

10 TV serial dramas, loved and known by **Bulgarian** teenagers and how **GEMINI Project** can include them in its **Educational Toolkit**

Example 1: Orange Is the New Black



<https://youtu.be/113gM4VH1ec>

Why? This American television series is set in a women's prison and explores various themes related to gender, race, sexuality, and power dynamics. The diverse ensemble of characters provides an opportunity to analyze different aspects of gender equality in a non-traditional setting.

Discussion Questions:

- How do the female characters in the series challenge gender norms and stereotypes?
- How do power dynamics between different characters reflect or challenge traditional gender roles?

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- What impact does race, class, and sexuality have on the characters' experiences of gender equality or inequality?
- How does the show address issues of gender-based violence, and what can be learned from these portrayals?

Example 2: Big Little Lies



<https://youtu.be/WpMa8YFcjtE>

Why? This drama series focuses on the lives of several women in an affluent community. It deals with complex topics such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and female solidarity while showcasing the different ways women can support one another.

Discussion Questions:

- How does the series portray the way societal expectations of gender roles affect the characters' personal and professional lives?

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- How are the struggles of different female characters in balancing career, motherhood, and self-identity depicted?
- What aspects of the series serve as a critique of traditional gender roles, and how are they explored through the relationships and friendships among the women?
- In what ways does the series demonstrate the importance of female solidarity, and how does it impact gender equality?

Example 3: The Handmaid's Tale



<https://youtu.be/81PyH5TH-NQ>

Why? This dystopian drama series is based on the novel by Margaret Atwood and presents a society where women are reduced to reproductive objects and have no agency. It offers a compelling and cautionary tale that underscores the importance of gender equality and human rights.

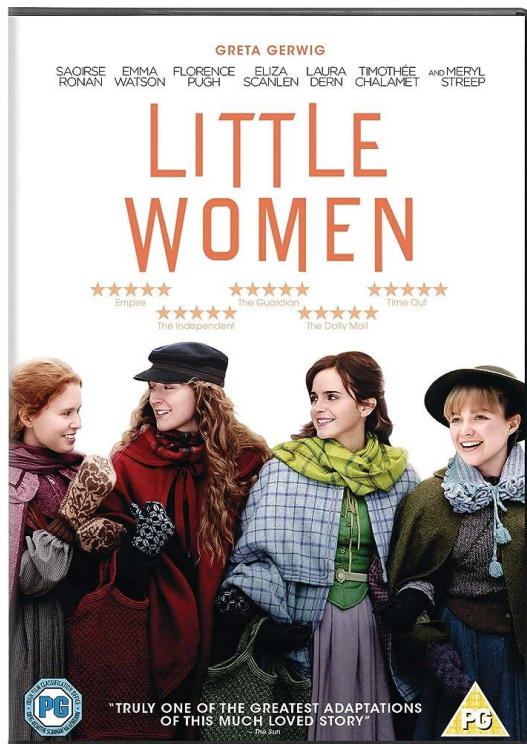
Discussion Questions:

- How does the series explore the consequences of a society that strictly enforces patriarchal norms and values?

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- How do the different female characters resist and subvert gender-based oppression in their own ways?
- What real-world parallels can be drawn between the dystopian society in the series and current or historical gender inequalities?
- How can the themes and issues raised in the series be used as a catalyst for discussions on the importance of gender equality and advocating for change?

Example 4: "Little Women"



<https://youtu.be/AST2-4db4ic>

Why: "Little Women" is a timeless story written by Louisa May Alcott that highlights the different aspirations and struggles of the four March sisters within the constraints of 19th-century society. "Little Women" taps into the discourse of gender equality eloquently, making it a deep and relevant source of discussion.

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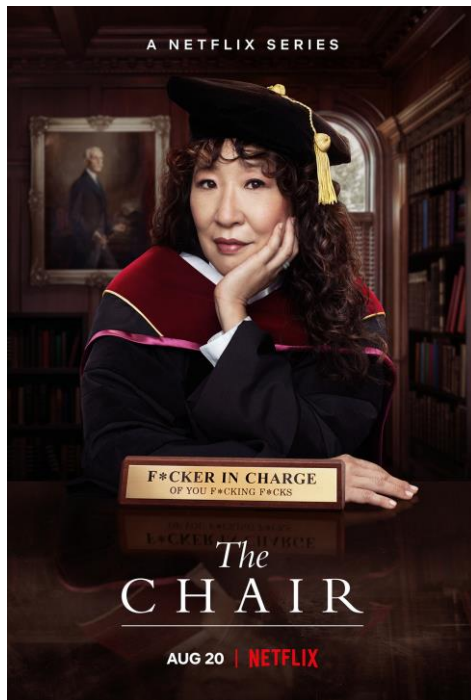
Discussion Questions:

