

NO BIG DEAL STUDY GUIDE

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Please visit <https://www.roseneath.ca/no-big-deal> for more info about the artistic team

SYNOPSIS

Longtime friends Ariel and Grayson are working at a horrible theme park for the summer to save up for college following their high school graduation. Their plan is to be roommates and take their first steps into adulthood together. But tensions created by their increasingly different ideas of growing into manhood - and a complicated incident involving fellow employee Lucy - might be enough to threaten the stability of their friendship. NO BIG DEAL is a complex and funny new play that tackles the themes of contemporary masculinity, bro culture, and consent.

Study Guide Created and Compiled by Andrew Lamb, Artistic Director

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TOXIC MASCULINITY - is a set of certain male behaviors associated with harm to society and men themselves. The violent socialization of boys often normalizes violence, such as in the saying "boys will be boys" about bullying and aggression.

MISOGYNY - is hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women. It is a form of sexism that keeps women at a lower social status than men, thus maintaining the societal roles of patriarchy.

ASSAULT - is the act of inflicting physical harm or unwanted physical contact upon a person or, in some specific legal definitions, a threat or attempt to commit such an action.

CONSENT - to give permission for something to happen: to give assent or approval: to agree.

PRUDE - a person who is or claims to be easily shocked by matters relating to sex or nudity.

SNOWFLAKE - A very sensitive person. Someone who is easily hurt or offended by the statements or actions of others.

FLIRT - a social behavior involving spoken communication, as well as body language, by one person to another, either to suggest interest in a deeper relationship with the other person, or if done playfully, for amusement.

MANSPLAINING - the explanation of something by a man, typically to a woman, in a manner regarded as condescending or patronizing.

HOOK UP - an overarching expression that can be used to describe the wide range of sexually intimate acts that you engage in with someone else, including touching and kissing.

STALKER - a person who harasses or persecutes someone with unwanted and obsessive attention.

VICTIM MENTALITY - an acquired personality trait in which a person tends to recognize or consider themselves a victim of the negative actions of others, and to behave as if this were the case in the face of contrary evidence of such circumstances.

ALPHA/BETA - the Alpha-Beta dynamic is when one person calls the shots while the other follows along and submits. Alpha and Beta are pseudoscientific terms for men derived from the designation for alpha and beta animals in ethology.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY 1 - TOXIC MASCULINITY

Begin by sharing the following with your class - this can be read by you or the students, or you may project it on a whiteboard or other projection if your classroom has this in place:

Toxic masculinity is a set of certain male behaviors associated with harm to society and men themselves. Traditional stereotypes of men as socially dominant, along with related traits such as misogyny and homophobia, can be considered "toxic" due in part to their promotion of violence, including sexual assault and domestic violence. The violent socialization of boys often normalizes violence, such as in the saying "boys will be boys" about bullying and aggression.

Dua Lipa recently opened up about how her song 'Boys Will Be Boys' that raises the issue of sexual harassment head-on saying that the track 'Boys Will Be Boys' details just what it's like being a girl and having to "avoid confrontation from men" and "avoid sexual harassment".

She told Vogue Australia: "It's about the growing pains of what it's like to be a girl. For me, that was walking home from school and putting keys through my knuckles ... So much of the human experience for women revolves around men; how they make us feel, whether that is good or bad ... Girls have to go through so much. You cover up yourself to avoid confrontation from men, avoid sexual harassment, people throwing words or catcalling. We change our ways to fit somebody else's lifestyle. It's really sad."

How and where do you adjust or change your behaviour to avoid confrontation or unwanted attention?

In gender mixed groups of 3 or 4, have your students take 5-10 minutes to list some answers to this prompt question. Have the groups share some of their answers with the class and discuss whether each of these are surprising or not to the rest of the class. What does it say about society if more of these examples are not surprising?

Feel free to play the official Boys Will Be Boys lyric video for your class for inspiration:
<https://youtu.be/k0QWX2M7W7M>

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY 2 - THE LAW OF CONSENT (Only YES means YES)

Share the following with your class from Women's Legal Education & Action Fund (leaf.ca):

THE LAW OF CONSENT IN SEXUAL ASSAULT

Canada has a broad definition of sexual assault. It includes all unwanted sexual activity, such as unwanted sexual grabbing, kissing, groping and date rape.

Sexual activity is only legal when both parties consent. Consent is defined in Canada's Criminal Code in s. 273.1(1), as the voluntary agreement to engage in the sexual activity in question. The law focuses on what the person was actually thinking and feeling at the time of the sexual activity. Sexual touching is only lawful if the person affirmatively communicated their consent, whether through words or conduct. Silence or passivity does not equal consent.

The Criminal Code also says there is no consent when:

someone says or does something that shows they are not consenting to an activity;
someone says or does something to show they are not agreeing to continue an activity that has already started;

someone is incapable of consenting to the activity, because, for example, they are unconscious;

the consent is a result of someone abusing a position of trust, power or authority;
someone consents on someone else's behalf.

