

# Equity 8™

The gender-equity rating

*Mel & Mo's Marvelous Balancing Act* (picture book)

Written by Nicola Winstanley, Illustrated by Marianne Ferrer, Copyright 2019

Rating: 7 out of 8 stars



Met criteria = 1

Did not meet criteria = 0

Egregiously did not meet criteria = -1

What to look for	Example(s)	Rating	Explanation of rating and recommendations
<b>Did the author tell the entire story without mentioning gender?</b> (Just by mentioning gender we communicate that it's someone's most important quality and activate stereotypes.)	No gendered words, such as she, he, girl, boy, mommy, daddy, etc.	1	No gendered words used.
<b>Did the artist illustrate the entire story without contributing to gender stereotypes?</b>	No pink, bows, or exaggerated eyelashes, etc. on girls. No blue, ball caps, etc. on boys, (Length of hair alone is not enough to exclude a book from this criterion. Authors often want/need to differentiate between characters. Hair is one way to do this that is less loaded with negative stereotyping.)	0	<b>Pink, a color linked with stereotypes, is used. This book would be even better if it steered away from the colors linked with stereotypes altogether. The main characters don't wear pink, which is great.</b>  <b>A pink poodle and a blue poodle appear to have made purple puppies and the purple puppies are cuddling only with the pink poodle (which reinforces the stereotype that pink means female, and female means caretaking).</b>

			<p>On one page Theodora is wearing a dress.</p>
<p><b>Is there counterstereotyping?</b> (Note: not mentioning gender counters stereotypes as it puts gender in the background.)</p>	<p><b>Are stereotypes challenged by showing the opposite?</b> Examples are showing a boy happily cuddling a baby or a girl swinging a bat with expert skill.</p>	1	<p>If we talk about Mel running her own business and Mo learning to ride a unicycle and train dogs, yes.</p> <p>Mel and Mo both wear clothes that feel comfortable and practical to them.</p> <p>If we make one of the twins a boy and he is the one who likes pink, we would counter additional stereotypes.</p>
<p><b>Are characters with different gender representations interacting with mutual respect, skill, and admiration?</b> (Or are the characters neutrally drawn so we can create the above dynamic ourselves?)</p>	<p><b>Are girls and boys both shown using tools while building something? Do they smile at each other? Do they treat each other like a peer (and not an/a inferior or superior)?</b></p>	1	<p>If we make the twin who likes pink a boy (Mel) and the other twin a girl (Mo), we can achieve this without reinforcing stereotypes.</p>
<p><b>Does the girl character have agency?</b></p>	<p><b>Is her body shown in motion? Is she making something happen through her efforts? Can we see her straining her muscles in active movement?</b></p>	1	<p>Yes, if we make Mo a girl, as she is shown riding a unicycle and balancing on a tightrope. The book would be better if it showed Mo training hard to excel at this.</p> <p>Mel makes a quality product that is needed and is running a business. The book would be better if it showed her</p>

			<p><i>using more tools (besides a needle and thread) to make the umbrellas.</i></p> <p><i>Theodora, a minor character, is shown in motion on a tightrope wearing roller skates.</i></p> <p><i>Mo and Mel come up with a solution to their problems by collaborating on a business with Theodora.</i></p>
<b><i>Does the book's story represent any of the Guiding Principles?</i></b>		<b><i>1</i></b>	<b><i>Resiliency</i></b>
<b><i>Are girls the main characters or do they share the spotlight equally with boy characters?</i></b>		<b><i>1</i></b>	<b><i>If we make Mo a girl, yes. The characters are never referred to as girls or boys. Their names and their old-fashioned swimsuits make it easier for us to be flexible with their genders.</i></b>
<b><i>Is the writer and/or illustrator a woman?</i></b>		<b><i>1</i></b>	



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