1. **Breaking gender norms:** Jo, the second March sister, is a core example in this mini-series who consistently challenges gender norms. She dreams of becoming a writer, a profession not usually acceptable for women during this period, and insists on maintaining her independence.
2. **Women's autonomy:** Each sister pursues different life paths, giving viewers a broad spectrum of women's experiences in that era. Their pursuits speak volumes about women's rights to chart their life courses, which is a key aspect of gender equality.
3. **Equal treatment:** The series shows how the expectations and limitations placed on women during this era hinder their ability to pursue their aspirations to the same extent as men.

Educational questions raised by "Little Women" topic of Gender Equality:

1. How do the aspirations and dreams of the March sisters represent the struggle for gender equity during that time? Can we see parallels in today's society?
2. How does each sister challenge or conform to the gender norms of their time? How does this shape their choices and their future?
3. Despite prejudices and societal constraints, how do the sisters strive for autonomy and equality?
4. How does the series illustrate the role of socioeconomic class in amplifying/reducing gender-based restrictive norms?
5. What lessons can be drawn from the Victorian era feminist themes of "Little Women," and how do they apply to modern conversations around gender equality?

Example 5: "The Chair"



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOqtBtWG1lQ>

Why: "The Chair" is an American comedy-drama series created by Amanda Peet and Annie Julia Wyman, released on Netflix in 2021. Sandra Oh stars as Professor Ji-Yoon Kim, the newly appointed chair of the English department at the fictional Pembroke University. She is the first woman appointed to the position.

Discussion Questions:

- **Representation in leadership roles:** The main character, Ji-Yoon, is the first woman to be appointed as the chair of her department. This highlights the theme of gender equity in leadership and authority roles, which are traditionally held by men.
- **Intersection of race and gender:** Ji-Yoon, as a woman of Korean descent, represents an intersection of race and gender in leadership roles. This intersectionality perspective enriches the dialogue around gender equality.

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Educational questions raised by "The Chair's" topic of Gender Equality:

- How does Ji-Yoon's leadership style differ from her male predecessors, if at all? How are these differences perceived and received by her colleagues and faculty members?
- How does the series portray the barriers and challenges Ji-Yoon faces as the first woman, and specifically a woman of color, in her position? How do these challenges tie into broader conversations about gender and racial equality?
- How does the relationship between Ji-Yoon and Bill Dobson expose power dynamics and gender roles within their professional and personal circumstances?
- How can institutions better support gender and racial diversity at all levels, particularly in leadership roles, as reflected in this series?

Example 6: "The End of the F*ing World"**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FruHLslczag>

Why: "The End of the F***ing World" is a British dark comedy-drama that is based on a graphic novel by Charles Forsman. The show features two main characters, James and Alyssa, both of whom are complex, flawed, and fully-formed individuals.

- **Gender Stereotypes and Roles:** The show breaks down traditional gender stereotypes. Alyssa, the female lead, is aggressive, outspoken, and often the one who takes charge of situations, contrary to typical representations of women as docile and submissive. James,

the male lead, is seen as timid and quiet, which contradicts typical depictions of men as dominant and assertive.

Equally Complex Characters: Both James and Alyssa are portrayed as deeply flawed individuals with their own issues and grievances. They each have just as much agency, complexity, and depth to their character arcs.

- **Importance of Consent:** Despite Alyssa's rough exterior, the show also portrays her vulnerability, especially in terms of sexual matters. It emphasizes the importance of consent by showing how Alyssa navigates these situations.

Discussion Questions:

- The deconstruction of traditional gender roles and stereotypes: Exploring how societal norms and expectations shape people's behavior and identity.
- The importance of open communication and understanding in relationships, with both parties contributing equally.
- The role of consent, autonomy, and respect in intimate relationships.
- The exploration of mental health issues, trauma, and their impact on individuals and relationships.

