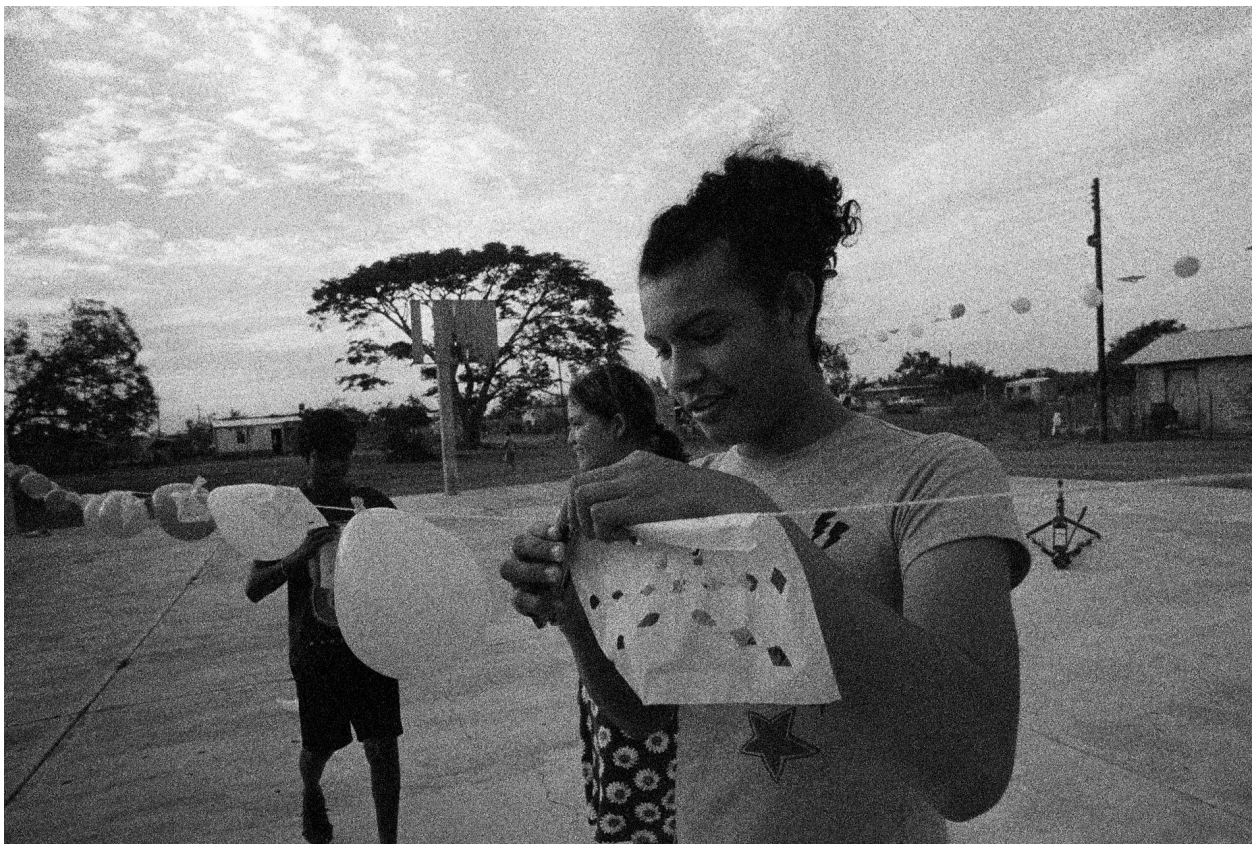




LESSON PLAN GRADES: 11-12

Things We Dare Not Do Lesson Plan: Exploring Political and Personal Aspects of *Machismo*



OVERVIEW

For much of recorded history, gender has been a significant component of human identity. Gender can be a difficult and confusing topic for teens and young adults. With imagery that

invites reflection, documentary filmmaker Bruno Santamaría, brings us *Things We Dare Not Do*, the story of 16-year-old Ñoño, a teen coming of age in the small Mexican coastal village of El Roblito. Ñoño lives what seems to be an idyllic existence with his loving family. But he holds a secret. Defying gender norms, Ñoño works up the courage to tell his family he wants to live his life as a woman. Yet when violence interrupts a community celebration, he must face the reality of a country shrouded in machismo and transphobia.

The lesson uses scenes from the film to help students explore the ways that a culture of machismo affects those who define themselves as outsiders, and also those who accept life within its limited boundaries.

Subject Areas

- Gender Studies – Machismo; Transgender Identity
- Literature – Coming of Age Stories; Personal Narratives
- Cultural Studies – Gender in Mexican / Latinx / Rural Communities
- Sociology of the Family

Grade Levels: 10-12

Objectives:

In this lesson, students will:

- learn the definition of “machismo” and understand that the concept defines acceptable roles for everyone, not just men

Materials

- Film clips from *Things We Dare Not Do* and a way to screen them
- Student access to the entry on Mexico-Machismo from GlobalSecurity.org
[\[https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/mexico/machismo.htm\]](https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/mexico/machismo.htm)
- [for online classes]: access to a digital concept mapping tool
- Students will need a way to do a free write (journal, paper and pen, digital word processing tool)

Time Needed

90 minutes (could easily be split over three class periods)

FILM CLIPS

Here are the clips in the order that they will be used in the lesson plan. The scenes are not in the sequence in which they appear in the film.

