Media manipulation

Year: Y6

Subjects and Issues

Being yourself Body Image Self-esteem
Diversity Identity Media influence
Stereotypes Relationships education LGBT+
Keeping safe Relationships Gender
Disability (protected characteristic)
Gender reassignment (protected characteristic)
Sex (protected characteristic)
Sexual orientation (protected characteristic)
Gender identity

Please note from September 2026 pupils should be taught the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment. Gender identity cannot be taught as fact, but can be helpful to refer to, to help explain gender reassignment. The guidance does not specify when pupils should be taught this content; that is a decision for the school.

Introduction

Read the story *What Happened to Cinderella Next,* and go through the questions.

What conclusions do the class come to?

Activity 1 - Media Manipulation

Watch the Dove Confident Me, Evolution clip (find link in Resources needed area). Play it twice.

In groups discuss how you feel about the way the media plays around with the image (media manipulation). Think about the 'before' and 'after' images.

Is it real?

Is it true?

What do you think about this?

How might it make a person feel about themself?

What type of people do these images tend to show most of the time? [perfect, even coloured skin, slim or underweight, what society sees as 'pretty' at the moment, tall]

What types of people do we rarely see in the media? [possible examples: different races, girls wearing a hijab, short, larger than size 14, transgender*, spotty, disabled, gay or lesbian.]

*Some people feel that their gender is not in line with their biological sex, so as adults they may choose to live their life as the opposite gender. If people do change their gender, they are protected by law as they have the protected characteristic known as gender reassignment.

See how SCARF supports teaching and learning about protected characteristics.

Why might this be? Discuss stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination – use IWB slide definitions if needed.

Explain that if we don't challenge this behaviour, this could lead to to people being treated unkindly or unfairly, to them feeling upset, or even unsafe.

Everyone is unique – we all have different bodies and brains; we have different needs, feelings, ideas and preferences. We might make different lifestyle choices too. It's ok to disagree or make different choices in life, but our differences are important and need to be respected.

We all have a responsibility to be respectful, and to challenge disrespectful behaviour towards others, too. If anyone behaves disrespectfully to us, or someone else, we can tell a trusted adult at home or at school.

Write a group statement on how you feel about media manipulation. Display it in class to remind people to look out for it.

Activity 2 – Challenge it!

Let's think about how we could turn this around; how could we embrace and celebrate our differences instead?

The class is to organise a ***Challenge Gender Stereotyping*** event.

In groups of 5/6 the children decide on an issue (e.g. use of stereotypical colours).

They then work out an event (e.g. for one day the boys will wear to school sparkly, pink etc. T-shirts and the girls will wear football, blue T-shirts).

Each group will present their idea to the class. Once all the presentations have been heard, the class votes for which one they will adopt.

Allow time for the groups to plan their event. Decide whether to limit it to class/year group, or extend to cover the whole school later, either through everyone taking part on the activity or through sharing it in an assembly.

Activity 3 – How to Challenge a Stereotype

Explain that we can politely disagree with statements or opinions, especially if we know they are based on stereotypes rather than facts.

If we don't challenge harmful stereotypes, this could lead to prejudice or discrimination – to people being treated unkindly or unfairly.

Explain how to do this assertively - recap assertiveness strategies (as rehearsed in the Y5/P6 Being Assertive lesson, if children have done this) such as:

- Stand firm
- Speak clearly
- Be friendly and polite
- Stay calm
- Look confident
- Negotiate

- Repeat your ideas (like a glitched online film)
- Relaxed body language
- Give eye contact or look towards the other person's face as you speak

Children work in pairs: one child says a stereotypical statement (based on discussion in Activity 2), the other has to challenge it, e.g.

- I disagree
- That's not correct/ true
- I actually think...
- In actual fact...
- Did you know that...
- Is that true for everyone? I heard that...

Reinforce that we all have a responsibility to be respectful, and challenge disrespectful or harmful stereotypes – towards us and/or others too.

Summing up

Emphasise that what we see in the media is not always what it seems and this can influence us to feel a certain way. Can the class think of any other images that try to manipulate their feelings?

Explain to (or remind) children that technology is advancing all the time and AI (Artificial Intelligence) can be used to change and manipulate images in ways that are hard to detect and also potentially embarrassing, upsetting and hurtful.

Remember that everyone is unique – our differences are important and need to be respected. We all have a responsibility to be respectful, and to challenge disrespectful behaviour towards others too. If anyone behaves disrespectfully to us, or someone else, we can tell a trusted adult at home or at school.

Extension (optional)

Carrying out the ***Challenging Gender Stereotyping*** event organised by the class forms the extension activity for this lesson plan. Ensure the event is discussed and agreed with Head teacher and governors before it takes

place so everyone is aware of it and is supportive of its aims.

Adapting lessons for learners with additional needs

Our additional Signposting and Support page provides further guidance on adapting SCARF lessons to meet the needs of learners with additional needs.

Version History

Tue, 31 Mar 2026

- Wording strengthened around difference, prejudice and discrimination
- Extension activity added to give children a chance to practise assertiveness skills
- Information on how to get support from an adult added
- Key vocabulary updated: assertive
- Teache resource - new definition whiteboards added

Mon, 02 Mar 2026

- Additional explanation regarding gender reassignment (protected characteristic) and being transgender added

Fri, 29 Aug 2025

- Story sheet updated to include questions about online influencers.
- Content of summary section updated to include reference to the risks posed by AI.
- Key vocabulary updated.

Learning Outcomes

Children will be able to:

- Define what is meant by the term stereotype;

- Recognise how the media (including digital platforms) can sometimes reinforce gender stereotypes;
- Recognise that people fall into a wide range of what is seen as normal;
- Challenge stereotypical gender portrayals of people.

