

THE FEMALE LEAD

Introduction

Our mission at The Female Lead is simple, but powerful: we want to shine a spotlight on the women who shape our world. We want to make them visible, to share their stories in detail. We believe that this is important for both girls and boys: having access to positive female role models is crucial to build girls' confidence, but it also helps young men to appreciate women's achievements, and to find new role models of their own.

In 'The Female Lead: Women who Shape our World', you will find 58 interviews with women who have achieved remarkable things. You will hear from a firefighter and a space scientist, a ballet dancer and a footballer, an MP, a journalist, a photographer, a fashion designer. You will hear from women who have excelled in sport, broken new ground in science, made pioneering advances in technology, made art, won literary prizes. You will hear from women who have worked in times of conflict, in conditions of the most serious danger, to protect the vulnerable and work toward peace.

We believe the women in this book reflect the rich diversity of women's lives and women's stories: from the pages of this book speak the voices of disabled women, women of colour, LGBTQ women, women who grew up in privilege and women who grew up in poverty, women in their teens and women in their seventies. You can find video interviews with many of these women on our website, and we urge you to watch the footage and explore their remarkable stories in greater detail.

This resource pack is designed to be used alongside the book: the activities you find here will help you to talk and think about the broader issues to which the stories of our Female Leads connect; to consider the impact of role models on your own life; and to begin to look towards your own future, and the incredible potential you hold within you.

Section One: Obstacle Course

Task 1

Working in a pair or a small group, spend 5 minutes discussing the following question:

Are women and men equal in the workplace?

Task 2

Hopefully you've had a chance to share your thoughts about women in the workplace, and hear from some of the others in your group – but what's the picture really like for women at work? Take our quiz below to find out. Answer true or false to the following questions. Afterwards, check your answers and give yourself a mark out of 8 (you can find the answers in the Appendix to this pack) – then move on to the discussion questions.

1. Of the FTSE 250 companies, only 25% have boards of directors where 33% or more of the members are women.
2. In financial services companies in the UK, around 50% of the members of company executive committees are women.
3. The gender pay gap has finally been closed, and women now earn roughly the same as men each year - there is about half a percent difference between average annual salaries.
4. Around 80% of non-medical health care workers (such as care assistants) in the UK are women.
5. Disabled women face exactly the same kind of discrimination in the workplace as non-disabled women.
6. Pressure to look good or be attractive has a negative impact on girls' career aspirations while they are at school.
7. Research suggests that having women on management boards and executive committees is actually good for business.

Vocab Box

FTSE 250: These are the 101st to the 350th largest companies listed on the London Stock Exchange. The top 100 largest companies are called the FTSE 100.

Executive Committee: An executive committee is a group of people who have responsibility for helping to lead a company or organisation.

Financial Services: Financial services companies are companies that provide a service which helps to manage money – for example, banks, insurance companies and credit card companies.

Gender pay gap: The difference between average annual salaries for men and women. Historically, women have earned less than men across most industries.

Discuss: How did you do in the quiz? Were you surprised by anything you learned? You may want to try out some of the extension questions below to keep the discussion going.

Extension: Discussion questions

Working in a pair or a small group, discuss your answers to the following questions.

- Why do you think there are so few women in really senior positions (such as management boards or executive committees) in the workplace?
- What are some advantages and disadvantages of having more women working?
- What are some advantages and disadvantages of having more women in senior positions?
- Why do you think that companies do better when they have women on their management boards and executive committees?

Quick Fire Activities

You've seen by now that women occupy an unequal position in the workforce compared with men. In almost every area of employment, women aren't paid equally, aren't promoted equally, and are more likely to be excluded from senior leadership positions in the companies they work for. Yet research shows that women bring really valuable things to the workplace: companies with greater numbers of women in leadership positions do better than male-dominated companies, especially in difficult times. So why aren't women equal with men in the workplace? To understand this, we need to look at the bigger picture: we need to think about society's attitudes to women, and where they come from.

Work with a partner or in a small group on the following activities. Spend no more than 5 minutes on each one.

- a) Have a look at the following pages from a children's toy catalogue. Which toys do you think are aimed at boys, and which are aimed at girls? What do these toys suggest about the kind of hobbies boys and girls might have? What do they suggest about the kind of jobs boys and girls might do in the future? Discuss your answers with your group.

Please see Appendix for image.

- b) What comes into your mind when you read the following job titles:

Physicist
Business executive
Leader

We typed these words into a popular image search engine and took a screenshot of the result. How many women do you see in these images? Of those women, how many are women of colour? Is it possible to identify any disabled women in these images? Was this similar or different to what you thought of when you read the job titles?

Please see Appendix for image.

