



# Parrotfish

## Teacher's detailed lesson plan

### Lesson 1: Building a safe space together

- **Presentation**

Using our reading of the book Parrotfish, we will discuss gender issues, as well as the rules to follow in relationships. We will spend three lessons on these topics.

Add your own color to the presentation, as you know your class and the challenges students face regarding those subjects.

- **Safe Spaces**

- Definition

Definition: "a place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment or any other emotional or physical harm." (Oxford Dictionary)

- What safe spaces can be:

Ideological: It can be your positive headspace that empowers you to have a better disposition of life. It is your unique world that you build and visit.

Physical: A building or room dedicated to a specific purpose and group, where community members can assemble without any fear of physical or emotional harm.

Environment: A friendly atmosphere that fosters inclusion and offers support to struggling or marginalized groups.

- Why do we all need safe spaces

Support: When we can open up about our troubles in front of a loved one, we get to drop our burdens, feel validated, and also receive helpful tips and ideas. Students belonging to the LGBTQ community, who have to endure harassment and bullying, get a lot of support from educators and peers in the designated safe spaces in schools and colleges.

Relaxation: A quiet corner can help us relax and just practice mindfulness. Research also validates the efficacy of relaxation for a sound mind.

Recuperation: A safe space provides us a time-out; an interval when we can process our emotions, take an inventory of our thoughts and plan strategies for our next battle.

Learning: Safe spaces are an effective way to help students return to a relaxed state that is optimal for learning. These spaces also support social-emotional learning because they provide children with tools to manage and regulate their emotions.

- **Creating a safe space together**

- **Choosing ground rules**

Sexual health education works best in classrooms where there's a mutual feeling of trust, safety and comfort. Ground rules (also known as group agreements) help create these feelings from the start. Ground rules that work are:

1. appropriate for your students' age and developmental stage
2. agreed upon by everyone
3. well explained so that students are very clear about what's expected
4. posted clearly in your classroom
5. referred to at the beginning and throughout the sexual health unit

Ground rules work better when students are involved in creating the list. The list doesn't have to be long. You can use 5 or 10 bullet points that are broad enough to cover the key messages you want students to remember. Some examples you can use as a guide are:

- no put downs
- respect each other
- no personal questions
- it's okay to pass
- questions are welcome
- use scientific terms for body parts and activities
- use inclusive language
- listen when others are speaking
- classroom discussions are confidential
- speak for yourself
- respect personal boundaries
- we will be sensitive to diversity, and be careful about making careless remarks
- it's okay to have fun

Write the rules on the board and create afterwards a document that can be kept and presented during at each lesson.

- **Building assertive communications skills**

Students identify passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive communication, and practice assertive communication skills. It is important to weigh other factors before stating that a person is communicating aggressively. For example, "Is this how they regularly speak?" "What is their body language saying outside the tone of their voice?" "What else is happening in the interaction? Consider place, time, event and previous interactions.

Students should understand they need to choose the style that is best for them in any particular situation.

- Display the Types of Communications slide or provide the Types of Communication handout to each student.
- Discuss the four types of communication styles with students, and ask them to provide examples of passive, passive-aggressive, assertive and aggressive communication behaviours.
- Point out that people do not communicate using just one of these styles. They can combine or change styles depending on the situation and/or person that they are interacting with. For example, a person can be assertive with their best friend whom they are very comfortable with, but they may be aggressive with someone that they do not like or respect.
- Divide the class into groups of 2-3 students.
- Give each group a Communication Scenario (1-5) handout.
- Instruct groups to read the scenario and provide a written answer to the questions provided. Students may find this sentence starter helpful when writing their assertive responses: "I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ and I want \_\_\_\_\_."
- Have each group pair up with another group.
- Ask each combined group to share their scenarios and answers with each other.
- Give groups time to practice assertive behaviour. They can use the assertive communication responses that have been written to role play conversations with each other.
- Debrief using the following questions:
  - What type of communication is most effective in solving difficulties within relationships?
  - Why don't the other forms of communication work as well?
  - What are the best examples of assertive communication from each combined group? (Have students read the scenario and the response.) Encourage students to reflect upon the type of communication that best represents their own behaviour and think about ways to use assertive communication within their relationships
  
- **Using inclusive language**

Ask the following question to the students:

- What is inclusive language?
- What examples of it can you find in the book?
- Why is inclusive language a part of a safe space?

Answer and explain with the Inclusive Language sheet. You might want to complete your ground rules after the discussion.

### ● **Create your own ground rules sheet**

Ask students to choose five rules/elements between everything that has just been discussed. They write it on their own sheet and keep it for the next lesson. They have to answer those questions:

- Why is this rule important to me?

