The following activities are designed to stimulate a current events discussion. Generative in nature, these questions can be a launching point for additional assignments or research projects. Teachers are encouraged to adapt these activities to meet the contextual needs of their classroom. In some cases, reading the article with students may be appropriate, coupled with reviewing the information sheet to further explore the concepts and contexts being discussed. From here, teachers can select from the questions provided below. The activity is structured to introduce students to the issues, then allow them to explore and apply their learnings. Students are encouraged to further reflect on the issues.

Core Skill Sets: These icons identify the most relevant core skills students will develop using this resource. Learn more about the WE Learning Framework at www.we.org/we-at-school/we-schools/learning-framework/.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS

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KEY TERMS

Self-esteem—the measure of respect and confidence a person has in themselves

Sideline—to remove a player from a game or to put a person in a position where they cannot contribute

Empathetic—capable of understanding and relating to others’ emotions
THEMES AND COURSE CONNECTIONS

• **Themes:** Children’s Rights, Local Issues, Global Issues, Inspirational Figures, Employment, Health, Community, Women’s Rights, Values and Ethics, Socially Conscious Living
• **Course Connections:** English, Social Sciences and the Humanities

MATERIALS

• Front board
• Paper and writing utensils
• Chart paper and markers
• Sticky notes
• Computer/tablet with Internet access and video capability

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS AND LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

• Recognize the impact of characters and toys on an individual’s self-image
• Understand the importance of creating an inclusive society
• Develop a critical and growth mindset when purchasing products that will influence their own image

DISCUSS

1. What purpose does a range of diversity in children’s toys and characters serve?
2. How can characters and toys create a positive or negative self-perception?
3. What is the impact of a television or movie character or toy on a child’s image of self and society?
4. Does diversity in characters and toys enable children to broaden their perspectives and create self-validation?

DIVE DEEPER

Divide students into groups of four. Distribute chart paper, markers and sticky notes to each group. Ask students to write or draw, on the sticky note, their favourite childhood toy, character, video game, movie or television show. Next, ask students to write down why this toy was memorable and how they felt while playing with this toy.

As a class, discuss what the term “self-image” means and how a child develops their personal self-image. Encourage students to reflect on their own early childhood development, the environment they grew up in and the people they grew up with. How did they develop their self-image and what influenced them? What stereotypes did they come across in the media that still has an impact on their current self-image?

In groups of three, ask students to read the Global Voices article “Why diverse toys could mean better leaders.” Ask students to reflect and discuss the effect a certain toy or character had on their own self-perception? While watching movies, television or when playing with toys, do students feel included in the narrative? Do they see themselves as part of society?

In the same groups, ask students to discuss how they would change the types of toys, television shows, movies and video games available to children to create an environment that promotes inclusion and diversity. Choose one toy or character, currently popular with younger children and discuss the improvements that can be made to create a positive impact on children who are influenced.

Share the video “New shared Barbie will have positive impacts on kids” www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHA_SwGoWio (2:17). As a class, discuss the following questions:

• Why do toy companies feel the need to update and diversify their toy collection?
• How will diverse toys affect children who play with them?
• What toy companies have made a change to their toy range to reflect a more inclusive society?
• Why has there been a shift in the design of children’s toys and characters?
• Does this change reflect the current cultural and political climate?

Tell students they will be participating in a classroom debate. Divide the class into groups of four and allocate each group either the side of affirmative (supporting a resolution) or negative (opposing a resolution). Topic: **Does diversity in toys and characters create better future leaders?** Each group will have an opportunity to debate against an opposing side. Students can use the information in the Global Voices article, Internet and personal anecdotes to create their arguments.

RESOURCES

Information for teachers and students about conducting a formal debate can be found here. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/frame_found_sr2/tns/tn-13.pdf