Example 7: "Stranger Things"



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJRJMQ-u_pQ

Why: The "Stranger Things" series offers a compelling narration of gender equality through its well-rounded, nuanced characters and progressive plot dynamics. The series incorporates several strong female characters, both young and adult, who often serve as catalysts for the story. Winona Ryder's character, Joyce Byers, is a single mother who, in spite of her vulnerability, relentlessly fights in order to rescue her son. Initially appearing to be an eccentric woman on the verge of a breakdown, Joyce ultimately defies cliché gender stereotypes by demonstrating courage, permanence and a critical instinct for detective work.

Meanwhile, the younger female characters in the series, such as Eleven and Max, uphold the essence of gender equality by breaking away from traditional gender roles in the narrative. These characters are portrayed with a boldness and an agency often associated with male characters in TV series. Eleven constantly challenges the limits of her extraordinary abilities to protect her friends, whilst Max demonstrates her capability as a seasoned skateboarder and refusal to be patronized by the boys.

Furthermore, Stranger Things recaps moments where standard gender roles are subverted in the series. Notable points include Nancy's fight for justice, Joyce's rescue mission, and Max's refusal to be relegated to the "prize" for Dustin and Lucas.

"Stranger Things" offers several plot points and characters that champion gender equality. Viewing such shows within the realm of these discussions can prompt a deeper understanding and discourse about these societal issues.

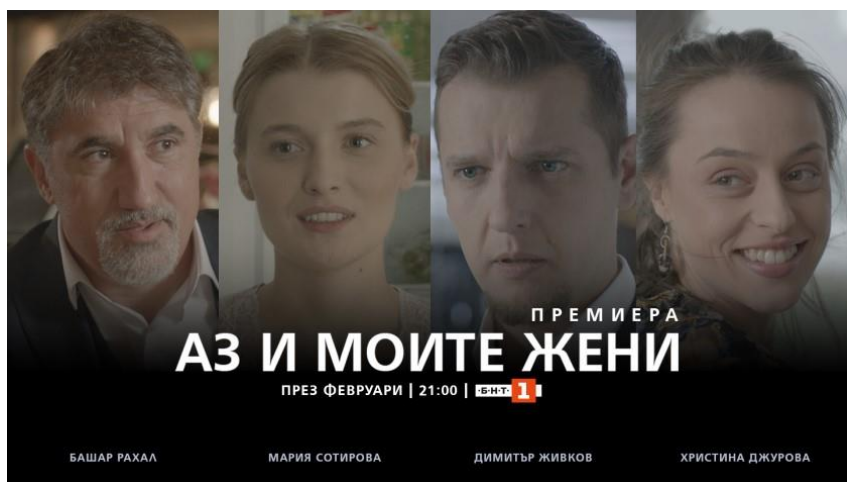
1. **Strong Female Characters:** "Stranger Things" showcases an array of robust female characters who defy traditional stereotypes. For instance, Eleven, a young girl with supernatural abilities, is often heroic and courageous, acting as the group's defender. Likewise, Nancy Wheeler evolves from a conventional teenager preoccupied with love and acceptance to a determined, empowered young woman seeking justice.
2. **Equal Contribution:** In the series, both male and female characters contribute equally to the storyline, displaying intelligence, bravery, resourcefulness, and resilience. This consistent attribute challenges traditional narratives that often relegate female characters to passive roles.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Challenging Gender Stereotypes:** Through its strong female characters who take up roles of leadership, the series subverts established gender roles and stereotypes.
2. **Gender Equality:** The series emphasizes equal opportunities and responsibilities for both male and female characters, promoting the concept of gender equality.

3. **Self Identity:** Characters like Eleven, who grapples with her identity and purpose, stimulate discussions on self-identity and acceptance.
4. **Empowerment:** Notably, the series underscores the theme of empowerment, seen through characters like Eleven and Nancy, who assert and stand up for themselves, showing self-reliance and determination.

Example 8: "Аз и моите жени (Me and My Wives) "



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X7FYnldGXzI>

The Bulgarian TV film "Аз и моите жени" (translated as "Me and My Wives"), presents a unique perspective on relationships and norms in society. Although the series does not seem to directly deal with gender equality as its main theme, there could be indirect references and interpretations related to the topic.

Based on the plot, the main character, Filip, is a doctor who finds himself in relationships with two different women - Kristina, a vain daughter of an architect from Sofia, and Maja, a free-spirited woman from Burgas. Clearly, the two women represent two different worlds. Both these relationships contextually immerse Filip in a conflict where he has to decide between two different lifestyles and perspectives.

