

LEARNING RESOURCE MATERIAL

Girl ⁱⁿ the Know

Your Inside-and-Out Guide to Growing Up

Written by Anne Katz, R.N., Ph.D. Illustrated by Monika Melnychuk



About *Girl In the Know: Your Inside-and-Out Guide to Growing Up*

Have you ever overheard your students wishing that life came with a how-to manual?

This straight-talking little book is packed with everything girls want to know about what to expect in puberty and how to make their way through it all as smoothly as possible. But there's way more to it than just the body basics — girls will get the lowdown on how to take care of their bodies *and* their selves, so they will be set to handle all sorts of life's challenges. Help the girls in your life be girls in the know — get them reading and inspire them to become their best, inside and out!

About the Author

Anne Katz, R.N., Ph.D., has written several health books and edits the clinical practice journal of the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nursing. *Girl In the Know* is her first book for young adults. Anne lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where she is an adjunct professor at the University of Manitoba and a sexuality counsellor.

About the Illustrator

Monika Melnychuk is the illustrator of *Centsibility: The Planet Girl Guide to Money*. Her work has also appeared in such publications as *Fashion18*, *Owl*, *UTNE Reader* and *Today's Parent*, as well as in the *Globe and Mail* and the *New York Times*. She lives in Whitehorse, Yukon, and wishes she had had a book like this when she was growing up.

Discussion Topics and Activities

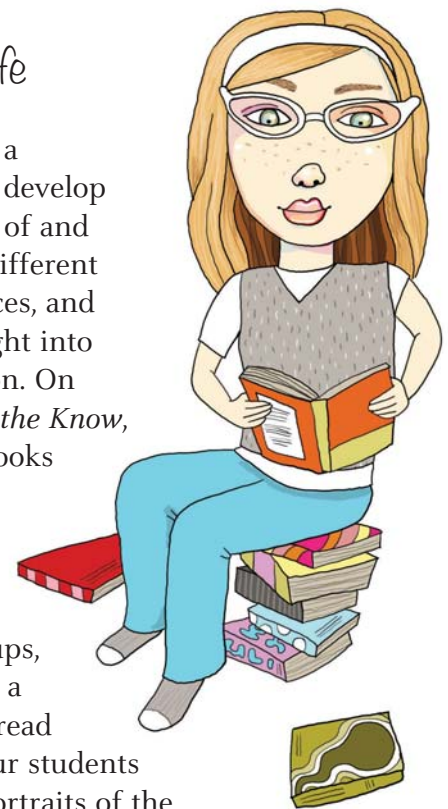
The following discussion questions and activities support the elementary and secondary curricula in health and wellness, language and literature, social studies and visual arts, grades 5–9. This learning resource has been designed as originals that can be reproduced for home or classroom use only. For more learning resource materials please visit www.kidscanpress.com.

1. This Girl's Life

Reading fiction is a wonderful way to develop an understanding of and appreciation for different people's experiences, and through this, insight into one's own situation. On page 47 of *Girl in the Know*, there is a list of books that capture girls' coming-of-age experiences.

Organize your students into groups, assign each group a different book to read and then have your students present written portraits of the main character(s) to the rest of the class. Lead the class in a discussion of the different characters, asking the following questions:

- * Is this character a positive role model?
- * What do you admire most about this character?
- * What did this character learn about herself, and how does she apply this new knowledge to her situation?



2. Me, My Self-Portrait and I



Artists often sketch self-portraits to become more adept at capturing expressions and revealing something of a model subject's personality and inner life. Using multimedia collage, challenge your students to reveal a bit of themselves by creating self-portraits of their own.

- * Have your students pair up to trace each other's silhouettes.
- * To personalize their self-portraits, encourage your students to use any combination of media to represent the things they feel make them

who they are — their activities, favorite books and music, family and friends, best and/or worst qualities, etc. Display the finished projects in the classroom and have your students present their self-portraits to the rest of the class. Celebrate their creativity and individuality!

3. I Am Woman

The phrase *coming of age* describes the time in a young person's life when she is recognized as having attained a certain level of maturity. A girl's first period is often seen as the signal of this shift from childhood to young adulthood.

a) Discuss what it means to come of age in today's society with your class. What does it mean to be mature? Does maturing physically — a girl getting her period or having breasts — necessarily mean that a girl is mature emotionally? How does one become mature?

b) Have your students pair up to research how a girl's coming-of-age is celebrated in different cultures and religions throughout the world and present their findings to the class.



