
Extraordinary Activities for Extraordinary Girls

Extraordinary Girls



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with a foreword by Isabel Carter Stewart of *Girls Incorporated*

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Discovering Potential

Explore Careers Create an activity centered on who and what girls can become. Introduce a wide variety of careers, being careful to avoid gender stereotypes, and work with the girls to create a list of some of the qualities and skills that are needed for success in these jobs. Next, have the girls make a list of the qualities and skills that describe themselves. When they are done, have them pick the three they would most like to use in a job. Ask the girls to match their lists to the various jobs you have discussed. Make it clear that this is just a small sample of the types of work available to them.



Take Note of Extraordinary Women Ask the girls to think and talk about famous girls and women they admire. Who do they think is extraordinary, and why? What have these role models accomplished? What obstacles did they have to overcome? Allow time for the girls to find more information about these role models. Provide the girls with resources or arrange a trip to a local



Jump Start Work backward from your list of careers available to girls and women today by eliminating those that were not available to them fifty years ago. Use this to start a conversation about the changing role of women in the working world. Encourage the girls to share their ideas about what they would like to do and how they can achieve their goals.

Suggested Resources

Girls and Young Women Entrepreneurs:

True Stories about Starting and Running a Business Plus How You Can Do It Yourself. Frances A. Karnes, Suzanne M. Bean, and Elizabeth Verdick. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1997.

The *I Want to Be . . .* series. Stephanie Maze and Catherine O'Neill Grace. San Diego: Harcourt Brace. Titles include *I Want to Be a Dancer, . . . an Engineer, . . . an Astronaut, and . . . a Veterinarian.*

Girls Unlimited,
www.girlsunlimited.com.

The Quest Beyond the Pink Collar,
<http://library.thinkquest.org/12336>

Jump Start Use the responses to this exercise to guide a discussion about the importance of hard work and setting goals. Emphasize that, thanks to extraordinary women like those they learned about, girls and women have





library or to a museum exhibit that features material about girls and women. Have each girl write an essay or share her thoughts about why each of these girls or women is extraordinary. As the girls talk about their findings, develop a list of the qualities and skills that these role models have in common. Ask the girls to think about some of the things these girls and women may have done to achieve their goals. This activity works best with older girls who are more likely to be familiar with famous women and significant historical figures.



Strut Your Stuff Talk with the girls about what they think it means to be talented. Have them review *Extraordinary Girls* and discuss some of the talents the girls featured in the book exhibit. If the book is not readily available, share with the girls a broad definition of talent, including such elements as musical and artistic ability, athletic prowess, skill at acting or public speaking, dedication to a cause or a goal, and the ability to inspire and motivate others. Encourage them to think of talent as something more than just playing a musical instrument or singing a song. Help them expand their understanding of talent to include characteristics like courage, vision, imagination, and persistence. Based on the ideas they come up with, work with them to put together a talent show that reflects this broad understanding of talent. Suggest that girls whose talents may not lend themselves to this presentation participate by telling about something they have achieved, exhibiting a piece of their artwork, or sharing pictures or a videotape of a performance or competition not easily brought to this venue. The show can be limited to members of their group or extended to their schools and communities.

more opportunities than ever before. Point out that the girls in your group share many qualities with their role models. Encourage the girls to think about how they can be role models themselves.

Suggested Resources

The Book of Women: 300 Notable

Women History Passed By. Lynne Griffin and Kelly McCann. Holbrook, Mass.: Bob Adams, 1992.

Cool Women. Dawn Chipman, Mari Florence, and Naomi Wax. Chicago: Girl Press, 1998.

Girls Who Rocked the World: Heroines from Sacagawea to Sheryl Swoopes. Amelie Welden. Hillsboro, Ore.: Beyond Words Publishing, 1998.

Herstory: Women Who Changed the World. Eds. Ruth Ashby and Deborah Gore Ohrn. New York: Viking, 1995.

Variation If resources allow, have the girls videotape their talent show. Suggest that they do this in a documentary style, including interviews with the performers and the organizers both prior to and following the show.

Jump Start Talk with the girls about what it took to put this show together and the value of every contribution. Explore the different roles girls took on and the value of each. Emphasize the importance of both leaders and followers, and remind them that everyone plays both roles. Encourage the girls to talk about ways their definition of talent may have changed through this process. Invite them to think and talk about the talents they may be interested in exploring.





