

Talking about misogyny

February 2023



As Andrew Tate, the social media influencer known as the “king of misogyny”, is prosecuted in Romania for human trafficking, Voice 21 reflects on the rise of misogynistic views in schools and how oracy can support educators to challenge these beliefs.

Isobel Plant, Head of Engagement at Voice 21.

Teachers are widely reporting a disturbing rise in misogynistic attitudes and behaviour in schools. Andrew Tate’s influence, as a high-profile symbol of toxic masculinity, is cited as a significant factor by educators, such as Assistant Head, [Helen Hinde from Meols Cop High School](#) and Mark Roberts, Director of Research at Carrickfergus Grammar School writing in [TES](#). Sadly, this isn’t a new trend - the [NEU and UK Feminista’s 2017 study](#) found that a quarter of all secondary school teachers and over a third of primary school teachers witness gender stereotyping in their schools on a daily basis. 66% of female students and 37% of male students in mixed sex sixth forms have experienced or witnessed the use of sexist language in schools.

As a society, it’s easy to hope that by squashing it, shutting it down, or ignoring offensive language and sexist attitudes, they will disappear; that Tate and influencers of his like are fringe voices and their allure will wane; that boys will grow out of it as young adults; or this behaviour will be disciplined at home by parents or carers.

However, if you believe, as Voice 21 do, that education has a fundamental role in helping young people find their voice and feel confident articulating their ideas - what do we do when they express views that we don’t agree with, that unsettle or offend us, or directly threaten the safety and well-being of our communities in school and society? What do we do when an education sector that is predominantly female ([75.5% of the teaching workforce in England](#)) is confronted with increasing sexism?

How can teachers approach it? One option is to enforce a no-tolerance policy explicitly telling young boys that their language use or a particular attitude expressed is wrong. The danger in silencing students in this way is not only that boys feel targeted, reinforcing ideas that people like Tate have been ‘cancelled’ by teachers, but it also lets these views go unchecked and misses an opportunity to unearth and challenge the root causes of such beliefs and the wider societal inequalities at play.

Although teachers may want to tackle misogynistic language they hear in school, they may feel unsure how best to address the underlying causes of these beliefs. Oracy education could be at the forefront of creating a kinder, more inclusive and equitable society. However, teachers need to be equipped with the tools to feel confident introducing and managing discussions with their students on contentious and complex issues.

Cont.



By creating safe forums for boys to share their opinions and be listened to thoughtfully, there is a unique opportunity to deconstruct misogynistic views together. When done well, dialogue in school demonstrates to students that every voice matters, that everyone has an equal right to speak and be heard, and that everyone is respected and valued. These principles are the foundation of democratic society and equip us to challenge hate speech and discrimination in any form. As [Robin Alexander](#) writes “Among the promises of dialogic teaching is that it distributes classroom talk more equitably, first between teachers and students collectively, then among students themselves; and that this redistribution will contribute to the larger cause of reducing social inequality.”

What do teachers need to do this effectively? To be able to have constructive and meaningful discussions about difficult topics, we encourage teachers to use our [Discussion Guidelines](#). These help to establish ground rules for talk, outline the hallmarks of an effective discussion and can be co-created with students. Ours include the importance of respecting each others’ ideas and celebrating being prepared to change your mind after careful listening to other viewpoints.

[Talk Tactics](#) provide students with specific roles in a discussion and ways to interact with each other’s ideas. After explicitly teaching students how to play each role, they can be encouraged to play a number of different ones in a discussion. The roles of challenger (responsible for disagreeing with an idea or presenting an alternative argument) and prober (responsible for digging deeper into an argument or asking for evidence to justify ideas) are particularly powerful. They help create a classroom culture where misconceptions are addressed and challenge is valued because it leads to us seeing something differently and broadens our own understanding.

A whole-school oracy approach will not only amplify the impact and create a school culture where every voice is valued but also support classroom teachers and wider school staff to confidently implement these approaches. And the outcome? [Our evidence](#) shows that a whole-school approach helps teachers feel confident facilitating discussions about complex and contentious topics that address the underlying causes and deconstruct language use; that all students feel safe and empowered to express themselves; and that our school communities reflect the equitable society we strive for. We hear this directly from students in Voice 21 Oracy Schools:

“It helps you voice your opinions and understanding other people’s thoughts and feelings” (Year 8 student).

“It lets people know that everyone has a voice and it tells people that everyone is included and equal” (Year 6 student).

“It’s important because everyone should have the chance to get their voice heard, regardless of their gender, race, religion and appearance” (Year 6 student).

Interested to find out more about Voice 21? Visit our website [here](#).



The Oracy Framework

Use the Oracy Framework to understand the physical, linguistic, cognitive, and social and emotional skills that enable successful discussion, inspiring speech and effective communication.

Physical

Voice

- Pace of speech
- Tonal variation
- Clarity of pronunciation
- Voice projection

Body language

- Gesture & posture
- Facial expression & eye contact

Linguistic

Vocabulary

- Appropriate vocabulary choice

Language

- Register
- Grammar

Rhetorical techniques

- Rhetorical techniques such as metaphor, humour, irony & mimicry

Cognitive

Content

- Choice of content to convey meaning & intention
- Building on the views of others

Structure

- Structure & organisation of talk

Clarifying & summarising

- Seeking information & clarification through questioning
- Summarising

Self-regulation

- Maintaining focus on task
- Time management

Reasoning

- Giving reasons to support views
- Critically examining ideas & views expressed

Social & Emotional

Working with others

- Guiding or managing interactions
- Turn-taking

Listening & responding

- Listening actively & responding appropriately

Confidence in speaking

- Self assurance
- Liveliness & flair

Audience awareness

- Taking account of level of understanding of the audience

What are Talking Points?

