

Rethinking *Pink* and **Blue**

***How does the media create and perpetuate an idea of what is “feminine” or “masculine”?
How can you educate people about and help to change the media?***

BACKGROUND: In *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, Esperanza is an imaginative child who is surprised that as she grows into a woman, her path is drastically narrowed by the culture around her. Instead of a person with a complex and valuable personality, she is reduced by those around her to an object. The only suitable future for her according to her father's ideals is leaving his home for a husband's home. Navigating this new, harsh reality causes pain and heartache. Our cultural heritages are all different, but most of us are affected by a common popular culture in the United States today created by media: television, magazines, movies, music, and social media. How does our popular culture pigeonhole us into certain rigid boxes? What does the media tell us about femininity and masculinity? How does it match who you really are as a complex person? How does it differ? How can we change the tide and take away media pressure to be someone we're not?

OBJECTIVES: In this project, each student will:

- analyze Sandra Cisneros's novel, *The House on Mango Street*, as well as TED talks and news articles, to contribute to discussions and journal entries,
- evaluate the role the media plays in shaping cultural ideals of femininity and masculinity,
- generate a hand lettered mini-poster with a positive media message,
- generate an infographic about one way the media exerts pressure on girls or boys,
- reconstruct something in popular culture to suit her or his ideal of how things should be *OR* construct a representation of how the current cultural ideals affect her or him.
- reflect thoughtfully on how the overall experience with this project has enhanced his or her media literacy.

PROCESS:

Stage 1: **EVALUATE.**

Watch Chimamanda Adichie's talk, "[We Should All Be Feminists](#)" as an introduction to feminism and intersectionality. Analyze Sandra Cisneros's novel, *The House on Mango Street*, by discussing, journaling, and annotating thoughtfully. Participate in journaling and roundtable discussions of several TED talks and news articles about the construction of femininity and masculinity in the media, evaluating what kind of pressures girls and boys face today in the U.S.

Stage 2: **EDUCATE.**

Conduct in-depth research of one aspect of the media ideal of femininity and masculinity, using an annotated Works Cited (MLA format) to keep track of your research. Are you interested in how the media influences girls' ideas about ideal body size? Fashion choices? Career ambitions? How TV shows about teen parenting affect girls' relationship choices? How magazine and TV show representations of women's interests compare with real women's passions? Are you interested in media portrayals of violence as a masculine method of problem solving? How the media affects what we think of as "acceptable" masculine emotions? The limited range of "acceptable" male interests in popular culture? Male body ideals in the media? Pressures on men to be talented athletes? The ways in which media defines an acceptable degree of closeness between male friends? Choose a topic of interest to you and read statistics, news articles, etc. Develop a visually stunning, accurate, and clear infographic to make society aware of the most important things you learned.

Stage 3: **RENOVATE.**

Find an element of society that is responsible for putting undue pressure on women or men and remake it to be what you think it should be. Alternatively, you can design a visual product to show how you personally feel affected by media pressure. Use the video on "[Tree Change Dolls](#)" to inspire you, but think outside the box!

Rethinking *Pink* and **Blue** Rubric

	Exceptional (12-13 points)	Proficient (11 points)	Developing (8-10 points)	Beginning (0-7 points)
EVALUATE	The quality of your annotations, class discussions, written responses, and notes is outstanding. Your input is thoughtful, profound, and furthers our conversations. You bring up great points, expend time and energy to understand the material you're responding to, and fuel your peers' understanding.	The quality of your annotations, class discussions, written responses, and notes are appropriate. Your input is thoughtful and furthers our conversations. You expend time and energy to understand the material you're responding to.	The quality of your annotations, class discussions, written responses, and notes are developing; you may need to expend more time and energy (or seek more teacher assistance) in order to understand the material and better respond to it. You may not offer much input in class discussions or your responses.	Your annotations, class discussions, written responses, and notes are very incomplete, are not on-topic, or may be missing altogether. You may not have obviously expended any time or energy to understand the material and may not have sought assistance.
EDUCATE	Your annotated Works Cited demonstrates "deep and wide" research: you consulted several credible and varied sources and read them thoroughly. You didn't search for "sound bytes," but took the time to understand your issue. You created a visually stunning, accurate, and clear infographic.	Your annotated Works Cited demonstrates that you consulted several credible and varied sources and read them. You tried to appropriately understand your issue. You created a visually compelling, accurate, and clear infographic.	Your annotated Works Cited demonstrates that you consulted several sources. They may not have all been credible or you may have mostly collected "sound bytes" that don't show a deeper understanding of the issue. Your infographic may have lacked visual appeal, accuracy, or clarity, but not all three.	You may not have turned in an appropriate annotated Works Cited with which to evaluate your research, or it may show that your research was inadequate or misguided. Your infographic is not visually appealing, accurate, or clear.
RENOVATE	Your "renovation" is original, creative, visually appealing, and successful, meaning it drives home your point in a profound way. It thoughtfully answers the essential questions and demonstrates your media literacy.	Your "renovation" is creative, visually appealing, and successful, meaning it appropriately answers the essential questions and demonstrates your media literacy.	Your "renovation" tries to answer the essential question but may demonstrate some misunderstandings of media literacy. Alternatively, it may not be totally clear or visually appealing.	It is unclear how your "renovation" answers the essential question. It may be missing, significantly incomplete, or may drastically misinterpret the goal of the project.
PROCESS	During our work, you immersed yourself wholeheartedly in each task: annotations, discussions, research, reflections, and other project work. You were resourceful, organized, and responsible. You met deadlines, problem solved, collaborated, managed time, and used available resources extremely well.	During our work, you completed each task: annotations, discussions, research, reflections, and other project work. You tried to be resourceful, organized, and responsible. You met deadlines, problem solved, collaborated, managed time, and used available resources.	During our work, you tried to complete all tasks but may have completed some inadequately. Bless your heart, you tried to stay organized, meet deadlines, problem solve, collaborate, manage time, and use available resources, even if it wasn't always very successful. You may not have succeeded in one or more of these areas.	You may have been off-task during project work times or may have required extensive teacher guidance in order to complete work. You may have missed multiple deadlines. You may not have used available resources. You may have hurt your own or other students' productivity. You may have misused resources.