Interview Extraordinary Women Divide the girls into pairs and ask them to choose the section of *Extraordinary Girls* that most interests them. If the book is not available, share the topics “learning,” “making a difference,” “religion and spirituality,” “the arts,” and “sports and play” with the girls and initiate a discussion about what each of these sections might introduce. Have them identify two women in their community who are leaders in the area they choose (for example, a teacher and a librarian for “learning,” a political leader and an activist for “making a difference,” or a local athlete and a coach for “sports and play”). Work with the girls to develop questions they would like these women to answer. For example, they might want to learn what challenges and motivates these leaders, what advice they have for young women today, whether the leaders have ever felt that they have been paid less or their work has been valued less because they are women, what these leaders think it means to be a girl or a woman, how things today are different from (and similar to) when they were girls, what they think needs to be changed in their community, etc. Each pair should interview two leaders and share their findings with the group. Encourage the girls to invite their interviewees as guests to their presentations.



Variation Have the girls identify role models in their daily lives. For this to work best, it should be people who are accessible to them, i.e. teachers, mothers, doctors, aunts, religious leaders, friends, etc. Ask them to interview these women to learn what they were like as girls and what they think it means to be a girl. Have the girls report back to the group about what they learn. Girls could share their material through role-playing by pretending to be a person they admire and answering questions or sharing material in that role.

Jump Start Lead a discussion with the girls about the similarities and differences between their lives and the lives of these girls and women. What surprised the girls? What advice did they find most helpful? Did they learn anything new about the women in their own lives? Did they feel inspired or excited by any of the things these women have done? Encourage the girls to recognize that extraordinary girls and women are not just celebrities, they are in every community.

Suggested Resources

Girls and Young Women Leading the Way: 20 True Stories about Leadership. Frances A. Karnes and Suzanne M. Bean. Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing, 1993.

“Holding Our Own: A Handbook for Girls and Women Exploring Leadership.” Girls Incorporated and the YWCA of Minneapolis. Indianapolis, Ind.: Girls Incorporated, 1996.





String a Paper Chain Encourage the girls to make a list of all the ways in which they are extraordinary. Have them write each item on a strip of colored construction paper. Fasten the ends of the first strip together in a circle, with the writing on the outside. Loop the second strip through the first and fasten its ends together. Continue adding links until all the strips are strung together in a colorful chain. Display the chain prominently as a reminder of how many outstanding qualities the group has to offer and how each girl's qualities are stronger and more effective when combined with another's. Encourage the girls to add new links to the chain as they think about other ways in which they are extraordinary.

Host a Talk Show Work with the girls to host their own mock radio or television talk show. Talk with them about the different roles such a production might involve, from host to producer to audiovisual crew to members of the audience. Encourage the girls to come up with the topic(s) they would like the show to feature and the format of the show on their own. They might choose to have one host or several. They might simulate a call-in format, or they might have one or several guests on "stage" with questions coming from the audience. Suggest that girls have the option of playing themselves on the show or assuming different roles for the program. For example, if they choose to hold a show focused on protecting the environment, possible roles could include government officials, owners of plants or businesses affected by environmental regulation, members of environmental activist groups, and local citizens interested (or not interested) in the issue.



Variation Create a paper chain to reflect the girls' accomplishments. Have the girls add a link each time a member attains a goal or achieves something she would like to share with the group.

Jump Start Use the chain to help the girls celebrate their assets and achievements. Consider using it as a tool to help the girls set goals and then share their accomplishments with others.

Variation This exercise can easily be adapted from a simple, one-session activity to something much more involved. If time is available, work with the girls to research the various angles of the topic(s) they choose, give them time to rehearse their roles, and consider inviting an outside audience for their performance. If resources permit, encourage the girls to make an audio-tape or videotape of their show.

Jump Start Encourage the girls to talk about what they learned from this exercise. What were the tasks that needed to get done, and how did they divide these responsibilities? Did they learn anything new about the topic(s) their show addressed? Did they find it hard to stay in character if they chose to take on different roles? Talk with them about how people often have different opinions. Discuss some of the constructive (and also the less constructive) ways that these opinions can be shared. If the show was taped, review the tape as a group and talk about what the girls thought worked well and what they would change if they did it again.

