

# In Your Face

## The Culture of Beauty and You

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written by Shari Graydon

**genre:** NON-FICTION

**themes:** SELF-ESTEEM  
BODY IMAGE  
GENDER ISSUES  
MEDIA  
ADVERTISING  
SOCIETY  
STEREOTYPING  
DECISION MAKING  
HISTORY

**suitable for:** GRADES 7–12

“In our factory, we make lipstick; in our advertising, we sell hope.”

—Charles Revson, founder of Revlon Cosmetics

On the strength of that hope, more money is spent annually on beauty products in the U.S. than on education—over \$6 billion on makeup alone.

Shari Graydon encourages readers to look critically at the culture of beauty both past and present. Whether it’s the different standards for guys versus girls, the assumptions we all have about models and celebrities, or the message that “the right makeup” can make you a better person, Graydon will help teens face up to the culture of beauty and the beauty-industry hype.

Meanwhile, a remarkable selection of photographs takes readers on an enlightening tour of beauty culture through time. Complete with a lively design and comic-style vignettes to open each chapter, this book will captivate readers.

**Shari Graydon bio:** A veteran media-literacy activist, Shari Graydon has written chapters for textbooks, columns for newspapers, programs for television, commentaries for radio, and speeches for politicians. She has taught media literacy at university and is a former president of the non-profit women’s group MediaWatch. She lives in Ottawa.

## The following activity ideas ...

... are only a start. There are many possibilities for helping students construct meaning from text.

Comprehension activities:

- help readers to extend their general knowledge from prior experience
- develop reading strategies for comprehension
- bring relevance to the act of reading
- foster discussion and reflection through response to the text and illustrations

## Before

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### STARTING THE BOOK

*Activities to build the context and to introduce the topic of the book, establish prior knowledge and interest, and develop predictions of what the text will be about.*

Beauty, body image, and eating problems are some of the salient topics covered in *In Your Face: The Culture of Beauty and You*. Working with students on these deeply personal issues is important, exciting, and challenging. As a teacher, you already know that a classroom environment that promotes safety and inclusion will nurture honest and meaningful discussion. Undoubtedly, you have already worked with your students to create such an environment. Here are some additional ideas that may be useful when discussing the issues addressed in the book.

- Body image and eating problems affect boys and girls/men and women differently. Sometimes it is easier for young people to speak to each other in same-gender groupings. If possible, a male and a female teacher can team up and facilitate some of the activities in this teachers' guide with each other's students of the same gender. Alternatively, a "fish bowl" technique can be used. Students sit in two concentric circles with either the girls or boys sitting in the inside or outside circles. When one group speaks, the other is silent until everyone in that group has finished sharing. The group that began sharing is then silent while the other group has an opportunity to speak.
- Personal information is sometimes easier for students to share in the form of a journal rather than in the larger group.
- Develop a shared language. Clear definitions are important when helping students to learn about new concepts. Use the glossary at the end of this teachers' guide.
- Establish group norms for classroom discussion.

## READING THE BOOK

*Activities to check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.*

There are five activities included in this section based on some of the important themes in *In Your Face: The Culture of Beauty and You*. The overall goal is to help students begin to integrate new information from the book both cognitively and emotionally through an experiential approach to learning.

### **ACTIVITY ONE: BEAUTY MYTHS: WHO DECIDES?**

This activity combines the theme of defining beauty (Chapter 1) with the theme of the ever-changing notion of beauty and fashion (Chapter 2). Students will discover how beauty myths are conceptualized, and they will have the opportunity to deconstruct some of the stereotypes in the plot and moral(s) of the traditional fairy tale. They will focus on the differences in representation: Beautiful young women or girls are portrayed as kind and generous, and often rely on the help of men to save them from difficult situations. Unattractive women are depicted as evil, jealous, and hurtful. Handsome men are usually wealthy and save the damsel in distress and live happily ever after. There are rarely any interracial or gay and lesbian relationships, just as there are rarely any characters of color, or people with disabilities.

#### ***Objective:***

Students will examine fairy tales in order to uncover beauty myths, and investigate the changing trends in beauty and fashion in different times and places.

