

Gender-stereotyped cartoon – the flintstones assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Gender-Stereotyped Cartoons 1. What cartoons did you watch or books did you read? I had chosen to assess whether children's media is gender-stereotyped by watching various episodes of The Flintstones from the ABC television station. 2. Are male and female characters portrayed in gender-stereotypic roles? " Flintstones. Meet the Flintstones. " As the song entails, the Flintstones were in fact your modern Stone Age family. This 1960's American sitcom had placed an emphasis on four leading characters each of which are portrayed in gender-stereotypic roles.

Starting with the main character, Fred Flintstone is an accident-prone quarry worker and head of the Flintstone clan. He is quick to anger, but a very loving husband and father. Wilma Flintstone, who is Fred's fiery, red-haired wife, is portrayed as being the more intelligent of the two as well as more level headed than her husband. The Flintstones best friends and next door neighbors are The Rubbles, Barney and Betty. Both the men and women in The Flintstones were drawn with the same body shape and type of clothing. The two main female characters, Wilma and Betty are both drawn very thin, with tiny waists, thin legs and medium busts. The two women are always dressed in short fitted dresses and accessorized each with a large necklace. The women always wear their hair in the same style and it never appears to be unwashed or disheveled in any way. Being that both the women along with men are emphasized as modern day cave people, they are never shown wearing shoes. This shows that both of the women are drawn with very tiny feet suiting well to the ideal body type of any woman.

The two main male characters, Fred and Barney are both seen as somewhat stout, with an insignificant amount of muscle in their chest and upper body areas. Fred and Barney are each characterized by having minimally pronounced waists, in what could be termed a slight “beer belly”. Both have the same short, conservative haircut which appears to be shaggy and un-groomed. They are dressed in a primitive cloth which is relatively unflattering to their bulky body type.

3. Are males and females equally represented in exciting plot activities? I do not believe that males and females are equally represented in *The Flintstones*. Unlike Wilma and Betty, whose sole occupation was raising their two children Pebbles, and the later adopted Bamm Bamm as well as being domesticated housewives, Fred and Barney were employed at the Slate Rock/Gravel Quarry. It is here, where they performed everyday masculine tasks serving as dinosaur operators which entailed them to the lifting and transporting of heavy materials, a job deemed as unsuitable (at the time) for any woman. The two men are also members of the Rock Quarry’s men-only bowling team known as the “Flintstone Flyer”.

On a regular basis, Fred and Barney arrive home after a hard day of work in a stone-age vehicle with stone wheels and a fringe on top. The two women are rarely seen driving the vehicle which puts emphasis on the gender stereotype that women rely on men for transportation amongst many other things at that present time. Barney and Fred were also members of the fictional “Loyal Order of Water Buffaloes” (Lodge No. 26), a men-only club paralleling real-life fraternities such as the Freemasons. Organizations which

allowed women only memberships were minimal and not really emphasized at this time.

Both married couples are often depicted as sleeping in separate beds from their spouses which was a popular trend for the majority of television sitcoms during the mid 1960's. 4. Do the male characters outnumber the female characters? After viewing several episodes of The Flintstones, my results have indicated a definite discrepancy between the numbers of male to female characters portrayed. As with most other 1960's television sitcoms, men were deemed as more active in society and the women were more passive. An individual with a more minor role, such as Mr.

Slate whose was Fred and Barney's employer, was played by a male along with the rest of their Slate Rock/Stone Quarry coworkers. Organizations in which the men were members such as the Loyal Order of Water Buffaloes and The Flintstone Flyer (Fred's bowling team) also consisted of men only which is yet another indication that male characters outnumber the females by a fairly large amount. Based on my observation of male to female characters, it appears that there is a ratio of about 4 to 1 with men being more favorable. 5.

Are the behaviors, attitudes, and characteristics of male and female characters strongly gender stereotyped? Yes. Starting with the attitudes of both the men and woman characters, it appears that Fred tends to be loud-mouthed, aggressive, and constantly scheming ways to improve his family's working class lot in life, often with unintended results. The women of this cartoon are rarely seen raising their voices to their spouse, or promoting

physical or verbal abuse of any kind. Due to his impulsive and short-tempered behavior and stubborn and naive nature, Fred Flintstone seems to be accident-prone.

He is able to create the biggest confusion, even with the most innocent and mundane action. Despite his apparently anti-social character, Fred's actions are shown to be usually free of any malice. And, although he almost constantly shouts and aggravates the people around himself, Fred proves to be a friendly person; often going out of his way to help someone. Although Fred often annoys Wilma with his immaturity, he proves to be a very caring and loving husband and father. Fred Flintstone is even known to go to great lengths to please his family or apologize when he goes too far.

Barney tended to be much more jovial-minded and easygoing than his friend Fred. He would go along with Fred's get rich quick schemes along with many other absent minded ideas rarely losing his patience because the two were best friends. This is evidence that male characters are portrayed as having a more aggressive role than the women who were more quiet and reserved. Also, it was clear that based on both the attitudes and behaviors of the men, that they were the head of the household and had the overall say in the relationship which is still remains evident in some marriages today.

Based on behaviors and attitudes alike, many episodes also depict characteristics which are shown only by the women. Household chores such as vacuuming, cooking, and being the dominant caregiver for the children, were roles in which only the women portrayed. The women also were also known for their love for shopping, and (occasionally) getting to meet the

celebrities of their world, including “Stony Curtis” and “Cary Granite” as well. 6. Are recent books and cartoons less gender-stereotyped than ones from a decade or more ago? Yes.

I believe that both books as well as cartoons are in fact less gender-stereotyped now than from a decade or more ago. Upon given this assignment, I had taken strong consideration into which cartoon I was going to choose. I originally had considered the popular animated children’s cartoon known as Dora the Explorer. Furthering my research into this program, it became evident that this particular cartoon was gender neutral and aimed for both a male and female audience. For example, Dora unlike many other female characters in cartoons today acts out against villains (a role more commonly played by a male).

Dora also enjoys playing sports and is a member of a baseball team which was rarely seen in female cartoon characters in the past decade. She is also a musician, skilled at playing a wooden flute which is a hobby that both young boys and girls can relate to. Early cartoons such as The Flintstones, fail to depict any kind of cultural diversity in their characters portrayal. Dora is of the Latina decent and is fluent in not only the English language but in Spanish as well.

This particular cartoon has sparked a revolution for gender neutral television, in more ways than one! I believe that today, more parents and caregivers are aware of gender stereotyping and are stepping out to correct or at least minimize the situation. More books and television series today are directed for both gender types and have the characters portrayed as doing activities

which were once seen done only by one gender type. With time, I feel as though all gender stereotypes will be diminished in both the media as well as the literary.