



Lesson Plan : MANchild

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Duration: 2 class periods

Instructional Goal: Students will analyze and re-examine their attitudes about masculinity with a focus on their ideas how boys become men.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Examine assumptions about how and why boys transition to manhood
- Compare and contrast representations of masculinity expressed in the Scenarios USA film *MANchild*
- Critically explore the concept 'MANchild' introduced in the short film
- Write a monologue about their own transition into adulthood

Materials

- Scenarios USA DVD *MANChild*
- Writing journals, notebooks, or pen and paper
- "Milestones" worksheet
- 1 copy of *Tommy's Monologue* per student

Procedure

Activity 1: Milestones

The goal of this activity is to have students discuss milestones that mark when they assume adulthood begins (15 minutes).

Brainstorm

- Break the students up into 3-5 mixed gender groups (if possible)
- Each group will assign a student to be a recorder
- Give each group a "Milestones" worksheet
- Assign to each group either "Manhood: when a boy becomes a man" or "Womanhood: when a girl becomes a woman"

- Instruct students to brainstorm the milestones and appropriate age/s at which manhood or womanhood begin, based on biological, emotional, legal or traditional/societal advances made in his or her life
- Tell students that for many of their responses, there are no “right” or “wrong” answers

Examples:

- Biological: starting to shave (anywhere between 11 and 18 years old)
- Emotional: self-awareness of emotional health (ongoing/late teens)
- Legal: voter registration, enlisting in military (18 years old)
- Traditional: 18th birthday party

Discussion

Have each group share their responses. Take time to point out the variations between the groups’ responses. Their responses will probably reflect a range of ages for biological, emotional or traditional transitions to manhood or womanhood, specific ones for societal milestones, such as the legal age for driving, drinking, etc.

Probe students about when exactly boys and girls graduate into adulthood. The point of this exercise is to provoke students to question their assumptions about these transitions. It is fine to leave these questions unanswered at this point.

- Direct an open question to the class: What does the fact that different groups came up with different ages at which a boy matures into a man, or a girl matures into a woman, tell us about our assumptions about manhood or womanhood?

Ask the students to ponder these questions while they watch the short film *MANchild*.

Activity 2: Introduce the film *MANchild*

The goal of this activity is to introduce the film *MANchild* (18 minutes).

Tell the class that *MANchild* is movie made by Scenarios USA, which is an organization that invites teens to write stories. Some stories are made professionally into films. *MANchild* was written by Earlaina Kemp, filmed in Cleveland, Ohio and directed by Rawson Marshall Thurber, who also directed the movie *Dodgeball*.

Earlaina wrote *MANchild* in response to the question “What’s the REAL DEAL about masculinity?” The story she wrote, which was then made into this movie, is about a teenager called Tommy, who seems on the cusp of becoming a man but is still trying to understand what it all means. Invite students to jot down any

notes about the film in general in their journals, notebooks or on a piece of paper as they are watching the film. Watch **MANchild**.

Activity 3: General discussion

Ask the students some general comprehension questions and for their initial (and emotional) responses to the film (5 minutes).

Example discussion questions:

- What are your first thoughts about this film?
- Do you recognize any of the situations or people from this film from what you see around you in your own life?
- What did you find most interesting about this film? Why?
- What do you think was Earlaina trying to say with her film?

Activity 4: MAN or child?

The goal of this activity is to watch **MANchild** again, focusing this time on the choices Tommy has to make as he transitions into manhood (18 minutes).

Explain to students they will watch the film again, this time to focus on the choices Tommy makes in the film. Draw two columns on the board - one titled *Tommy's Priorities* and the other titled *Tommy's Choices*. Ask your students to watch the film again and to think about the following questions:

- What were Tommy's priorities?
- What were his choices?

Suggested definitions

Priority: putting something first because it is more important

Choice: the act of choosing, to select or pick out from a number of alternatives

Play the film **MANchild** again.