Key Vocabulary

media manipulation
stereotype
gender stereotype
gender reassignment (protected characteristic)
assertive

Resources needed

Dove Confident Me, Evolution clip - click here

Story sheet
What happened to Cinderella next...

SCARF

READ OUT

The Prince leant forward to put the delicate glass slipper on Cinderella's foot. The TV crew camera zoomed in to capture the results for everyone viewing at home. A hush descended on the household as everyone held their breath to see if it fitted, which it did, perfectly. Cinderella and the Prince got into the Bentley and were driven to the palace as cheers were heard across the nation. Her new life was beginning.

PAUSE AND ASK QUESTIONS

- What sort of jobs would Cinderella be expected to do in her new life?
- What sort of clothes would she be expected to wear?
- What sort of food would she eat?
- How would she look?
- How would the public know what was going on in Cinderella's life?

READ OUT

For a while Cinderella really enjoyed life. It was so new and exciting. She was richer than she ever dreamed she would be. She had everything she wanted. Every day there were stories and photos of her in the newspapers and magazines. People were always uploading videos of her they had taken on their phones. Things that she said went viral. She was EVERYWHERE!

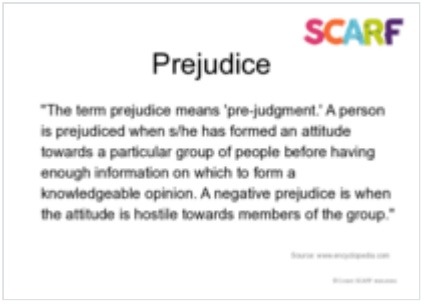
PAUSE AND ASK QUESTIONS

- How do you think she is feeling about her new life?
- How would she feel about being everywhere?
- How might you feel if it was you?

READ OUT

Then one day she was being driven to a hospital to meet some ill children. She loved meeting people and talking with them. She was very kind and always knew what to say to make people smile and laugh. The Bentley got stuck in traffic and while she looked out of the window she saw a her year old girl walking down the road with her mum. The little girl looked like a mini version of Cinderella. She was wearing a copy of her favourite red dress which had been splashed across the media a few months ago. She even had matching lipstick and the same hair style. A shiver ran down Cinderella's back.

What happened to Cinderella next... - Story sheet - one copy for teacher to read to the class



Definition of prejudice - Teacher resource to display on IWB

Definition of stereotype - Teacher resource to display on IWB

Discrimination Definition Whiteboard - Teacher resource to display on IWB

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements

- Relationships Education Respectful relationships 1. The importance of respecting others, even when they are very different from them (for example, physically, in character, personality or backgrounds), or make different choices or have different preferences or beliefs
- Relationships Education Respectful relationships 4. The importance of self-respect and how this links to their own happiness.
- Relationships Education Respectful relationships 7. What a stereotype is, and how stereotypes can be unfair, negative

or destructive.

- Relationships Education Online relationships 1. That people sometimes behave differently online, including by pretending to be someone they are not.
- Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing (Health Education) Internet safety and harms 2. About the benefits of rationing time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing.
- Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing (Health Education) Internet safety and harms 5. That the internet can also be a negative place where online abuse, trolling, bullying and harassment can take place, which can have a negative impact on mental health.

DfE Relationships Education and Health Education statutory requirements (2025)

- Online safety and awareness 2. How to critically evaluate their online relationships and sources of information, including awareness of the risks associated with people they have never met. For example, that people sometimes behave differently online, including pretending to be someone else, or pretending to be a child, and that this can lead to dangerous situations. How to recognise harmful content or harmful contact, and how to report this.
- Online safety and awareness 4. The importance of exercising caution about sharing any information about themselves online. Understanding the importance of privacy and location settings to protect information online.
- Online safety and awareness 5. Online risks, including that any material provided online might be circulated, and that once a picture or words has been circulated there is no way of deleting it everywhere and no control over where it ends up.
- Online safety and awareness 6. That the internet contains a lot of content that can be inappropriate and upsetting for

children, and where to go for advice and support when they feel worried or concerned about something they have seen or engaged with online.

- Respectful, kind relationships 1. How to pay attention to the needs and preferences of others, including in families and friendships. Pupils should be encouraged to discuss how we balance the needs and wishes of different people in relationships and why this can be complicated.
- Respectful, kind relationships 10. What a stereotype is, how stereotypes can be unfair, negative, destructive or lead to bullying and how to challenge a stereotype.
- Respectful, kind relationships 4. Pupils should have opportunities to discuss the difference between being assertive and being controlling, and conversely the difference between being kind to other people and neglecting your own needs.
- Wellbeing online 3. The benefits of limiting time spent online, the risks of excessive time spent on electronic devices and the impact of positive and negative content online on their own and others' mental and physical wellbeing.
- Wellbeing online 8. That abuse, bullying and harassment can take place online and that this can impact wellbeing. How to seek support from trusted adults.

PSHE Association Learning Opportunities

- R12 . To recognise what it means to 'know someone online' and how this differs from knowing someone face-to-face; risks of communicating online with others not known face-to-face.
- R23 . About why someone may behave differently online, including pretending to be someone they are not; strategies for recognising risks, harmful content and contact; how to report concerns.
- R24 . How to respond safely and appropriately to adults they may encounter (in all contexts including online) whom they do not know.
- L9 . About stereotypes; how they can negatively influence behaviours and attitudes towards others; strategies for

challenging stereotypes.
- L12 . How to assess the reliability of sources of information online; and how to make safe, reliable choices from search results.

National Curriculum Links

- History KS2 Pupils should note connections, contrasts and trends over time and develop the appropriate use of historical terms.
- History KS2 Pupils should regularly address and sometimes devise historically valid questions about change, cause, similarity and difference, and significance.