#### ***Time:***

Total 160 minutes: 30 minutes for part 1, 80 minutes for part 2, one full period of in-class time for part 3.

#### ***Preparation:***

Collect a variety of traditional fairy tales from the school library. Include a variety of fairy tales from different cultural groups. Be prepared to have students work in small groups. Create worksheets with the following questions:

- Summarize the plot and moral(s) of your story.
- Who is the intended audience?
- Who are the main characters in this story? What do they look like? How do they behave?
- Do you notice any connection between the way the characters look and the way they act?
- What are some of the differences between the European fairy tale and those from other cultures? What characteristics are valued in each fairy tale? What traits does each culture value?

**Materials:**

- chart paper and markers / chalk board and chalk
- a selection of fairy tales (enough so each group receives two different stories)
- worksheets

**Learning Strategies:****Part 1:**

1. Have students share their earliest memories of beauty. Try to elicit responses that relate both to themselves as well as to other people and other things (for example dolls, a new bike, a beautiful day, family members). Record their responses on the chart paper under the heading BEAUTY.
2. Ask students where their ideas of beauty came/come from and record their responses on the chart paper under the heading SOURCE.

**Part 2:**

1. Break the larger group of students into smaller groups of three or four.
2. Distribute worksheets and two different fairy tales to each group (one European fairy tale, one from another culture). Give each group 20 minutes to complete the worksheet.
3. Ask each group to make a brief presentation on their findings. Based on the reflections from their worksheet, ask each group to rewrite one of their fairy tales into a short play they will present to the class. Give each group 20 minutes to write and rehearse their play. Ask them to present their new fairy tale to the class.

**Part 3:**

1. Have students work in pairs to research the history of fashion. There are many easily accessible websites students can choose from (some of these are listed in the resource section at the end of this teachers' guide). They should focus on an aspect of historical fashion that is new to them (for example the wearing of corsets, hairstyles, tattoos, foot-binding).
2. Have students draw parallels between historical fashions and current styles and beauty treatments (i.e. 17th-century tools for big hair and today's gels, flat irons, dyes ...)
3. On a Bristol board, each pair of students should display their findings.
4. Display the Bristol boards in an art gallery style. Have the students walk around and look at and read each other's work.
5. In a large-group discussion, have students share the changes in fashion they themselves have gone through over the years.

## **ACTIVITY TWO: A VERY DANGEROUS BUSINESS: YOUNG ENOUGH TO COMPETE**

This activity combines the themes of four different chapters: youth and beauty (Chapter 2), suffering to be beautiful (Chapter 4), competition and “appearance rivalry” (Chapter 8), and the big business of the beauty industry (Chapter 9). Students will explore how the beauty industry affects boys and girls by perpetuating stereotypes. These stereotypes relate to traditional gender roles. Girls and women tend to compete on their looks, while boys and men typically compete on their physical strength or intelligence. This reinforces the idea that the only thing women need to be successful is beauty. This in turn places pressure on girls and women to spend more time on their looks, purchase more beauty products, and engage in a variety of behaviors to enhance their physical appearance. At the same time, boys and men feel pressure to bulk up to look muscular and toned.

### ***Objective:***

Students will: think about the ways that the beauty industry affects them personally; analyze the strategies that they engage in to conform to beauty standards; and think about the role and effects of competition on boys and girls.

### ***Time:***

30 minutes for introducing the topic and explaining the handout; one week for student inventory and analysis; one month for recording beauty product purchases; one full class period for follow-up discussion.

### ***Preparation:***

Create a checklist that includes the required questions (see Learning Strategies 2). Photocopy and hand out one to each student.

### ***Learning Strategies:***

1. Ask students to brainstorm all of the things that people do or wear in order to “look good” and fit in with friends. Depending on their age, they will come up with an enormous list, including hair care (gel, shampoo, hairstyle, straighteners, and dye), makeup, clothes, piercings, jewelry, food restriction (eating problems and dieting), exercise, steroid use, and hair removal (shaving, waxing, and plucking). Record their responses.
2. Now ask students what activities they engage in that make them feel better, and why. Record their responses and examine the list of beauty activities. Are all of the responses based on styles and makeup? Or are there other things students do that make them feel good about themselves?

