

"Compassion is the basis of morality"

*Arthur Schopenhauer*

## Stella



Level 2



5 to 30



120 minutes



**Complexity:** Level 2

**Group size:** 5 to 30

**Time:** 120 minutes

**Overview:** This activity uses ranking methods to expose the differences in participants' moral values, and to open discussion on questions of gender inequality and socialisation into gender-based stereotyping

**Objectives:**

- To enable participants to reflect on their own values and priorities in relation to gender issues
- To analyse the sources and influences which lead to different moral positions or priorities
- To understand how individuals become socialised into gender-based stereotyping and prescribed gender roles

**Materials:** • A copy of Stella's story for each participant

**Preparation:** Make sure you have enough space for participants to work individually, in small groups of 3 to 6, and in plenary.



## Instructions

- 1) Introduce the activity and its objectives. Ask them to read the story individually and to rank the behaviour of each character (Stella, Vitali, Ralf, Stella's mother and Goran) along a scale from 'best' to 'worst'. For example, they might decide that Stella's behaviour was the worst, Goran's was the next worst, Ralf's was next – and so on. Give participants 10 minutes for this task.
- 2) When everyone has decided on their individual ranking, ask participants to get together in small groups (between 3 to 6 people) and compare and discuss their results with others. The task of the small groups is to come up with a common ranking – a list that everyone in the small group can agree on. The group should create a common ranking on the basis of shared understanding and consensus, rather than using, for example, a majority voting.
- 3) Optional: After the small groups have agreed a common ranking, you could repeat this phase by bringing two small groups together to form medium size groups. However, if you do include this phase, groups in the first round should not be larger than 4 people.
- 4) Ask each group to present the results of their discussions to the plenary. Groups should give brief arguments for their commonly agreed ranking.

## Debriefing and evaluation



Use some of the following questions to debrief the activity:

- When you worked individually, how did you decide what was good and what was bad behaviour?
- Was it difficult to agree on a ranking that suited everyone?
- What were the challenges or blocks which made agreement difficult?
- What role do personal values play in such a process?
- Where do personal values, such as those reflected in this activity, come from?
- Can you identify any prescribed gender roles in the story?
- Which gender related concerns or dilemmas are raised by this story?
- Are any of these concerns present in the context where you live? How do issues such as these affect young people?
- Which human rights issues can you identify in the story? Do you think human rights are useful when dealing with moral dilemmas related to gender? Explain your answer
- How can we support young people to deal with social pressures relating to morality and gender?



## Tips for facilitators

It is important that you establish an open atmosphere in which every ranking of the story is seen to be acceptable, and where you do not start 'blaming' people for arguments you might consider strange or bad yourself.

The activity can be adapted in a number of ways. One possibility is to run it as described, and then to repeat it with a changed story, in which all the women become men, and vice-versa. Do participants' rankings remain the same? If not, why does the change make a difference? You could also include the ages of characters in the story, and experiment in other ways: for example, by making them all have the same gender, or by including a character's ethnic or national background. It would then be interesting to look at how the changes in the story make a difference to the ranking, and why.



## Suggestions for follow-up

You could follow this activity with other activities that explore gender stereotyping and gender socialisation, for example: "Gender-in-a-box" or "Good, better, best".

You could also explore gender-based violence and intersectionality through activities such as "Understanding gender-based violence" or "About Maria".



## Ideas for action

Suggest to your group that they explore the question of values, as these relate to gender, in different settings or communities. You could do this in several ways, for example: conducting a series of interviews using different audio-visual methods with representatives of different religious and cultural communities, or inviting women and men from the communities you are interested in knowing more about to come to meet the members of your group and to discuss values related to gender.



## Stella's Story

Somewhere in a far-off land lives a beautiful girl called Stella. She is in love with the handsome Vitali, who lives on the other side of an enormous river. Earlier in the year, all the bridges across this river were swept away by a terrible flood, and all the boats except one were damaged or destroyed. Stella asks Ralf, the owner of the only remaining boat, to take her to the other side of the river. Ralf agrees, on one condition: he insists that Stella sleep with him. Stella is confused. She does not know what to do and runs to her mother to ask for advice. Her mother tells her that she does not want to interfere in Stella's private business. In desperation, Stella sleeps with Ralf, who then takes her across the river. The joyful Stella rushes to Vitali to embrace him and proceeds to tell him everything that happened. Vitali pushes her away roughly, and Stella runs off, sobbing. Not far from Vitali's house, Stella meets Goran, Vitali's best friend. She tells him everything that has happened. Goran punches Vitali for what he has done to Stella, and then walks away with her...