- When followed, what is the effect on the whole class?

## Lesson 2: The Parrotfish

- **Remind Ground rules**

Before the beginning of lesson 2, you've created a document with the ground rules agreed in class during lesson 1.

- **The continuum of gender**

- The giant football field

As a whole class, ask students to identify an analogy in the book about the gender continuum. If necessary, give them some clues:

- The chapter in which the scene occurs: chapter 11, also pages 228-229
- the actors named as part of the analogy: Scarlett Johansson and Bruce Willis
- who proposes the analogy: Sebastian

Show the slide of the giant football field.

- **What is a transgender person?**

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. Note that transgender does not have an "ed" at the end.

- **The gender unicorn**

- Present the gender Unicorn to explain the differences between Gender Identity, Gender expression, Physical and Emotional attraction.

Definitions:

**Gender Identity:** One's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or another gender(s). Everyone has a gender identity, including you. For transgender people, their sex assigned at birth and their own internal sense of gender identity are not the same. Female, woman, and girl and male, man, and boy are also not necessarily linked to each other but are just six common gender identities.

**Gender Expression/Presentation:** The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. Many transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth.

**Sex Assigned at Birth:** The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex based on a combination of anatomy, hormones, chromosomes. It is important we don't simply use "sex" because of the vagueness of the definition of sex and its place in transphobia. Chromosomes are frequently

used to determine sex from prenatal karyotyping (although not as often as genitalia). Chromosomes do not always determine genitalia, sex, or gender.

Physically Attracted To: Sexual orientation. It is important to note that sexual and romantic/emotional attraction can be from a variety of factors including but not limited to gender identity, gender expression/presentation, and sex assigned at birth.

Emotionally Attracted To: Romantic/emotional orientation. It is important to note that sexual and romantic/emotional attraction can be from a variety of factors including but not limited to gender identity, gender expression/presentation, and sex assigned at birth. There are other types of attraction related to gender such as aesthetical or platonic. These are simply two common forms of attraction.

- As a whole class, using the online tool, integrate Grady's characteristics on the gender unicorn.

Click on the link: What about Grady? On the powerpoint. [La Licorne du Genre \(mrtino.eu\)](http://LaLicorneDuGenre.mrtino.eu)

### ● Discussion on the book

How did Grady's coming out went:

- With family
- With friends
- At school

During the discussion, use the slide to write on the board the attitudes to avoid and attitudes to adopt that are pointed out by students, Then show students [Sam : un outil ludique pour comprendre et accepter la r alit  du transgenre chez l'enfant – RCI | Franais \(rcinet.ca\)](http://Sam:unoutil ludique pour comprendre et accepter la r alit  du transgenre chez l'enfant - RCI | Franais (rcinet.ca)), and add commentaries on attitudes to the list.

Attitudes to avoid

- Misgender them voluntarily
- Trivialize coming out
- Have a shocked reaction to coming out
- Make fun of one's gender expression (ch 10)
- Bully them verbally and physically (ch 8)
- Using one's dead name (name assigned at birth) (Eve)
- Reveal his or her gender identity or sexual orientation to others without consent
- ...

Attitudes to adopt regarding coming out:

- Thank the person for her confidence in you
- Be a good listener
- Tell them you accept them, no matter what
- Offer your help and support
- Respect the rhythm of the person

- Be aware of your privileges and prejudices
- Be sensitive to privacy – surgical or hormonal or medical condition
- Think about your own identity/gender expression
- Respect pronouns
- ...

Attitudes to adopt regarding public spaces:

- Be out and public about your support
- Speak on behalf of targeted individuals
- Recognize the efforts of others to confront inappropriate behaviors
- Encourage everyone to learn about trans issues
- ...

- **How to make a school safer?**

Using their reading memories and previous observations, build a list with students of what could be done at the school to make it a safe space for the LGBTQ community, and trans or non-binary students specifically.

- Offer gender-neutral bathrooms [Offrir des toilettes mixtes dans vos locaux : télécharger les affiches ici - Coalition des familles LGBT+](#)
- Educate yourself (teacher and students)
- Support students who come out
- Revisit school policies
- Respond to anti-LBGTQ behaviors
- Show that you are an ally
- Stop dividing activities by gender
- Start an LGBTQ Safe Space
- ...

- **Choose an action to take with the students**

Involve students in a process where they are taking action and responsibilities in creating a safe space for everyone at school.

## Lesson 3: Dating and consent

- **Remind the ground rules**
- **Challenges in relationships**
  - Grady's feelings for another person

Ask students to identify questions and feelings that Grady has about another person in the book (Chapter 16).

- What does it mean on the sexual orientation level

Remind the gender unicorn – physical and emotional attraction.