Activity 5: Discussion

The goal of this activity is to compare and contrast different representations of masculinity, using the film as a guide (15 minutes).

Discussion questions:

- What do the similarities between *Tommy's Choices* and *Tommy's Priorities* tell you?
- What do the differences between *Tommy's Priorities* and *Tommy's Choices* tell you?

Have the class discuss the similarities or differences between the two columns. Highlight the fact that the one time Tommy's priorities and choices do not sync

up, is when he decides to go down to the warehouse to help Will, in a misplaced sense of obligation to an old 'friend'.

Note to educator

The objective of this exercise is to show students that Tommy seemingly on the verge of adulthood, and making all the right choices to achieve his dreams goes off path and does make a mistake; one that could be called childish and that could cost him everything he's been working so hard for. This is an opportunity for the students to understand that the transition from boyhood to manhood is framed by the choices one makes and this is process of 'becoming' that is constant throughout one's life.

Discussion question:

- Do you think Tommy's priorities and choices are manly? If so, why? If not, why not?

This is an opportunity for students to have a discussion about their assumptions of what is and what is not masculine behavior.

Following the discussion, highlight the range of ideas and opinions the students have articulated, in order to emphasize that masculinity can be represented in many different ways and can mean many different things to many people. In Tommy's case especially, the author of the script notes "Tommy is someone who cannot be compartmentalized, someone full of contradictions, a full person."

Discussion question:

- How do the other people in the film see Tommy? What are their assumptions about what it is to be boy or a man?

Note student responses on blackboard or a flip chart. This is an opportunity for the students to reflect upon and discuss their impressions of what was conveyed about Tommy in the film and how different representations of masculinity are presented in both positive and negative ways through the eyes of those who view Tommy.

Activity 6: Tommy's Monologue

The goal of this activity is to have students reflect and write about the concept of **MANchild** in their journals (5 minutes).

Give each student a copy of **Tommy's Monologue**. Ask students to discuss in their journals what Tommy means when he talks about being a "MANchild." Students should reflect on and think more deeply about the transition from boy to man, and about how this transition is a lifelong process as Tommy himself seems to understand from his statement to the college recruiter.

Activity 7: My Monologue

The goal of this activity is to have students write their own monologue to a college recruiter, or other institution or trusted adult (5 minutes). Ask students to consider the following:

- Who am I addressing with my monologue?
- What should the style and the tone be?
- What is the most important message about me and what I am going through right now in my life?
- Where am I going with my life?
- Where do I want to go with my life?
- Who can I turn to for guidance and support as I consider my choices and priorities?
- What do I want you to do after you hear my monologue?

Invite students to share as appropriate.

Activity 7: Wrap-up

Close the discussion by briefly reviewing the idea of transitioning between childhood and adulthood. The main theme in the film points to the fact that the choices one makes frames these transitions. But as Tommy points out in the end, this is a constant process. Mistakes will be made, but will also be learned from. The teacher should point out that this is something not relegated to gender but is a common message for both boys and girls. Another equally important theme in the film is the character of Tommy himself- man or child; he accepts his many roles and responsibilities, despite the judgment of people around him.

Milestones

Biological	Emotional	Age	Legal	Societal/Traditional
		1		
		2		
		3		
		4		
		5		
		6		
		7		
		8		
		9		
		10		
		11		
		12		
		13		
		14		
		15		
		16		
		17		
		18		
		19		
		20		
		21		
		?		
		?		
		?		
		?		

TOMMY'S MONOLOGUE

Tommy: *“Your essay topic... it was on growin’ up right? Well, I feel like I’ve grown up over the past few hours! I’ve been through some things that are supposed to be a rite of passage for the black male. I realize that I’m still growing... Legally, I’m a man! But I still feel like something else... like a MANchild. I really want this opportunity... if my decision last night, my poor judgement cost me this, then I made a choice and there are consequences to every decision. I can’t promise I won’t make mistakes in the future, but I can promise that I’ll learn from the ones that I do make.”*