

GENDER EQUALITY QUESTIONNAIRE - ADVANCE GUIDANCE

This questionnaire explores the underlying structure of the play you are directing / producing / marketing / reading, from the perspective of how it presents male and female roles. The questions focus directly on binary gender categories of 'male' and 'female' as the questions are specifically attempting to understand something about the way these traditional categories are represented in plays and on stage. If the play (also) represents non-binary gender, please use the text boxes under the questions to give details.

The questions on the form are largely multiple choice. The questions often come in pairs, with the second part offering an option to add a description. If you are uncertain which category your play falls into it can help to add a note here. You can also use the text boxes to make notes on the question as you are trying to decide your answer.

The questions are designed such that the questionnaire shouldn't take very long – unless you find it helpful to fill out the optional sections in greater depth, for example if the questionnaire were being used by a director to help them understand the dramaturgical structure of the play in terms of gender. There is no judgement implied by the answers – the process of gathering these thoughts is to gain a sense of patterns across many plays, rather than to judge an individual play. The questions simply aim to uncover a nuanced picture of the representation of female characters, rather than imply that there could be a 'right' way of representing women. There are so many considerations at work in the process of programming that gender is never going to be the sole factor. Rather this is an attempt to understand better how plays represent women in general.

Numbers of male and female characters in the opening and closing scenes?

Usually answering this question will be straightforward, but occasionally the category your play fits into may not quite fit with your overall impression of the play. For example, you might notice that technically the numbers of male and female characters on stage are the same, but that the female – or male – character(s) have/has very much the last word, or are the main focus of the scene, etc. If so, you can indicate this in the text box provided.

These notes might include observations like:

- 'there are more women but they say very little compared to the men'
- 'there are more women but a male character is at the centre of the very ending'
- 'the play ends with the male character having learnt something, but not the female character' (or vice versa)
- 'the last scene is fairly evenly split between male and female characters, but the female character has the last word'

Which characters drive the action of the play?

Usually the characters who drive the action of the play also are its main focus. What is meant by 'driving the action' is when a character says or does something that changes the plot of the play, affecting other characters. More than one character might drive the action, or who the main driver is might shift – for example Lady Macbeth drives the action in the early part of *Macbeth*, but once the king has been murdered, it is Macbeth who drives the action.

It might be useful to add further details for this question if there is a more complicated relationship between the action of the play and the themes/ideas it wants to emphasize. For example if characters of one gender largely drive the action – but the play centres on, for example, the reflections of the characters of the other gender.

Who has more to say?

If it is possible to actually the contrasting numbers of lines spoken by the male and female characters, that can be very useful (as it may differ from our perception). If it is Shakespeare for example, the number of lines a character has can be found online - <https://sites.google.com/a/shakespearelinecount.com/www/shakespeare-characters-line-count>

Otherwise a quick skim of the play, concentrating not on what characters are saying but the ratio of male to female speakers, can be useful in comparing the proportion of lines spoken by male and female characters.

The Bechdel test (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bechdel_test)

One thing that this research has made clear, is that this test is highly relevant for theatre as well as film, but that it is also interesting to consider what topics female characters are represented as talking about, and how far these reflect historic perceptions of female spheres (socially as well as theatrically).

Asking this question at all might appear to apply a value-judgement about domains/topics traditionally thought of as 'girls jobs' (!) (for example domestic tasks; appearance/clothes; children; organising social events), but this is not the purpose. The question rather seeks to identify how far female characters are being written as engaging with the wider world, beyond their functional roles as mothers/wives/family-supporters), when not directly engaging with men.

Of the female roles, what proportion are roles that largely support the representation of other characters (whether male or female)?

The question is interested in what extent the female characters are defined by their functional role in relation to someone else (whether male or female). To what extent are the female characters represented primarily as servants, mothers, secretaries, wives or other roles fulfilling a support function in relation to others? Is the play largely interested in one or two characters, with female characters being brought in to express something about those central characters?

This would also include situations in which the female character exists primarily as an object of desire for a male character (eg where a female character appears to happily acquiesce to the male characters' perception of her, and his desire for her, without having any agency of her own).

Which characters do we understand best in terms of intention, motivation and/or back-story?

This question explores the way in which the individuality of the character is represented. It is useful to look out for how much the character talks about themselves and/or the past, or shares details about their lives that are not strictly relevant to the plot. If you feel the play is fairly evenly split, please answer the multiple choice according to what gender the characters are who you feel are most clearly and detailedly depicted as individuals, and then provide details for your decision in the second part of the question.

Are any of the female characters mocked, bullied or denigrated for comic purpose, or for the purpose of illustration something about the male characters?

Please include any instances of female characters being mocked, bullied or denigrated, regardless of whether they are in order to demonstrate an attitude or the play is 'about' those problems. Please include in your answer any such descriptions of women who don't actually appear as characters the play. However, if in the play the female character(s) responds to/comments on taunts or denigration (about herself or about others), or even retaliates, please make a note in the 'further details' below this question.

Which characters are represented as most creative and/or adventurous and/or inept? / Which characters are represented as sensible/good at organising/accepting?

These are probably the most unusual questions of this analysis. They emerged from research done on a wide variety of plays in which certain qualities were naturalized according to gender. This is certainly a reflection of the different kinds of social roles that actually exist, and therefore, again, articulating these representations should not be taken as a value judgement. However, it is interesting to examine how many plays reflect these largely unconscious social norms.

The terms 'accepting' and 'inept' might need some clarification. Being inept might be represented in a wide variety of ways – at root is perhaps the representation of an inability to self-organise. By 'accepting' is meant the quality that allows conformity to a situation, a state of affairs, even where it isn't in the individual's own interest (they might do it for the sake of others, for example).

No words to describe any of the qualities mentioned in these questions come without some degree of value-judgement – but the attempt is to make them as neutral as possible. Both have positives and negatives. The first set of qualities arguably are more likely to be represented in drama, as they are more likely to produce conflict and change.

It is outside the scope of this analysis, but it might also be interesting to reflect how the play itself judges the qualities mentioned in these two questions, and how that might relate to gender:

Is being 'inept' a sign of failure or genius?

Is someone who does not conform, praised as adventurous and/or intelligent, or condemned as rebellious and/or foolish?

Does anything happen to a female character that she might reasonably be expected to have a reaction to (EG anger/sense of betrayal/annoyance/excitement) but which she accepts without question?

Examples might include A Midsummer Night's Dream, where Titania does not protest against Oberon having taken her Changeling boy whilst she was under the spell of the love potion, or the musical Sweet Charity, where the main character accepts without question the sexual double-standards (even as the musical makes plain its unfairness), and resigns herself to being let down by successive boyfriends.

The final questions of this questionnaire currently relate to the process of answering it! Please do give any response you think important/relevant, regardless of whether I've actually asked that question.