

Equity 8™

The gender-equity rating

The Little Engine That Could (picture book)

Retold by Watty Piper from *The Pony Engine* story by Mabel D. Bragg,

Illustrated by Lois Lenski, Copyright 1930

Rating: 4 out of 8 stars



Met criterion = 1

Did not meet criterion = 0

Egregiously did not meet criterion = - 1

What to look for	Example(s)	Rating	Explanation of rating and recommendations
Did the author tell the entire story without mentioning gender? (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.	0	Gendered pronouns are used. All the train engines are gendered. "Boys and girls" is used. "Boys" are always listed in front of "girls."
Did the artist illustrate the entire story without contributing to gender stereotypes?	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 so that is less	0	Stereotypes are perpetuated. Boys and men are drawn wearing pants and doing tasks (holding a horse, holding a rake, fishing, and running fast.) Girls and women are drawn wearing dresses, frills, bows, and bonnets. They are often shown just standing and moving their arms a bit (though one is holding a basket and a younger child's hand).

	<p><i>loaded with negative stereotyping.)</i></p>		<p><i>Females are presented as one dimensional with little (if any) agency. Males are presented as multi-dimensional (e.g. clowns, soldiers, a monkey, and Humpty Dumpty) and often with agency.</i></p> <p><i>A flower is drawn wearing a skirt.</i></p> <p><i>Most of the animals thankfully are not wearing blue, pink, or gendered accessories.</i></p>
<p><i>Is there counterstereotyping? (Note: not mentioning gender counters stereotypes as it puts gender in the background.)</i></p>	<p><i>Are stereotypes challenged by showing the opposite? Examples are showing a boy happily cuddling a baby or a girl swinging a bat with expert skill.</i></p>	<p><i>0</i></p>	<p><i>The stereotypes that are perpetuated overshadow the times the book counters stereotypes.</i></p> <p><i>It's wonderful that the train engine in the beginning is a female, It's also wonderful that the little blue engine that becomes "the little engine that could" is a female. I wonder how many parents (and children) keep referring to the engine as a "she," and how many slip into using "he."</i></p> <p><i>The dolls are girl characters and dressed ornately. This perpetuates stereotypes.</i></p> <p><i>The male clown character is the one leading the toys to a solution. He points out the other engines and encourages them to ask for help. The clown is also on top of the engine for the final pages.</i></p> <p><i>Tears were only in the girl dolls' eyes.</i></p>

<p>Are characters with different gender representations interacting with mutual respect, skill, and admiration? (Or are the characters neutrally drawn so we can create the above dynamic ourselves?)</p>	<p>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)?</p>	<p>0</p>	<p>The engines don't talk to each other.</p> <p>The girl dolls don't demonstrate equal skill, agency or prominence in the story.</p>
<p>Does the girl character have agency?</p>	<p>Is her body shown in motion? Is she making something happen through her efforts? Can you see her straining her muscles in active movement?</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>The little blue engine helps under difficult circumstances and prevails through her effort.</p>
<p>Does the book's story represent any of the Guiding Principles?</p>		<p>1</p>	<p>Contribution. The little engine does her very best to help others in a difficult situation. Resiliency. She tries even though it's hard, and continues to try until she reaches her goal.</p>
<p>Are girls the main characters or do they share the spotlight equally with boy characters?</p>		<p>1</p>	<p>There are two "she" engines featured prominently, so we have the opportunity to make girl characters important.</p>
<p>Is the writer and/or illustrator a woman?</p>		<p>1</p>	<p>Lois Lenski is not named with the author on the cover of some editions of this book, so this criterion barely receives a 1.</p>



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