

# beyond princesses and pirates

Promoting Gender Equality  
and Challenging  
Gender Stereotypes

A Guide to Children's Picture Books



## What are gender stereotypes?

Gender describes masculinity and femininity and refers to the socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women; boys and girls.

Gender stereotypes are broadly accepted ideas about the way males and females should behave. Common gender stereotypes include that men shouldn't cry; that females are naturally caring and emotional; that boys like trucks, sport and want to be superheroes; and that girls like dolls and aspire to be princesses.



## Why is it important to challenge gender stereotypes?

Rigid gender stereotyping promotes inequality between the sexes and can set children up to expect and accept power imbalances within relationships later in life. Presenting children with positive and diverse representations of gender teaches them that anything is possible and to see others as equals.



## Things to consider

When selecting reading material with your children you could consider the following points:

- **Are there both female and male characters in prominent roles?**
- **Does the story challenge gender roles?**
- **Do female and male characters in the story have the same opportunities?**
- **When characters have non-stereotypical qualities or interests, is this portrayed as something normal and is it welcomed?**

## About this guide

The content of many children's picture books keeps gender stereotypes alive, depicting boys as active, physically strong, heroic central characters, and girls as pretty, passive characters in search of a prince.

This guide provides parents, grandparents, carers and teachers with a range of stories that are available at Maribyrnong's libraries that present alternative ideas about what children can be, what they can be interested in and what they can achieve.

These books can be used to encourage discussion, broader thinking and directly challenge harmful gender stereotypes with children in a way that is easy to understand.

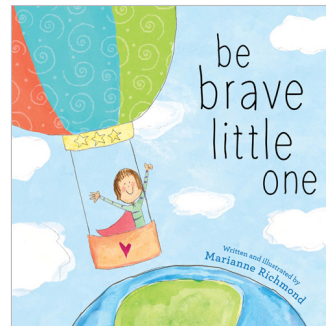


## Be Brave Little One

**Marianne Richmond**

Be Brave Little One honours and celebrates the power of courage in every child.

ISBN: 9781492658818, Sourcebooks

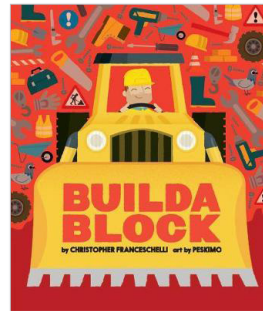


## Buildablock

**Christopher Franceschelli & Peskimo**

Children will discover male and female workers sharing and enjoying many of the jobs on a construction site.

ISBN: 978-1419725692, Harry N. Abrams

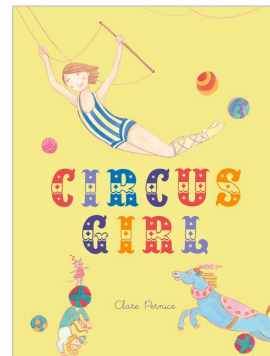


## Circus Girl

**Clare Pernice**

Circus Girl is the “star” of the show – she can accomplish anything. She is courageous, bold, daring and full of confidence.

ISBN: 9781927018361, Simple Read Books

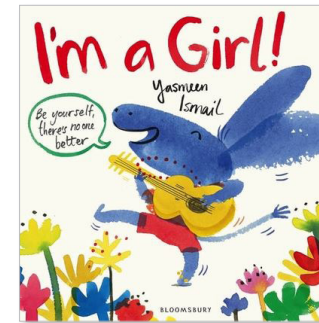
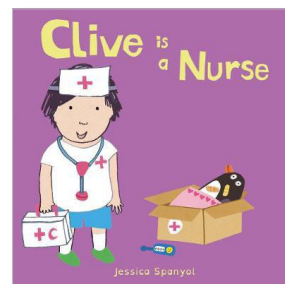


## Clive is a Nurse

**Jessica Spanyol**

Follow Clive and his friends as they explore the many things a nurse does in a day.

ISBN: 9781846439919, Child's Play

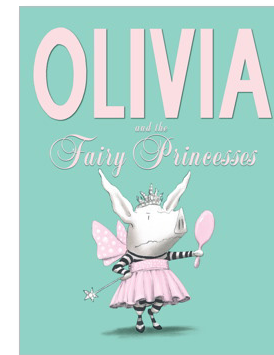


## I'm a Girl

**Yasmeen Ismail**

Meet a little girl who is spontaneous, fast, strong, and loves winning. Sometimes she's mistaken for a boy, but she definitely isn't one! When she meets a boy who likes wearing princess dresses and playing dolls, they quickly discover shared interests and a wonderful friendship.

ISBN: 9781408858486, Bloomsbury Children's Books

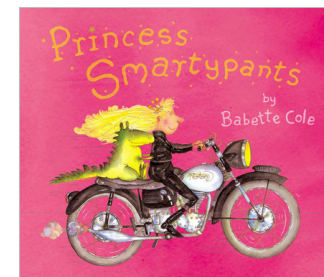


## Olivia and the Fairy Princesses

**Ian Falconer**

Olivia, the plucky piglet, embarks upon a quest for identity with very lofty goals – and being a princess in pink is NOT one of them!

