender in the "If I Were a Boy" video.
 - Students develop questions about the video and discuss in small groups
 - Follow-up: Large group discussion of questions developed by students
- A modern reading.
 - Re-read scene from *The Duchess of Malfi* and have students re-write scene from a modern perspective.
 - Students can act out their scene
 - Continued exploration of Gender using different characters in place the Duchess and Bosola

Appendix

Example of Webquest:

The role of women in Early Modern Europe



You can use the following websites to help find information on the gender roles of women in Early Modern Europe:

<http://www.othervoiceineme.com/othervoice.html>

(Read from the section entitled "The Issues" down to "The Problem of Knowledge")

<http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Co-Fa/Early-Modern-Europe.html>

Your username will be recorded when you submit this form. Not ? [Sign out](#)

* Required

What jobs or duties were common for women? *

What concept was used to perpetuate the male headed household? *

How did society respond to women with power? *

Send me a copy of my responses.

Instructions for creating a webquest:

- You will need a gmail account to create your webquest
- Note that the following instructions and recommended questions were selected based on the websites (found in the Form Description box). It is also possible to use different questions, but we recommend scaffolding students to find answers by giving them relevant websites.

1. Go to www.docs.google.com
2. In the upper-left-hand corner, click on “Create”
3. Select “Form” from the drop-down menu
4. Give your form a title. We recommend “The Role of Women in Early Modern Europe”
5. Under the title, click on the “Form Description” box. Type:

- You can use the following websites to help find information on the gender roles of women in Early Modern Europe:

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(Read from the section entitled "The Issues" down to "The Problem of Knowledge")

<http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Co-Fa/Early-Modern-Europe.html>

6. Click on the first, untitled question and title it “What jobs or duties were common for women?”
7. For question type select “Paragraph Text”
8. Click “Done”
9. Repeat this process for questions two and three. Our recommended questions for #2 and #3 are:
 - What concept was used to perpetuate the male-headed household?
 - How did society respond to women with power?
10. Once finished, click on “Send Form,” located at the bottom of the page
11. Enter your students’ e-mail addresses OR copy the link and e-mail it to students
12. On your Google Drive, you will now see a document labeled “[Title of your webquest] (Responses).” This is where you can look at your students’ answers.

Example for Gender Matrix:

Using the “Gender Matrix”, identify the words or passages that point to a character’s gender role. Pay attention to who is talking to whom. Include the Act and Scene numbers so you can refer back to the excerpt. For example, “Doth not the color of my hair ‘gin to change?” (3.2.) refers to Act 3, Scene 2. If your edition also identifies line numbers, that can go at the end (i.e. 3.2.1009).

Scene	Phrases associated with gender	Differences from current gender assumptions	Similarities to current gender assumptions
Act 1 Scene 2 <i>Marriage Proposal</i>			
Act 2 Scene 1 <i>Make-up / Pregnancy</i>			
Act 2 Scene 5 <i>Female Expectations</i>			
Act 3 Scene 1 <i>Sorcery</i>			
Act 4 Scene 2 <i>Betrayal and Death</i>			

Note: Students should gather vocabulary and quotations, including conversational context (particularly speaker and recipient), directly from the text, and not from previous discussions about the text. If you or your students feel other scenes are more appropriate, edit as needed.

“If I Were a Boy” Lyrics:

<p>{Verse 1}</p> <p>If I were a boy even just for a day, I'd roll out of bed in the morning And throw on what I wanted and go, Drink beer with the guys And chase after girls. I'd kick it with who I wanted And I'd never get confronted for it, 'Cause they stick up for me.</p> <p>{Chorus}</p> <p>If I were a boy I think I could understand How it feels to love a girl. I swear I'd be a better man. I'd listen to her, 'Cause I know how it hurts When you lose the one you wanted, 'Cause he's taking you for granted And everything you had got destroyed.</p> <p>{Verse}</p> <p>If I were a boy I would turn off my phone Tell everyone it's broken So they'd think that I was sleeping alone I'd put myself first And make the rules as I go, 'Cause I know that she'd be faithful Waiting for me to come home.</p>	<p>{Chorus}</p> <p>If I were a boy I think I could understand How it feels to love a girl. I swear I'd be a better man. I'd listen to her, 'Cause I know how it hurts When you lose the one you wanted, 'Cause he's taking you for granted And everything you had got destroyed.</p> <p>{Bridge}</p> <p>It's a little too late for you to come back Say it's just a mistake, Think I'd forgive you like that. If you thought I would wait for you, You thought wrong.</p> <p>{Chorus }</p> <p>But you're just a boy. You don't understand. Yeah you don't understand, oh How it feels to love a girl. Someday you wish you were a better man. You don't listen to her. You don't care how it hurts. Until you lose the one you wanted, 'Cause you're taking her for granted And everything you had got destroyed. But you're just a boy!</p>
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***The Duchess of Malfi* vs. “If I Were a Boy” Matrix:**

	<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>	“If I Were a Boy”
Double standards for men vs. women		