



i am a girl




STUDY GUIDE

Society & Culture Studies

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I Am A Girl is a feature length documentary about what it means to be a girl in the 21st century, as told through the personal stories of six girls in six different countries.

This education package contains carefully crafted study guides for different subject areas in the high school curriculum. It includes one guide for Society and Culture; Family and Community; Sociology Studies; and one guide prepared by ATOM (Australian Teachers of Media), which has relevance to other subjects including Health and Physical Education, Values Education, Civics and Citizenship, Cross-cultural and Gender Studies, English, Personal Development, Psychology and Media Studies.

Alongside the study guides are six vignettes each of 10 minutes in length telling the discrete stories of the six girls featured in the documentary. In this way detailed study can be made of the individual girl's stories with further contextual information provided beyond the full-length film. To access this additional video content please go to www.iamagirl.com.au and click on "Education" in the menu.

Embedded within the education package is a suite of evaluation resources that are available to teachers and students. These tools will enhance the use of the film in the classroom and provide teachers with additional resources. They have been built into the I Am A Girl website to complement teaching activity.

Specifically teachers are encouraged to:

- a. Get their students to complete the Audience Survey form as a way of starting to reflect on and think about the film. That form can be accessed by clicking on the "Seen the Film?" button on the I Am A Girl website <http://www.iamagirl.com.au/> or using the following link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/iamagirlaudiencesurvey>;
- b. Encourage students to learn more about the girls on The Girls page of the website <http://www.iamagirl.com.au/the-girls/> and get them to write a postcard to the girls using the function embedded on that page (which comes up when you hover your cursor over the photo of each girl on that page);
- c. Encourage students to think about how they might respond to the issues raised in the film by exploring the ideas on the Do Something page of the website <http://www.iamagirl.com.au/do-something/do-something/>;
- d. Teachers are encouraged to complete the Teacher Survey to provide feedback on the curriculum materials and the film. https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/iamagirl_teacherfeedback

We hope you enjoy using the I Am A Girl education package, which can be used as individual modules or as a full kit with complementary aspects.



Society and Culture

THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WORLD.

Using the film *I Am A Girl* to introduce students to the key concepts of Society and Culture.

Society and Culture has nine key concepts;

PERSON

SOCIETY

CULTURE

ENVIRONMENT

TIME

POWER

AUTHORITY

GENDER

TECHNOLOGY

These concepts are constantly interacting with one another and impacting on the everyday lives of each person. This film profiles six young women coming of age in six extremely different environments. Students should familiarise themselves with the definitions of each of these concepts and be able to apply them to their own lives before applying them to the individuals in the film.

The syllabus has specific definitions for each concept and these should be investigated by students and discussed in class prior to watching the film. They can be found on pages 15 and 16 @ http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/pdf_doc/society-culture-st6-syll-from2010.pdf

As well as these key concepts the film clearly touches on many of the other concepts of Society and Culture, especially;

SOCIALISATION

KINSHIP

FAMILY

IDENTITY

SELF

INSTITUTIONS

COMING OF AGE

TRADITION

CUSTOMS

VALUES

RIGHTS

These and other concepts can be found on pages 48 - 53 on the above link.



As the film is about girls we should start with a discussion of gender. The syllabus defines Gender as:

“A term to describe the **socially constructed differences** between men and women, referring not only to individual identity and personality, but also at the symbolic level, to **cultural ideals** and **stereotypes** of masculinity and femininity and, at the structural level, to the **sexual division of labour.**”

This needs to be discussed by the class in detail and should be considered in context either cross culturally or historically depending on the backgrounds of the students that make up the class.

Possible discussion questions could be:

- Is achieving women's rights important for men?
- France has banned the burqa, should Australia?
- Have women's rights gone to the point of discriminating against men?
- Have we reached the point where gender discrimination is no longer an issue in Australia?
- Are gender differences really a product of biology?
- Was my grandmother lucky to be a stay-at-home Mum?