Clip 1: Preparing for the Celebration (1:27 min.)

6:05-7:32 starts with camera zooming in to dance practice; ends with Nono saying “Tomorrow we’ll rehearse at Yuleni’s”

Clip 2: Playing at the Beach (3:13 min.)

41:11-44:24 starts with 2nd kid jumping into water; ends with shot of sunset at end of race

Clip 3: Life in the Village: Movie Night (2:37 min.)

18:27-21:04 starts with children throwing rocks at target while loud speaker voice says “To all the people...”; ends with Nono yawning and continuing to watch film

Clip Four: Nono’s Secret (3:31 min.)

10:00-13:31 starts with Nono photographing with phone as he walks to beach; ends with head shot as Nono gets ready to put back on his “regular” shirt

Clip Five: The Gauntlet (3:05 min.)

1:04:55-1:08:00 starts with Nono walking to work (just before someone whistles at him); ends with Nono going to back of store (past customers) to hang a blouse

Clip Six: The Big Ask (6 min.)

52:00-58:00 starts with two shot of Nono and mother with Nono looking uncomfortable (before she asks what’s wrong); ends with shot of mother with arms crossed

ACTIVITIES

Step 1: Defining *Machismo*

a) Create a Concept Map

Using any concept mapping tool that is familiar to students, have the group map out what they already know about the concept of “machismo.” Take time as a group to organize ideas into categories (e.g., physical attributes, role of violence, role in family).

b) Read an Information Source

As a class read the entry on Mexico-Machismo from GlobalSecurity.org
[<https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/mexico/machismo.htm>]

one-paragraph-at-a-time, pausing after each paragraph to note ideas that were already included in the class' concept map and to add any new ideas that students think are important.

c) Discussion

Discuss issues as they arise to ensure that all students understand the demands that are made of people growing up in a culture that embraces *machismo*. If it helps, students might give examples from their own lives where machismo has been expressed, but at this stage, avoid debating whether students support or reject any particular components of the ideology. An opportunity for that will come later.

d) Craft a Definition

Working in small groups, have students draft a definition of machismo that summarizes what they've learned. Provide an opportunity to share definitions and invite each individual student to take from the various drafts to come up with a final definition that feels right to them. They'll use this, along with the class' concept map for the next part of the activity.

e) Source Analysis

As time allows, you may want to have students examine the source of the reading and discuss why a website focused on military and security issues would include an entry on *machismo*.

Step 2: Applying the Concept to Real Life

a) Introduce the Film

Make sure students have their concept maps and definitions handy. Explain that they'll use them to help analyze several clips from a documentary film called *Things We Dare Not Do*. It's about a 16-year-old named Ñoño, who is growing up in a small coastal Mexican town. Each clip shows an aspect of Ñoño's life. Students' jobs will be to look for answers to three questions:

1. How are each of the people (not just Ñoño) influenced or affected by machismo?
2. What do they see that affirms or reinforces the ideology of machismo?
3. What do they see that challenges the ideology of machismo (and for advanced students, what are the consequences or outcomes of the challenge)?

(You might want to post these so students can see them as they view)

To practice, you might invite students to imagine Ñoño standing at the stove, preparing a meal for younger siblings. How might they answer the three questions? (Note: This is an actual scene from the film, but not one included in the clips that they will view)

b) Show Clips 1-5

Clip 1: Preparing for the Celebration

Students might begin to notice details, like the ideas conveyed by dance moves or costume choices. Or they might describe the Ñoño's creativity or role as leader (and style of leadership).

Clip 2: Playing at the Beach

Students might comment on Ñoño's continuing creativity and leadership role. Also the nature of play, competitive games, group hierarchy, and how the "outsider" on the motor bike is treated.

Clip 3: Life in the Village: Movie Night

Students might wonder about Ñoño's role in the play of village children and why we don't see him with children his own age. They also might notice the children's gun play and their reactions to the violent movie (including Ñoño's boredom).

Clip 4: Ñoño's Secret

Given his apparently positive role in his community, students might think about why he feels he must experiment with his transformation in secret.

Clip 5: The Gauntlet [trigger warning: this clip includes homophobic slurs]

Students might notice what Ñoño must survive just to go to work (indicating a traditional work ethic?), and also who feels entitled to participate in the tradition of catcalling and using slurs, as well as the reactions of bystanders.

Take a few moments to allow students to process emotions that may have come up during the viewing and to review what they've learned thus far about the ways that machismo influences everyday life.

Step 3: Writing for Synthesis

a) Show Clip 6: The Big Ask

Show the final clip, but pause about 30 seconds before the end (at 57:30, before the father gives his answer). Briefly repeat the standard discussion format, examining issues like why Ñoño needs to muster courage for this moment (i.e., why it isn't easy), and why the decision is the province of the family patriarch.