A person cannot say they mistakenly believed a person was consenting if:

that belief is based on their own intoxication; or

they were reckless about whether the person was consenting or;

they chose to ignore things that would tell them there was a lack of consent; or

they didn't take proper steps to check if there was consent.

The responsibility for ensuring there is consent is on the person who is initiating or pursuing the sexual activity. The bottom line regarding the law of consent is that only yes means yes!

Tea and Consent Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZwvrxVavnQ>

Play this excellent video that uses making tea to clearly explain consent for your class

In pairs or small groups, have your students explore the notion of consent by coming up with a non-sexual metaphor that demonstrates consent like in this video. Have them think about something from their everyday life where they have to confirm consent or say no. Then have them create a short (30secs - 1min) presentation that demonstrates this to the rest of the class (this can be in the form of a commercial, or a scene from a play, or a TedTalk, etc).

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY 1 - PROBLEMATIC GRAYSON LINES

There are a number of problematic lines that are said by Grayson in NO BIG DEAL. Here are a few for you to consider:

It's bro talk this is bro talk
Because I don't have little bitch teeth
Then when we get to college we'll have our pick of the litter
Don't bitch out on me
Anyway yeah no homo but yeah
Do you know how much of a bitch you sound like right now?

In small groups, assign two of these lines to each group and have them discuss why they feel these statements are problematic. Have the groups also think about what they could say or ask someone if they said something like this in front of them.

If there's time, ask the group to list other problematic things they hear regularly at school in the hallways. Then have each group share their discussion with the rest of the class.

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY 2 - YOU COULD RESPECT HER BOUNDARIES

Have two students read the following excerpt from NO BIG DEAL:

ARIEL

So you're just gonna use her then?

GRAYSON

It's not using her that's such a bad way of putting it. People hook up all the time it's no big deal.

ARIEL

What if she's not into it?

GRAYSON

If she's not I'll keep going until she is.

ARIEL

Or you could respect her boundaries?

GRAYSON

No man ever got anywhere by giving up.

Then read the following paragraph to your class:

In NO BIG DEAL the character of Grayson continues to pursue Lucy as he believes hooking up with her is something he needs to do before going off to college. This perceived societal pressure leaves Grayson looking at Lucy as an object and less so as a human being.

What are ways that Ariel could help Grayson think less about these perceived pressures and interact with Lucy as equals and with consent? The scene excerpt below is an example of how Ariel understands this, so how can he help Grayson to understand?

Have two other students read the following excerpt from NO BIG DEAL:

ARIEL

Sorry if he's like
Bothering you or like making you / feel

LUCY

No it's fine it's
I've had way worse.

Thanks though.
It's cool that you're actually like
Aware of stuff like that

ARIEL
Oh uh

LUCY
I mean no offence but
Most guys like
Aren't.

In pairs or groups of three, create a short scene (1-2 mins) between Ariel and Grayson to share with the class that demonstrates a positive example of respecting Lucy's boundaries. If you are in groups of three, you could also incorporate Lucy into part of your scene.

RESOURCES:

"Toxic masculinity": what does it mean, where did it come from — and is the term useful or harmful? The history, rise and risk of "toxic masculinity," as told by a sociologist
https://www.salon.com/2022/10/08/toxic-masculinity-what-does-it-mean-where-did-it-come-from--and-is-the-term-useful-or-harmful_partner/

Letting 'boys be boys' should mean letting go of outdated ideas about masculinity
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/parental-guidance-amy-bell-toxic-masculinity-boys-will-be-boys-1.6593001>

'I Used to Be a Toxic Man'
<https://www.newsweek.com/i-was-toxic-man-how-i-changed-1741647>

Why Julia Gillard's misogyny speech still resonates a decade later – video
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/video/2022/oct/07/why-julia-gillards-misogyny-speech-still-resonates-a-decade-later-video>

Creating a new normal: OISE experts say schools play an important role in challenging toxic notions of masculinity
https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/oise/News/2018/Creating_a_new_normal_OISE_experts_say_schools_play_an_important_role_in_challenging_toxic_notions_of_masculinity.html

OSSTF - Still Not Laughing - educator resource
<https://www.osstf.on.ca/resource-centre/educators-resources/still-not-laughing.aspx>

Gender-Based Violence Knowledge Centre - Government of Canada
<https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-violence-knowledge-centre.html>

Government of Canada - Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46)
<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/section-265.html>

ASSAULT

265 (1) A person commits an assault when

- (a) without the consent of another person, he applies force intentionally to that other person, directly or indirectly;
- (b) he attempts or threatens, by an act or a gesture, to apply force to another person, if he has, or causes that other person to believe on reasonable grounds that he has, present ability to effect his purpose; or
- (c) while openly wearing or carrying a weapon or an imitation thereof, he accosts or impedes another person or begs.

Application

(2) This section applies to all forms of assault, including sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm and aggravated sexual assault.

Consent

(3) For the purposes of this section, no consent is obtained where the complainant submits or does not resist by reason of

(a) the application of force to the complainant or to a person other than the complainant;
(b) threats or fear of the application of force to the complainant or to a person other than the complainant;

(c) fraud; or

(d) the exercise of authority.

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