Once students have become familiar with the key points outlined above they should be able to write a short paragraph on their own experiences, describe how 'gender' as a social construct has impacted on their own lives and consider where their place on the masculine-feminine continuum lies.



Breani

16, USA

ENVIRONMENT

- Explain what it means to live in the 'Projects'?
- How does Breani's grandfather rate the environment?
- What is his advice for walking outside?
- How does Breani cope with the pressures of her surroundings?
- What are the similarities and differences between your own environment and the Projects?

TECHNOLOGY

- List the various devices used by Breani in the film and comment on how important they are to her and her peer network?
- How does Breani get around her city?
- How does Breani use technology to create a career pathway?

FAMILY

- Describe Breani's family situation and the roles that significant family members take in her growing up.
- Breani has both strong male and female parenting models, how important is this in her personal life?

PEERS

- Who are Breani's friends, how does she interact with them and how important are they in her life?
- Describe her encounters with boys and their result.

VALUES

- What are the core values that motivate Breani's family?

INSTITUTIONS

- Breani is supported by a number of institutions that give her opportunities. Make a list with a short explanation,
 - City Council – provides housing



Aziza

17, Afghanistan

ENVIRONMENT

- Describe the physical environment where Aziza lives.
- How is Aziza's life different to your own?
- Explain how Aziza's life has been impacted on by war.

CULTURE

- How are girls valued in traditional Afghan culture?
- How does Aziza's culture influence her dress?
- What are the usual arguments given to suppress women in Afghan culture?
- How has Aziza's mother coped with the stresses in her own life?

FAMILY

- Describe Aziza's family.
- How has the family supported her?
- In what way is Aziza's life different to her Mother's?

VALUES

- How did Aziza's Dad's values differ from traditional Afghan cultural values?
- What happened to Aziza's Dad?

INSTITUTIONS

- Aziza's future depends almost exclusively on one institution. What is it and how does it offer hope to girls like her?

POWER AND AUTHORITY

- Aziza's Dad was killed by the Taliban. Who are the Taliban and what are their ambitions?
- Who has been fighting in Afghanistan since 2001 and what is the present situation?
- Research [Malala Yousafazi](#). What motivates girls like her and Aziza? Are they just attempting to help Western culture destroy their own cultural traditions? Will their efforts bring real change to the societies that they come from?

A portrait of a young woman with short blonde hair, wearing a dark blue collared shirt under a grey knit sweater. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a room with a teal wall, a framed picture, and a desk with a lamp.

Katie

17, Australia

ENVIRONMENT

- Describe Katie's home environment? How does it compare with yours?
- Every year the [UNHDI](http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries)¹ (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>) publishes a ranking of countries based on living standards and quality of life.
- What is Australia's ranking? What aspects of Katie's life reflect this ranking?

FAMILY

- Describe Katie's family.
- How are domestic tasks allocated in Katie's household? Explain how Katie is supported by her family.
- How does Katie's family impact on her decision-making?
- How does Katie's family support her?

PEERS

- Who are Katie's peers? How does she interact with them? How important is Katie's peer network in her life? How does Katie's peer group compare with your own?

VALUES


- Make a list of things that Katie sees as important in her life.
- e.g. school, family, friends, home life.
- Discuss how important these are to her and how this reflects her fundamental values.

INSTITUTIONS

- List the major institutions that support Katie in her growth to adulthood?
- Comment briefly on each in relation to her life in the film
- e.g. Health system – supports Katie to manage her depression

TECHNOLOGY

- How does technology support and influence Katie's life?

A close-up portrait of a young woman, Habiba, smiling warmly. She is wearing a colorful headscarf with geometric patterns in yellow, blue, and black. The background is a solid light blue color. The name 'Habiba' is written in a cursive font on a white paper-like background that overlaps the top left of her face.

Habiba

17, Cameroon

ENVIRONMENT

- Describe the urban African environment of Habiba's home.
- What are the similarities between this environment and yours?

CULTURE

- What is Habiba's religion? How do you think this impacts on her understanding of gender roles?
- Habiba and her social group speak both French and Ewondo. What does this tell us about the culture of Youndé, Cameroon's capital city?
- Describe the women's dress. What do you think is the significance of body art for the rite of passage from single to married life?