Concerning gender equality, viewers may interpret this situation as a reflection of gendered expectations and how women are perceived in society, especially seeing two very different female characters in the same context. Educational questions could include:

- How do the different portrayals of the two female characters represent societal perceptions of women and their roles?
- How does Filip's behavior towards both women reflect the attitudes men have towards women in relationships?
- What can be learned about equality in relationships from this story? Is Filip's attitude towards Kristina and Maja an indicator of gender disparity?
- How do societal norms, as depicted in the series, impact the ability of the characters to express themselves freely?

Example 9: "Алея на славата (The Alleyway of Fame)"



"The Alleyway of Fame" is a fascinating Bulgarian television series that delves into the dynamic, fierce, and sometimes tumultuous world of gastronomy. The series not only explores the professional hurdles and milestones of its diverse range of characters but also deals with the more personal aspects, showcasing the complex reality of their lives.

The series would be highly applicable in youth education settings. The ways it addresses these issues could spark important discussions surrounding sexism, gender stereotypes, career ambitions, personal agency, and workplace exploitation, especially in industries dominated by men.

The topic of gender equality is subtly yet consistently woven into its narrative. Here's how:

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1. **Women as Protagonists:** More than half of the series' characters comprise women, and their experiences form a significant backbone of the series. By giving women a central role, the series elevates their narratives, breaking away from the trend of women being secondary or supporting characters.
2. **Defying Stereotypes:** The series redefines traditional gender roles. Take Ally, for instance. She is a talented young chef who is challenging societal norms by declining the prestige of a well-known Paris restaurant and her family's restaurant to forge her path. Similarly, Tina's story is a testament to her strength, resilience, and independence as a single mother and speaks volumes about the exploitation faced by women in certain professional spaces.
3. **Challenging Power Dynamics:** Through the character of the antagonist Dimo Lagadinov, the series exposes power imbalances and the exploitation often masked behind charm and status, primarily targeting women.

The series thus becomes an informative lens for audiences to understand the societal issues women face, making it a potent educational tool. These issues include but are not limited to:

- **Gender Equality:** The series challenges gender stereotypes, showcasing strong, independent women who are capable of making their own decisions and standing up to their oppressors.
- **Workplace Exploitation & Sexual Harassment:** The series highlights the darker facet of workplace power dynamics, unmasking sexual predators, and the traumatic experiences women often endure in silence.
- **Ambition and Personal Agency:** Through Ally's and Kalina's journey, the series emphasizes the importance of recognizing personal aspirations and the ability to determine one's own life's path.

Example 10: Sen Anlat Karadeniz (Tell Me About the Black Sea)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g346fdLi7fM>

"Sen Anlat Karadeniz" (Tell Me About the Black Sea) is a Turkish drama series that brings forward significant gender-related themes through its storylines and characters.

The series depicts a story of a young woman, Nefes, who escapes an eight-year-long forced marriage with a violent husband and finds refuge in the northern part of Turkey. Her story unfolds addressing themes such as domestic violence, freedom, resilience, and gaining self-worth.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Depiction of Domestic Violence:** The series presents a stark portrayal of domestic violence, an issue often tied to gender inequality and power dynamics in relationships. It enables conversations about the importance of respecting women's rights within a marriage.
2. **Strength and Resilience of Female Characters:** Nefes, the main character, embodies strength and resilience, defying gender stereotypes and traditional roles often depicted in media. Her journey of escaping and surviving an abusive marriage propels discussions around women's autonomy and individual freedoms.



3. **Challenging Gendered Power Dynamics:** The show explores and questions power dynamics traditionally associated with gender roles, particularly in a domestic setting. It challenges the notion of 'male dominance' and provides a critique of patriarchal systems.

Given these powerful narratives, "Sen Anlat Karadeniz" can be utilized within youth education to facilitate dialogue around gender equality. Here are some suggested themes and questions to guide such conversations:

1. **Understanding Domestic Violence and Abuse:** How are these issues portrayed in the series? What are their consequences and how can society take steps to prevent and address them?
2. **Resilience and Empowerment:** Discuss the transformation of Nefes from a victim to a survivor. How does her journey inspire conversations around empowerment and building resilience?
3. **Challenging Gender Stereotypes and Roles:** How do the characters in the series break free from traditional gender roles? What stereotypes are challenged and what impact does this have on perceptions of gender?
4. **Discussing Consent and Respect in Relationships:** Using narrative instances from the series, guide discussions around the importance of consent, mutual respect, and equal partnership in relationships.