



Writing for Change

RAISING AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCE, POWER, AND DISCRIMINATION

1.23 Challenging the Pseudogeneric “Man”

Objectives

Examine the use of male-gendered nouns as “generic.”

Challenge the notion of the generic male as inclusive.

Generate gender-free, inclusive nouns and pronouns.

Materials needed

Copies of the handout

Time needed

Ten to twenty minutes

Instructor directions

Ask your students to examine phrases that use male nouns as “generic.”

Have them describe the mental image created by each phrase.

Ask them to substitute a term representing a group of people of a specific age, religion, or ethnicity for the male noun and describe the mental images created by using the substitute terms.

Have them discuss how connotations are affected by word structure and by familiarity.



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Directions

Examine the following phrases that use male nouns as “generic.” Describe the mental image created for you by each phrase. Do you see yourself and people like you in the images?

Next, choose a term representing a group of people of a specific age, religion, class, or ethnicity, and substitute that term for the male noun (example: “childkind”). Does use of the new, specific term sound incongruous or unusual? Why?

Describe the mental images created by using the substitute terms. Do you see yourself and people like you in the images?

Finally, suggest a gender-free, inclusive term for each (ex: for “mankind,” “humanity” or “people”).

For the benefit of all mankind

“All men are created equal”

May the best man win

Prehistoric man

Man the pumps!

The first manned mission to Mars

Chairman of the Board

We need more manpower

Not fit for man or beast

The relationship between men and machines

Man's best friend

“To boldly go where no man has gone before”

Man of the Year

“Peace on Earth, goodwill toward men”

The founding fathers

“Crown thy good with brotherhood”

“Friends, Romans, countrymen; lend me your ears”