TRADITIONS

- Marriage is an important institution in Cameroon. Describe the events of Habiba's marriage, both traditional and modern.

FAMILY

- Habiba's marriage is symbolic of her move from one family to another. How will she maintain contact with both her family and her peers after marriage?
- Compare the place of family in Youndé with your own culture.

POWER AND AUTHORITY

- Habiba has made her own decision to get married. What does this tell us about the changing rights of women in Cameroon?
- How will decisions be made in her life after her marriage?
- What is your opinion on this custom?

VALUES

- What has Habiba sacrificed to marry a man 20 years older than herself?
- What does this tell us about balance between traditional and modern values in Cameroon?



Manu

19, Papua New Guinea

ENVIRONMENT

- Describe the traditional environment of Manu's village.
- Unemployment seems to be an issue in the village – how do you account for this?
- Compare Manu's village to your own environment. What are the similarities and differences?

FAMILY

- How did Manu's family react to her pregnancy?
- What does her Father's response to Manu tell us about his own expectations for his daughter?
- What seems to be the main reasons for her Father's reaction?
- How does Manu react to her new situation?

POWER AND AUTHORITY

- What does Manu's situation tell us about changing patterns of power and authority in traditional village life in PNG?
- Who makes decisions for Manu?

VALUES

- Manu's Father's reaction to her pregnancy tells us a great deal about his ambition for his daughter. How does this relate to the value of gender equity?
- Compare Manu with a teenage mother in Australia. Would an Australian girl have to give up on education? What social institutions in Australia would support a girl like Manu in continuing her education?

INSTITUTIONS

- Despite being from a traditional village Manu is able to access modern institutional support, how does she do this?

GENDER

- Compare how both Manu and Kimsey cope with motherhood.

“Khmer traditionalists compare a Cambodian girl to white cotton wool. A boy is compared to a gem... When white is muddled, it can never be washed to the purity and cleanness it once had. Gems, on the other hand, can be cleaned to shine brighter.”

Kimsey

17 , Cambodia

ENVIRONMENT

- Describe the environment where Kimsey lives.
- Urban environments in developing countries like Cambodia are very different to those in developed countries like Australia or the USA. Briefly compare Kimsey’s home to Breani’s, or Katie’s

CULTURE

- Discuss the leisure activities that you engage in and compare them to Kimsey’s situation. Kimsey’s earnings are vital to her family. Why do you think this is not appreciated?

GENDER

- What is your opinion on Traditional Khmer attitudes?

VALUES

- What values does Kimsey’s mother hold to be important? Why do you think this is the case? How do Kimsey’s values differ from those of her mother? What seem to be the values of the males in Kimsey’s life?

INSTITUTIONS

- Kimsey’s predicament can be seen as a result of the failure of social institutions in a rapidly changing, developing society. Discuss each of the following and compare your own situation with Kimsey: family; peers; school; rule of law; transport; media; social security.

TECHNOLOGY

- What technology does Kimsey use? How could improvements in technology change Kimsey’s situation?

If you have internet access, click on the flags to find out about each girl’s country from the UN.

Or go to <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>

Manu

Kimsey

Habiba

Katie

Aziza

Breani



TASK – Choose one of the girls profiled in the film and write a paragraph that relates her life to each of the fundamental concepts. Kimsey has been used as the subject for the following example. Please note that other sources linked at the end have been used to complement the film.

SOCIETY

Cambodia is a country of 14.5 million situated in South East Asia. Despite more than 30 years of relatively stable government Cambodian society still suffers from the complete destruction of all social institutions and the systematic murder of over 30% of the population during the time of the Khmer Rouge government 1975-1979. The economy has developed rapidly and this has resulted in a large influx of people from the countryside into the cities. As the social institutions that cater for health, education, welfare and policing are rudimentary most new city dwellers are compelled to survive on their wits. Kimsey’s situation illustrates this and her situation is common, according to the UN, 50% of Cambodians live in severe poverty with another 20 – 30% vulnerable to do so.



