

VAL LANG

Class grouping:

Whole class, pairs, individuals

Time:

60-90 minutes

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to the context of Val Lang's work prior to visiting the *Women of the Land* exhibition, where they will be able to explore Val's contributions to her community in more depth. In this four-part lesson, students will consider the contributions made by women to Australia's agricultural industry and explore the concept of 'gender bias'. As an extension task, students will have the opportunity to research work done as part of 'The Invisible Farmer Project' and make connections to their own family history through the invisible work completed by women.

Activities:

1. Gender stereotypes about farmers
2. Challenges faced by women in rural communities compared with challenges faced by women in urban communities
3. Diamond ranking the challenges faced by women
4. Personal reflective response to Val Lang's story
5. Extension Task: Research 'The Invisible Farmer Project' stories and interview a female family member

Preparation and Materials:

- Books and pens/pencils
- Student access to the internet
- Teacher access to the internet and to a projector
- 1 x diamond ranking sheet per pair or group and prompt page for Activity 4 for each student (or a digital copy provided to your class)

Activity 1

Whole class activity

Drawing activity and class discussion

This task is intended to help students explore the notion of ‘gender bias’ in relation to their perceptions of farmers (refer to Figure 1).

1. Ask students to draw a picture of a ‘farmer’ in their books, labelling it with all of the qualities they think are important to the role.
2. Ask students to hold up their drawings and share them with the class. Ask the class the following questions:
 - How many of the students drew a male farmer?
 - Why do they think this was their ‘default’ position?
 - Did anyone draw a woman? Why/why not?
 - What sorts of characteristics did students identify as being important to a farmer and how many of them are traditionally associated with men?
 - As a class, watch the YouTube clip: Inspiring the Future - Redraw the Balance. Link: <https://youtu.be/qv8VZVP5csA>
 - Ask students how this clip made them consider stereotypes and how it related to their own drawings

Activity 2

Paired, individual or whole class task

Exploring the challenges faced by women in rural communities

Val Lang began her career in agriculture in the 1980s when she was only one of four women studying Agricultural Science at the University of Melbourne. Following this she joined the board of the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women (FAAW) and later on she became the president.

1. Ask students to imagine that they are a woman living in a small rural/agricultural community. What challenges they might face? Ask students to independently list the challenges and then write contributions up on the board.
2. Ask students to imagine that they are a woman living in Melbourne (in a suburb known to your students). What challenges they might face? Ask students to independently list the challenges and then write contributions up on the board.
3. Using the range of challenges listed on the board, discuss the similarities and differences between women in rural communities and women in the inner city. Students could complete a Venn diagram to highlight similarities and differences.

Activity 3

Individual or paired task

Diamond ranking challenges faced by women

1. Provide students with the diamond ranking template, or draw it up on the board
2. Ask students to classify the challenges faced by women in rural communities on the diamond ranking template. Students can also do the same for women who live in the city.
3. If time permits, ask a couple of students to share their work and facilitate a class discussion on what students think is the number one challenge faced by women living in rural communities.

Activity 4

Individual task

Personal reflective response

Share Val Lang's response to the question or alternatively project the answer on the board.

In an interview at the Melbourne Museum as part of 'The Invisible Farmer Project', Val Lang, a member of the Rural Women's Movement, answered the following question about her decision to become a farmer:

Q. You mentioned you ended up deciding to study Agriculture. What led you to this decision?

A. I had actually applied for, and got into, Science and I didn't realise you could do Agricultural Science. The day I went to enrol I walked past the desk that said 'Agricultural Science', and I asked if I could change that on my application, and they said yes. So that was at Melbourne University, and the interesting thing is that *in those days girls couldn't do practical studies at Dookie, or Longerenong, or Marcus Oldham – that was only for boys*. There weren't nearly as many women then. By the time we finished there were four or five girls to forty boys.

– Interview extract, Valerie Lang, 8 Sept 2015

<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/14510>

Individually respond to the following statement:

What have you been told that you could not do because of your gender?



Extension Activity

The Invisible Farmer Project research

Val Lang has been involved in 'The Invisible Farmer Project'. This project documents the role women play in the agricultural community. Students can discover the stories of some of the women involved in the project at the exhibition and also on the website: <https://invisiblefarmer.net.au/featured-stories/>

Students can choose to interview a female family member about the 'invisible work' they complete. Alternatively students can imagine they are interviewing Val Lang and design interview questions.

Diamond Ranking Template