4. Into the Great Wide Open

On page 45 of *Girl in the Know*, author Anne Katz challenges readers to learn more about the world and their part in it.

Grades 5–7: In many places throughout the world, girls aren't afforded the same opportunities for education as boys. As a class, research the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Education For All (EFA) agenda and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI).

Grades 8–9: Female genital cutting (FGC) is a coming-of-age ritual practiced throughout the world, and numerous international organizations, such as UNICEF and Amnesty International, are committed in their efforts to end this practice.



a) Ask your students what they know of FGC and have them read up on the ritual, examining why people believe in it, and why others are opposed to it. Rituals and traditions are cultural cornerstones. Does changing a tradition take away from a people's culture or heritage?

b) Propose that the class lead an education campaign in your school to raise awareness about FGC and to commemorate International Day against Female Genital Mutilation (February 6).

5. Mirror, Mirror ...

Girls are bombarded in print, online and on television with images of female models and celebrities who overwhelmingly represent a specific beauty ideal. Ask your students to bring in a selection of their favorite magazines. As a group, review each of the magazines and keep track of the number of girls and women in each one who look the most "real" to your students. If your students are impressed by the diversity of girls and women represented in a particular magazine, have them draft a letter to the editor applauding her or his decision to celebrate girls and women of different shapes, races and abilities. If the number of "real" girls and women is disappointingly low, have your students draft a letter to the editor of that magazine outlining what — and whom — they would like to see in future issues. Emphasize the importance of your students' making their voices heard, of speaking out against things that aren't right and of speaking in favor of what is.

6. In the Eye of the Beholder

Examining European art reveals ideals of beauty changing over time, vacillating between soft curves and straighter edges. Despite North American society's cultural diversity and the variance of beauty ideals culture to culture, the current, most represented beauty ideal includes a thin and/or lean, muscled body.

a) Discuss the concept of beauty with your students. What makes a person beautiful? Does a person's personality affect their perceived beauty? How? What have people done to attain greater beauty in the past? And today? What do other cultures find beautiful? What are their own beauty ideals? How much has the media influenced their opinions versus their own heritages?



b) Have your students create a portrait — written (poem, descriptive paragraph, story, song), performed (song, rap, spoken word, monologue, interpretive dance) or rendered visually (collage, painting, video montage, comic strip) — of their beauty ideal, the woman they would like to become.

c) Motivate your students to be the change they want to see in the world. Discuss what they could do to develop a positive self-image for themselves and encourage it in the girls and women in their lives, too. There are a few suggestions on page 78 of *Girl in the Know* to get you started — what other ideas can your students come up with?

7. Women in History — and of the Future

As difficult as it is for tweens and teenagers to imagine, the adults in their lives were young once, too, and can offer much-needed support, insight and guidance.

a) Have your students interview the older women in their families, e.g., mothers, aunts, grandmothers and great-aunts, to get a sense of what it was like to be a young woman at other times in recent history. Here is a list of questions to get your students started:

- * What kinds of extra-curricular activities were they encouraged to do? Were there any activities girls were discouraged or prevented from doing?
- * What was the most stressful part about being a teenager?
- * What were the most popular career choices for women? What did they choose to do?
- * How have things improved for girls since they were teenagers? Has anything worsened? What else would they like to see change?
- * What would they wish for your teenage years and beyond?

b) Ask your students what career goal(s) they aspire to. Have them make a list of the steps they will need to take to achieve that goal. Encourage your students to think laterally, focusing not only on academic requirements, but also considering experiences and relationships that might support them in realizing their goal. For example, if a student were to pursue medicine, she will certainly need to do well academically, but she might also seek out activities that would round out her experience, e.g., volunteering or working in a hospital to observe health care professionals at work; joining debate club or learning another language to hone communication skills; participating in sport or studying music to develop discipline and create an outlet for self-expression and stress release; etc. Relationships, too, will play a part in her success — she will need to have a strong support system in place. If possible, arrange for your students to meet with a female professional in their field of interest to share her experience.