- **What challenges can occur in relationships?**

Introduce the activity by pointing out that people experience problems in all kinds of relationships. In dating relationships, there are predictable factors that lead to conflict, and if they remain unresolved can lead to break-ups.

- Ask students to give an example of a conflict in a dating relationship. In order to respect the privacy of their family and friends, ask them to respond with examples from their imagination or relationships they have seen in TV/movies/books, not personal experience.
- On separate pieces of flipchart paper, write these four headings:

• Practical/Logistical Challenges • Compatibility Challenges • Commitment Challenges • Affection/Intimacy Challenges

- Post the flipchart papers around the room.
- Divide students into four groups. Assign each group to one flipchart paper.
- Give the students a few minutes to brainstorm and write down their ideas of problems that could occur in dating relationships in the category on the paper.
- Ask each group to rotate around the room to the next flipchart, and add at least one idea to the next flipchart.
- Repeat until each group has visited all four papers.

Some sample answers:

Practical/Logistical Issues: Partner moves to another town, Partner doesn't go to same school, Partner doesn't have their own phone/computer, Work/school/extracurricular activities leave little time for partner, One partner is not allowed to date

Issues Compatibility: Family does not approve of partner, Big age gap, Different values or beliefs, Different religion or ethnic background, Different life goals

Commitment Issues: Too busy with other activities or people, One partner is not interested in exclusivity, One partner cheats

Affection/Intimacy Issues: Poor communication between partners, One partner is uncomfortable with public displays of affection, Jealousy Emotional or physical abuse

- Debrief by asking the class to discuss these questions:

• Which headings were the easiest and hardest to identify examples for? • Do any of the challenges seem easy to solve? Which seem the hardest to solve? • Is there a category that seems to have more problematic examples? • What role do a person's values play in relationship problems?

- **What rules do we follow when dating?**

- Consent: [which path would you take ?](#)

This activity provides an opportunity for students to choose the outcome of a story about consent involving Alex and Riley (similar to a "Choose Your Own Adventure®" book).

Load the "Consent: Which Path Would You Take?" slideshow.

As a class, go through the consent story of Alex and Riley and allow students to choose where the storyline goes.

After getting to the end with one storyline, go back to the beginning and repeat the story. As time permits, repeat several times so students can see how the different choices lead to different situations.

Debrief the activity with the following questions:

What are some ways someone can ask for consent? (Encourage students to say their responses out loud.)

- "Is it ok if..."
- "Would you like it if..."
- "I would really like to..."
- "Can we talk about..."
- "Is this ok?"

It is helpful for students to practice saying words that ask for, give or refuse consent and accept the answers. This is one way they can feel more prepared to have consent conversations in real life.

- "I want to check with you before we go any further, do you want to do this?"
- "Are you comfortable?"
- "Do you want to stop?"

What are some ways a person can enthusiastically and clearly communicate their consent?

- "Yes!"
- "I definitely want to do that."
- "Let's do this."
- "I am good with ... but not with ..."

What are some things someone could do or say to refuse consent or show the answer is "no"?

- "No."
- "Not now."
- "Stop."
- "I don't want to."

- "I have to go home now."
- "I need to use the bathroom."
- "I need to study."
- "I'm not feeling well."
- "I'm not ready."
- "Let's talk about this later"
- Push the other person away.
- "Can we \_\_\_\_\_ instead?" (This may be important for some students. It may not be an all or nothing scenario. Maybe kissing on the lips is not acceptable, but kissing on the cheek is ok.)
- "I don't want to go any further than holding hands or kissing on the cheek."
- "I really like you but I am not comfortable with that. I am okay with \_\_\_\_\_. Is that something you would like to do?" What are some ways to respond that respects a 'no' answer?
- "I wish you wanted to, but I get it."
- "Thanks for telling me. I don't want to push you."
- "Ok. Can we talk about this again sometime?"
- "I am kinda glad you said no. I wasn't sure I wanted to either but I thought you did."

- Answer key / [Kahoot!](#)

Present the Kahoot quizz or read the assertions at loud and discuss of the answers with the whole class, using the Answer Key to add to the student's answers.

During the lesson, did students:

Knowledge: define consent?

Skills: practice identifying the presence or absence of consent in various situations?

Attitudes: accept the need to ask for and obtain consent in sexual relationships?

## Resources

[Offrir des toilettes mixtes dans vos locaux : télécharger les affiches ici - Coalition des familles LGBT+](#)

[Graphics - \(transstudent.org\)](#)

[Trans Student Educational Resources -](#)

[History & Importance of Safe Spaces in Schools | Resilient Educator](#)

[Creating a Safe Space for Students in Your Classroom \(kirstenskaboodle.com\)](#)