CULTURE

Cambodia has a relatively homogenous culture with a history of over 1000 years. The Khmer language and Theravada Buddhism are common to over 90% of the population. Consequently values derived from Buddhist beliefs and traditional ideas are shared by most people. This may help to explain Kimsey’s mother’s attitude about forcing her daughter into sex work at the age of 12. Buddhism honours celibacy but does not condemn any particular form of sexual activity so prostitution by either sex is not a taboo. Attitudes to Gender, such as ‘a girl once tarnished can never be clean’ tend to keep girls like Kimsey on the street. Traditional customs value age and Kimsey’s Mother uses this advantage when she berates her daughter for not working hard enough.

ENVIRONMENT

Phnom Penh is a modern city being built on the riverbanks of a traditional peasant rice-growing society. This has created opportunities and immense imbalances in wealth. People who move to the new urban environment must sell their skill or labour to survive, as there are no really developed social institutions to support them. Urban poverty is the result and new comers have to improvise and adapt to the cash economy. The biggest employer in Cambodia is the garment industry where a young woman can earn \$3 a day. Unskilled males have little chance of work and can consequently become dependent on female relatives. In Kimsey’s case she is able to earn much more than a textile worker but her partner turns violently on her partly because she is the primary income earner and partly because of the nature of her employment combined with his male ego.

TIME

Cambodian urban society is in a state of constant change. Moving to a city with no skills or education often results in extreme poverty, however as the city develops and social institutions are established and extended, opportunities arise that previously did not exist. Schools and hospitals are built, laws begin to be enacted and enforced to protect people and social stability becomes the norm. Improvements in Cambodia’s Human Development Index have been significant and constant since 1995 so the long term seems promising. However, individuals like Kimsey, seemingly trapped in the present, are problematic.



POWER

Where social institutions are weak, power is exercised by violent elements. Kimsey is often beaten and abused by both her partner and her clients. She had no say about going into prostitution, a decision made for her by her mother. When she has a difficult time at work her mother attacks her over money. She has nowhere to go to seek redress. When her baby is taken from her she feels completely helpless. Her only way out is to leave.

AUTHORITY

Having weak or corrupt civil authorities enables violent social elements to intimidate and exploit weak individuals. Kimsey does at one point threaten her partner with police action and he just treats this with scorn. Buddhist monks offer the only non-state based legitimate authority in Cambodia and they have been active in promoting workers' rights².

GENDER

While Buddhism theoretically advocates gender equality, traditional Khmer culture traditionally puts women into a secondary and supportive role. Marriage is assumed as a natural state and the male is expected to have authority and to exercise power. A boy is allowed to make mistakes as these can be cleaned from the male gem, but girls have much stricter expectations as the cotton remains forever stained.

In a modern urban economy this situation is untenable as status becomes linked to income. Kimsey is the family's sole income earner so she should have authority, but both her mother and her partner use traditional arguments to intimidate and belittle her.

TECHNOLOGY

Kimsey uses a mobile phone and her partner sees his sim cards as important. She is driven to work on a motorbike but technology has yet to make major advances in the new urban settlements. Improved communications can only help. Activist Buddhist monks have begun setting up online support for exploited workers and this can only help girls like Kimsey.

INSTITUTIONS

Kimsey is a girl who has to find her own way in a very fragile society. The social institutions that support young people in their transition through adolescence, family, peer networks, school, and a legally secured environment either do not exist for her or actually make her life even more difficult. She is on her own.

OTHER RESOURCES AND LINKS

- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elizabeth-daube/life-on-3-a-day-garment-w_b_4638311.html
- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cb.html>
- <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2014-01-09/cambodia-s-monks-join-battle-over-raising-minimum-wage>
- <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=53,6643,0,0,1,0#.UuxopT2Swpk>
- <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>
- http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/pdf_doc/society-culture-st6-syl-from2010.pdf
- <http://www.mekong.net/cambodia/women.htm>

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To experience more please go to:
www.iamagirl.com.au/education