ISBN: 9781442450271, Atheneum Books for Young Readers



## Princess Smartypants

**Babette Cole**

Princess Smartypants does not want to get married. Find out how she fights to preserve her independence in this hilarious fairy-tale-with-a-difference.

ISBN: 978-0399243981, Penguin Random House

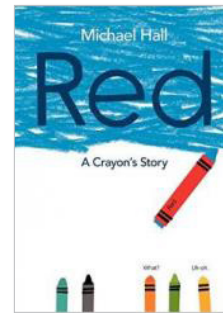


## Red: A Crayon Story

**Michael Hall**

A funny, heart-warming and colourful story about finding the courage to be true to your inner self.

ISBN: 9780062252098, Harper Collins

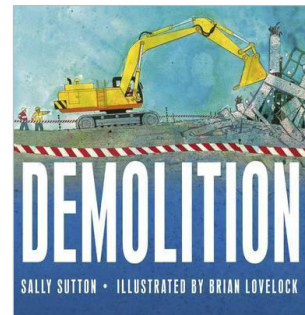


## Roadworks, Demolition, Construction Series

**Sally Sutton and Brian Lovelock**

A series of books that depicts the busy women and men involved in building a road, demolishing an old building to make way for a park, and constructing a library.

ISBN: 9781921529269, Walker Books Australia and New Zealand

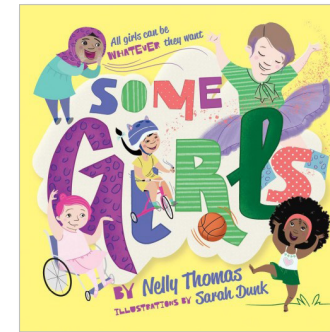
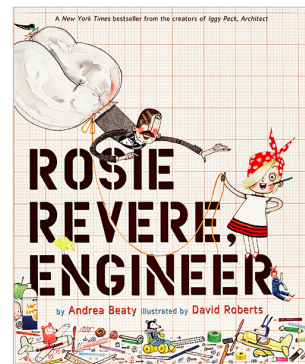


## Rosie Revere, Engineer

**Andrea Beaty and David Roberts**

Rosie may seem quiet during the day, but at night she's a brilliant inventor of gizmos and gadgets who dreams of becoming a great engineer.

ISBN: 13 9781419708459, Abrams Books for Young Readers

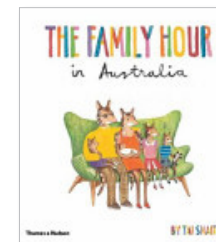


## Some Girls

**Nelly Thomas and Sarah Dunk**

Some girls are good with cars and bikes. Some girls are good with art and kites. Some girls are good with puzzles and maths. And some girls are good with dolls and cats. Some Girls is a story about how everyone is different and special in their own way.

ISBN: 9780648147404, Piccolo Nero

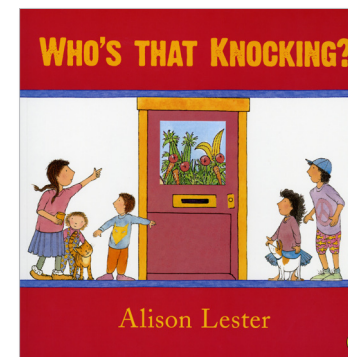


## The Family Hour in Australia

**Tai Snaith**

The Family Hour in Australia explores curious facts about endangered Australian animals that reflect some of the diversity seen in mixed, modern human families.

ISBN: 9780500500330, Thames and Hudson Australia



## Who's That Knocking?

also published as *Monsters are Knocking*

**Alison Lester**

"Who's that knocking at our front door?" – so each page begins, with a mysterious house guest waiting to be discovered behind each flap. This is a fun story that shows that things are not always as they appear.

ISBN: 9780143502951, Picture Puffin





## More information

If you have any queries about this resource, please contact the Gender Equity Officer via [healthandwellbeing@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au](mailto:healthandwellbeing@maribyrnong.vic.gov.au)

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### References

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Womens Health East *No Limitations – Breaking down gender stereotypes in the early years. A guide for early years educators* (WHE, 2017). [whe.org.au/resources/no-limitations-resources/](http://whe.org.au/resources/no-limitations-resources/)

Womens Health East, Access Health and Community *Free to be me book selection checklist* (Available online March 2018) [whe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/10/Access-HandC\\_Book-Selection-Checklist\\_.pdf](http://whe.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2017/10/Access-HandC_Book-Selection-Checklist_.pdf)

Because Why (Our Watch, 2018) [www.ourwatch.org.au/Because-Why/Menu-Item/About-Because-Why](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/Because-Why/Menu-Item/About-Because-Why)