Ask and discuss: "What do you think Ñoño's father will say (and why do you think he'll say that – what's your evidence)? What factors do you think the father should consider (e.g., impact on Ñoño's siblings, Ñoño's happiness, health, and safety, his own status among his peers)?"

Then ask students to do a five minute free write to answer the question: What do you want Ñoño's father to say?

At the end of the free write, invite a few volunteers to share what came up for them. How did their own ideas about gender roles influence their reactions?

Then show the remaining 30 seconds of the clip and discuss reactions to the father's response.

You might end the lesson with an update: According to the filmmaker, Ñoño, now 19 and a teacher, is in a process of hormonal transition and wants to legally change her name to the one she currently uses: Dionayara.

She is the first in her town to openly live into her transition and identity, and because her village lacked Internet access, she did so without any models, just her own intuition and truth. Her parents are supportive and learning as well.

At a screening of the film in Robolito (the fishing village in the film), Dionayara performed a dance in a long dress with her long hair and the town celebrated. The masculine fishermen have also, been changed. It seems that everyone has made a significant transition.

EXTENSIONS

As an assessment, assign students to use the format of an advice columnist or social media influencer to create a response to a fictional family query about Ñoño's situation (e.g., My son has come to me to ask for permission to dress as a woman, but I'm worried that if I say "yes," he might be a target for violence or that his younger siblings will be ostracized. What should I do?). Answers should include at least three things that the student learned from the lesson.

Students who need an example of the format might look at this:

<https://slate.com/human-interest/2021/09/gender-norms-pronouns-and-more-parenting-advice-from-care-and-feeding.html>

Compare Ñoño's story to other "coming of age" stories, in either literature or film. Alternatively, compare to a novel about the experience of being trans. If your own library lacks available titles, there are many lists of Young Adult books featuring trans characters. You might start with this one prepared by the Los Angeles Public Library:

<https://www.lapl.org/teens/books/young-adult-books-including-transgender-characters>.

Arrange for a screening and discussion of the film *Disclosure* (DisclosureTheMovie.com), a documentary history of media portrayals of trans people.

Watch Clip 4 again and discuss ways that it might illustrate the Simone de Beauvoir quote: "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman." Advanced level students might read excerpts from *The Second Sex* to further explore the ways that de Beauvoir explains the constructed (and sexist) nature of traditional womanhood as she experienced. For a shorter, easier read, that is available under a Creative Commons copyright, you might assign: [Why Simone de Beauvoir didn't believe in being 'a strong woman' \(bigthink.com\)](https://bigthink.com/culture-religion/simone-de-beauvoir-strong-woman)

<https://bigthink.com/culture-religion/simone-de-beauvoir-strong-woman>

Identify historical and contemporary examples of machismo shaping U.S. law or policy. For those that no longer exist, explain what changed that made the law or policy unpopular or unworkable. For current examples, invite students to take action and/or communicate their views to elected officials.

RESOURCES

Resource List

The Film

POV: [*Things We Dare Not Do*](https://www.pbs.org/pov/thingswedarenotdo)

<https://www.pbs.org/pov/thingswedarenotdo>

The film's **POV** site includes a [discussion guide](#) with additional activity ideas and resources.

[**GLAAD**](#)

<https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

GLAAD is a media watchdog that works to ensure accurate representations of LGBTQ people in media. This link is to their Media Reference Guide which explains terminology. It can help teachers and students, especially those less familiar with the issues, find respectful language to use during discussions.

[**Transgender Law Center**](#)

<https://transgenderlawcenter.org>

A good starting place for transgender youth who need help or support beyond what a teacher or school can offer.

[**Disclosure**](#)

[RESOURCES \(disclosurethemovie.com\)](https://www.disclosurethemovie.com/resources) <https://www.disclosurethemovie.com/resources>

[**GSA Network**](#)

<https://gsanetwork.org/>

Resources for students creating and leading school-based support clubs for LGBTQ+ youth and their allies.

[**Hetrick-Martin Institute for LGBTQ+ Youth**](#)

https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.72/10f.3da.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/DYCDResourceGuide_HMI.pdf

This youth wellness organization offers a guide for social service staff on how to support LGBTQ+ youth. Recommended for school counselors, administrators, and advisors of GSA clubs.

[**GLSEN**](#)

<https://www.glsen.org/resources/educator-resources>

Offering a wide range of resources, this organization has been showing educators how to create inclusive, supportive schools and classrooms since 1990.

[**TransLatin@ Coalition**](#)

<https://www.translatinacoalition.org/publications>

Los Angeles-based organization focused specifically on the needs of trans Latinas.

Standards

[RI.11-12.2](#)

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

[RI.11-12.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings;

[SL.11-12.1](#) Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

[SL.11-12.6](#) Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating a command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

[11-12.4](#) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Faith Rogow, Ph.D. is a media literacy education specialist at InsightersEducation.com. She has authored media literacy textbooks and written discussion guides and lesson plans for nearly 300 independent films, specializing in topics related to equity and social justice.