3. Instruct students to keep a personal inventory for one week of all the things they do to "look good." Ask them to indicate which products and/or behaviors they have seen advertised in magazines or on television. Out of those advertised, which are most prominent?
4. Ask students to choose from their lists a product they use or a behavior they engage in that involves them experiencing some form of discomfort (for example food restriction, steroid use).
5. Ask the students to keep a record of every beauty or fashion item they buy for a month. At the end of the month ask them to add up their spending and multiply it by 12.
  - How much do they spend in a month?
  - How much in a year?
  - Are they surprised by the total amount they are spending on fashion and beauty items?
  - Do they think they should spend more? Less?
  - On a graph, plot the spending of the boys in the class; now plot the girls' spending.
  - Who spends more on fashion and beauty items, boys or girls?
  - Is there any correlation between the amount each gender spends and the amount of advertising directed at them?
  - Is there a correlation between self-esteem-issue statistics and the spending trends?

### **ACTIVITY THREE: POWER EFFECTS. GENDER, AND BEYOND**

This activity combines the themes of sexism (Chapter 5) with other forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and size (Chapter 6).

#### ***Objective:***

Students will explore the relationship between discrimination based on physical appearance and the role of institutions, individual actions, and ideas. Racism, sexism, homophobia, class bias, and discrimination against people with disabilities are all connected to the beauty myth.

#### ***Time:***

Total 80 minutes: 40 minutes each for part 1 and part 2.

#### ***Preparation Part 1:***

Collect used fashion, muscle, fitness, gossip, car, and sports magazines as well as newspapers from students and colleagues a number of weeks before teaching this activity. If you live and work in an urban center with geographically culturally specific community and shopping areas, try to access fashion and gossip magazines from outside of North America and Europe. Be prepared to have students work in small groups. Create worksheets with the following questions:

- Describe the topic of your magazine.
- Who is the intended audience?
- Who is in the magazine? What do they look like? What are they doing?
- Do you notice anything in particular about the kinds of people who are represented? How would you describe them?
- What types of advertisements are included? What do the advertisements tell you about the audience for the magazine? What is the relationship between the ads and the editorial content of the magazine?

### **Preparation Part 2:**

Choose a few magazines as teacher copies. Find images of Hollywood on-screen couples. You may want to include images of some of the actors mentioned on page 77 in the section “Old Farts and Sweet Young Things.” Cut out each individual actor/actress separately as you would a paper doll. Find 25 couples and create 50 individual paper cutouts. Try to include some couples who do not fit traditional Hollywood standards—interracial couples, same-sex couples (television shows and films such as *Buffy* and *Catwoman* include such relationships). Check the Internet for images. Put 5 couples (10 cutouts) in each of 5 envelopes.

### **Materials:**

- chart paper and markers / chalk board and chalk
- worksheets
- envelopes
- cutouts of movie-star couples
- glue
- construction paper

### **Learning Strategies:**

#### **Part 1:**

1. Break the larger group of students into smaller groups of four or five.
2. Distribute worksheets and several magazines of the same genre to each group. For example, one group will receive the fashion magazines; another will receive the gossip magazines, another sports magazines, etc. Depending on the age of your students, you may want to assign individual tasks (recorder, presenter, timekeeper, etc). Give the class 30 minutes to complete their worksheets in groups.
3. Ask each group to make a brief presentation.
4. Help your students to discover some of the stereotypes and ideas behind the images in magazines and newspapers. Ask them to pay particular attention to how each gender is portrayed. For example, are women active or passive, fashion obsessed or comfortably casual, etc.? What about men? How are they portrayed? What is the magazine saying about women? About men? What are the differences in representation across genres? Across racial, sexual orientation, and other minority groups?

**Part 1 Extension:**

Have students research and compare current fashion trends with those from the 1950s, '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s. On the Internet, students can type in the words *beauty* and the decade of their choice to find relevant information. They may also use the public library to access older fashion magazines.