Talking Points, developed by Lyn Dawes, are a set of controversial, thought-provoking, sometimes factually incorrect statements related to a given topic which promote discussion. Talking Points are phrased as discussion points rather than questions, encouraging students to share their thoughts rather than trying to give a 'correct' answer.

Using Talking Points to discuss misogyny

Using Talking Points to address misogyny is a good way to surface and challenge any problematic views that are held by students. While you shouldn't shy away from these important topics, it's important to recognise that some students may have particularly strong feelings about this subject matter or to certain talking points. It's vital that your classroom is a safe space to have these discussions and that you do your best to 'Value Every Voice'. We have included some suggestions of Talking Points but you may also want to create your own to meet your students at the appropriate level.

Embedding oracy skills



- Ensure students use the language of reasoning and justification to explain their stance on each Talking Point.



- Ask students to apply their own knowledge and reasoning to each Talking Point, using this evidence to reach a consensus.
- Introduce Student Talk Tactics to encourage students to challenge and probe each other's opinions on the Talking Points as well as instigating their own ideas.



- Use a tool such as Talk Detectives to monitor other students' conversations and feed back to the class on how the discussions went.
- Scaffold turn taking by asking students to choose their talk protocol beforehand; for example: putting their thumb up if they have an opinion to share about a particular Talking Point.

Choose one Talking Point to discuss then work through the rest if you have time.

- Boys are stronger than girls
- There are some jobs that girls are better at than boys
- Girls cry more than boys
- Sexism doesn't exist in primary schools



Try using these Talk Tactics during your discussion:



Instigate

Present an idea or open up a new line of enquiry.



Challenge

Disagree or present an alternative argument



Probe

Dig deeper, ask for evidence or justification of ideas.



- Use the language of reasoning and justification to explain your stance on each Talking Point.



- Apply your own knowledge and reasoning to each Talking Point.



- Decide on your talk protocol beforehand; for example: putting your thumb up if you have an opinion to share

Using quotes to discuss misogyny

Using quotes from a range of famous people is another good way to address misogyny and will again help to surface and challenge any problematic views that are held by students. It's vital that your classroom is a safe space to discuss these quotes and that you do your best to 'Value Every Voice'. We have included some suggestions of controversial misogynistic quotes but you know your students best and may want to choose different ones based on your students' age and needs.

“A misogynist is a man who hates women as much as women hate each other.”

H.L Mencken

Embedding oracy skills



- Ensure students use the language of reasoning and justification to explain their stance on each quote.



- Ask students to apply their own knowledge and reasoning to each quote.
- Introduce Student Talk Tactics to encourage students to challenge and probe each other's opinions on the quotes as well as instigating their own ideas.



- Use a tool such as Talk Detectives to monitor other students' conversations and feed back to the class on how the discussions went.
- Scaffold turn taking by asking students to choose their talk protocol beforehand; for example: putting their thumb up if they have an opinion to share about a particular Talking Point.

Discuss what you think about these quotes with your group one at a time.

“Women are decorative. They never have anything to say, but they say it charmingly.”

Oscar Wilde

“You can’t be responsible for something that doesn’t listen to you. You can’t be responsible for a dog if it doesn’t obey you, or a child if it doesn’t obey you, or a woman that doesn’t obey you.”

Andrew Tate

“You know, I don’t want to sound too much like a chauvinist, but when I come home and dinner’s not ready, I’ll go through the roof, OK?”

Donald Trump



- Use the language of reasoning and justification to explain your stance on each quote.



- Apply your own knowledge and reasoning to each quote.
- Come to a consensus if you think it’s appropriate.



- Decide on your talk protocol beforehand; for example: putting your thumb up if you have an opinion to share

What is a Concept Cartoon?

Concept cartoons, created by Brenda Keogh and Stuart Naylor, are an excellent springboard for talk in any subject. They feature a range of characters offering different ideas or opinions on a given subject. The cartoons often contain common misconceptions or a controversial statement, promoting students to address these through talk and providing an ideal way for them to apply knowledge and develop understanding together, choosing which character they most agree with and why.

Using Concept Cartoons to discuss misogyny

Misogyny is a great topic to discuss using Concept cartoons as students can share who they agree with, and therefore what they think, without being afraid that they are saying the wrong thing. Rather than arguing with another student, which some people may find challenging, they are going against the opinions of a fictional character instead. It also gives students who have never really thought about this topic before a jumping off point to decide what their opinion is.

Embedding oracy skills



- Explain any ambitious subject-specific vocabulary in the Concept Cartoon to prompt students to use this during their own contributions



- Introduce [Student Talk Tactics](#) to encourage students to challenge, build on and probe each other's opinions on who they agree with as well as instigating their own ideas.



- Support students to listen to each group and issue specific praise for how they have structured and presented their argument or opinion on the statement.

Concept cartoon



Erika

I agree. It's too dangerous. There have been so many incidents of crimes against women recently, it shows that women and girls need to keep themselves out of dangerous situations.

Why does this only refer to women? It's possible for men to be attacked while walking home too. Maybe we should say that it's not safe for any gender to be out alone late at night?



Karl

“It's not safe for women to walk home alone late at night”



Tamana

I disagree. Surely the responsibility should be on men not to be violent rather than stopping women from having their freedom?

I think that's far too simplistic, the misogyny of a significant proportion of men is the thing that needs to be addressed and is a bigger problem than just walking home alone at night.



Tom



Have you used these resources with your class? Let us know!

Email: schools@voice21.org

Follow us on Twitter at: [@voice21oracy](https://twitter.com/voice21oracy)

Voice 21 is a registered charity in England and Wales. Charity number 1152672