**Part 2:**

1. Have the students divide into five smaller groups.
2. Give each group an envelope with paper cutouts of on-screen couples.
3. Ask the students to pair the movie-star cutouts together according to the way they think they have been paired romantically in films and on television. The students may have to guess.
4. Ask the groups to be prepared to offer a rationale for their choices when they present to the larger class.
5. After each group shares their best guesses, give the class the correct answers, with information about the films and television programs for which the actors were actually paired. You can ask the class whether they were surprised by any of the pairings and why. Have a discussion about stereo types and double standards drawn from information in Chapter 5.

**ACTIVITY FOUR: THE STORY OF BEAUTY**

This activity combines the themes of privilege and the price of beauty (Chapter 7) with testimonials of models (Chapter 10). Students will learn that “beautiful” people still have problems, and some of those problems are connected with being beautiful.

***Objective:***

Students will think about the pressures and stresses associated with being beautiful.

***Time:***

One classroom period

***Materials:***

- a copy of Morgan’s, Agata’s, and Elia’s testimonials from Chapter 10 for each student
- a variety of fashion, celebrity, and muscle magazines
- large paper
- glue
- markers

### ***Learning Strategies:***

#### **Part 1:**

1. Have students read Morgan's, Agata's, and Elia's testimonials.
2. Ask each student to write a letter of reply to one of the above. Their letter should include answers to the following questions:
  - What did you think of the story?
  - Did any part of the story surprise you?
  - What did you learn about beauty from the story?

#### **Part 2:**

1. After examining the negative aspects of being beautiful, have students browse through magazines and choose a picture of someone whom they consider beautiful.
2. Ask students to glue this picture onto a larger piece of paper.
3. Ask them to think about what the person in their example may be thinking. Using markers, have them create word bubbles to represent these ideas.
4. Ask students to share their work in small groups.
5. Come together as a large class and create a chart of the positive and negative experiences of “beautiful” people. Now compare these experiences with those the class imagines for people who are not considered beautiful.

### **ACTIVITY FIVE: WHEN I GROW UP**

This activity combines the themes of privilege and the price of beauty (Chapter 11). Students will learn that beauty is not defined by one sole attribute, but rather by a combination of qualities.

#### ***Objective:***

Students will think of strategies to help them achieve their future goals.

#### ***Time:***

One classroom period

#### ***Materials:***

- a variety of magazines

***Learning Strategies:***

1. Have students create a collage from images in magazines reflecting what they want their lives to look like when they are adults.
2. Ask them to write about the qualities and accomplishments that they desire.
3. Have them think of strategies they can use that will help them achieve those qualities and accomplish their goals.

# Resources for Teachers

Throughout *In Your Face: The Culture of Beauty and You*, there are very clear and useful definitions that you will want to explore with students. As well, many important text, video/film, curriculum, and website resources can be found in the Notes section starting on page 165. What follows are a few resources that you may find helpful to supplement the activities in this teachers' guide.

## GENERAL RESOURCES

The following websites have comprehensive lists of American and Canadian curriculum guides, videos, books, and electronic resources.

Pathfinder Body Image [http://www.wsd1.org/PC\\_LMS/pf/bodyimage.htm](http://www.wsd1.org/PC_LMS/pf/bodyimage.htm)

The American Anorexia Bulimia Association <http://www.aabainc.org/>

Eating Disorders Awareness & Prevention <http://www.edap.org>

Egallery: Addressing Body Image, Self-Esteem, and Eating Disorders  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~egallery/volume2/small.html>

American School Board Journal: (Research) Starving in Silence  
<http://www.asbj.com/2002/03/0302research.html>

## CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Adams, M.L. Bell, & P. Griffin (1997). **Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Source Book for Teachers and Trainers**. Contains specific chapters focused on curriculum designed for increasing awareness of different forms of oppression. A blend of theory and practice.

Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario (1999). **We're Erasing Prejudice for Good**. A literature-based, comprehensive anti-bias curriculum document that contains integrated lessons consistent with Ontario's curriculum. This year round resource contains complete lessons from kindergarten to grade 8 on ten monthly themes. Available from [www.etfo.on.ca](http://www.etfo.on.ca)

ETFO Body Image Project. **Reflections of Me**.

A comprehensive research-based, body-image curriculum for grades 1 to 8. The package also includes a video and a brochure for parents. Available from [www.etfo.on.ca](http://www.etfo.on.ca)

Peel District School Board (2000). **The Future We Want: Building an Inclusive Curriculum**.

Rice, C. & V. Russell. (2002) **EmBodying Equity: Body Image as an Equity Issue. A Manual for Educators and Service Providers**.

A practical resource for grades 4 to 12 addressing the intersections of body image, identity, discrimination, and equity. Available from [www3.sympatico.ca/equity.greendragonpress](http://www3.sympatico.ca/equity.greendragonpress)

## WEBSITE RESOURCES

### [www.pbs.org/newshour/infocus/fashion/whatisfashion.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/infocus/fashion/whatisfashion.html)

This site covers the history of fashion and has many interesting links to nail polish color, hair dyes, uniforms, hip-hop fashion, etc.

### [www.nedic.ca](http://www.nedic.ca)

The National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC) is a Toronto-based non-profit organization, established in 1985 to provide information and resources on eating disorders and weight preoccupation. NEDIC began as a result of the concerted efforts of a group of health-care providers.

### [www.bodypositive.com](http://www.bodypositive.com)

Body Positive explores the notion of taking up occupancy inside your own skin, rather than living above the chin until you're thin. It is a set of ideas that may help you find greater well-being in the body you have. One of these ideas is to define "healthy weight" not from a generic height/weight chart or even arbitrary Body Mass Index cut-offs, but rather as the weight your body is when you are living a reasonable life.

### [www.mediawatch.ca](http://www.mediawatch.ca)

MediaWatch is a national, not-for-profit feminist organization that works to promote social justice and equality by conducting media research and advocating for change within government, industry, and the public. MediaWatch has produced many educational print and video resources related to the media's portrayal of women and girls. Check the Resources section of this site for a list of reports.

### [adbusters.org](http://adbusters.org)

Adbusters is a global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators, and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age. Adbusters Media Foundation publishes *Adbusters* magazine which is a not-for-profit, reader-supported, 120,000-circulation magazine concerned with the erosion of our physical and cultural environments by commercial forces. Adbusters' work has been embraced by organizations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, and has been featured in hundreds of alternative and mainstream newspapers, magazines, and television and radio shows around the world.

### [www.humoriste.freesevers.com/History%20of%20Beauty.htm](http://www.humoriste.freesevers.com/History%20of%20Beauty.htm)

This website spotlights women throughout the ages who were known for their beauty.

### <http://Inventors.about.com/library/inventors/blbeauty.htm>

This website features the history of cosmetics, beauty supply products and hair removal. It is very detailed and full of interesting information.

### [www.beautyworlds.com/tocmodcult.htm](http://www.beautyworlds.com/tocmodcult.htm)

This website features many interesting articles related to various aspects of beauty, including global hair styles, issues of beauty and disability, and advertisement campaigns.

## VIDEOS

**Your Name in Cellulite** (1995). National Film Board of Canada.

Gail Noonan created this six-minute animated video about the disparity that exists between a woman's natural beauty and the ideal set forth in popular culture. Available from [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca)

**The Big One** (1997).

This video focuses on clothes manufacturing, the effects of corporate downsizing on the lives of Americans, and the exploitation of workers in Third World countries. Available from most video stores or [www.michaelmoore.com](http://www.michaelmoore.com)

**Beauty Begins Inside Series** (1996). National Film Board of Canada.

*The Pressure Zone*, one of three videos in this series, seeks to explore the messages bombarding teens from the diet and image industries. Available from [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca)

## Journals

**Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture**

Published quarterly in March, June, September, and December. Of particular interest is Volume 6 (Fashion and photography) and Volume 1 (Hair). You can subscribe online at [www.bergpublishers.com](http://www.bergpublishers.com)