- c) In 2015, a prominent British scientist called Tim Hunt caused a storm of controversy on social media when he made the following comment about female scientists whilst speaking at a conference attended mostly by men:

“Let me tell you about my trouble with girls ... three things happen when they are in the lab ... You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you and when you criticise them, they cry.”

What does this suggest about the way in which women are sometimes viewed in the science industry? How might this affect girls at school who might be considering a career in science?

Thought Box

You may have found that when you read the job titles in question 2, the first image that came to your mind was of a man doing those jobs - that preconception is certainly reflected in the search engine results. Gender stereotypes can affect what we think women are capable of doing and achieving. This means that we continue to think of some jobs as being 'for men' - and, often, these are high-level and better paid jobs in competitive industries where men have traditionally been more successful. This has a knock-on effect: the more we think and talk about these jobs as being 'for men', the more difficult it becomes for women to access them, and so the stereotype gets reinforced. Women working in fields like business, finance and science, or women in leadership positions, have to push back against these stereotypes in order to be successful.

Gender stereotypes can sometimes lead to sexist discrimination in the workplace, as we see in the comment made by the scientist. If you look back at the images from the children's toy catalogue, it's clear that gender stereotypes are reinforced even in childhood – there are very clear expectations about the hobbies girls and boys enjoy, the things they value, and the way they will see themselves and each other as they grow up. Girls are offered prams and dolls, while boys are offered science kits and sports equipment.

It's clear that gender stereotypes play a really important role in determining how hard it is for women to achieve success in their chosen fields, and even the fields women feel they can choose. The way that society views women affects the way that women are treated inside and outside the workplace – so, on top of any personal obstacles they may be facing, women have gender stereotypes and sexist discrimination to contend with.

The effects of stereotypes is a theme our Female Leads return to many times in our interviews with them. Each of the women we interviewed had faced and overcome a whole range of obstacles before achieving her own unique kind of success. We think there's lots of value in looking a bit more closely at those obstacles: they give us a detailed picture of what women are up against, and understanding an obstacle is the first step towards overcoming it.

Your teacher or session leader will give you a copy of an interview with one of our Female Leads. A list of interviews to look at can be found in the Appendix to this pack. Read the interview, and work with a partner or in a small group to identify the obstacles this woman has overcome to get to where she is today. Some obstacles might be personal, while others will be the result of the way that society views and treats women.

Section Two: Breaking down the Barriers – Women who buck the trend

Thought Box

If you've had the chance to dive into some of the interviews with our Female Leads, you will have seen that many of these amazing women have had to struggle against some tough obstacles to reach their level of success. In addition to any personal obstacles they might be up against, women have to contend with the additional barriers placed in their way by gender stereotypes and sexist discrimination. However, our Female Leads are living proof that the highest level of success is possible for women, despite the barriers that may stand in their way – and that women are successful in lots of different ways, from business to motherhood, politics to art, banking to rock-climbing.

It's important to understand the obstacles women have to contend with, but it's just as important to celebrate women's success whenever and wherever we find it. Research has shown that having strong, positive female role models is crucial to building girls' confidence, and can have a big impact on their chances of being successful in the future: according to Girlguiding's 2016 survey of girls' attitudes, 40% of girls aged 11-21 feel inspired by a role model, and 76% of 7-10 year olds feel encouraged when they see somebody doing a job they want to do. Role models help girls to envision what their own futures could look like, and work out how to get there. Having access to a wide range of female role models is also a really positive thing for boys and young men: when boys and young men are encouraged to look up to women and value their achievements, gender stereotypes lose their toxic power.

'The Female Lead: Women who Shape our World' is packed full of role models from every field of work and walk of life you could imagine. In addition to the interviews within the book, there are hours of exclusive footage on our website for you to explore so that you can add to your list of role models. To get started, have a go at the activities below.

Task 1

Think of a woman you really admire – it can be anyone: your favourite teacher, a close friend or family member, or even a female celebrity you look up to. Write a profile of them using the template below. Find a partner, and tell them why you admire this person.

Name:

Age (if known):

Country of birth:

Current job:

Greatest Achievements:

Why you admire her:

Task 2

You should do this activity in a pair or small group. Your teacher or session leader will give your group an interview with one of our Female Leads. Read the interview, and write a profile using the template from Task 1. A list of interviews to choose from can be found in the Appendix.

When prompted by your teacher or session leader, summarise your Female Lead's life and achievements for the rest of the class in no more than 60 seconds.

Section Two: Breaking down the barriers - Toolkit for success

It's clear that all of our Female Leads have been really successful in their work and lives - but how have they done it? What makes a successful person?

Task 1

What personal qualities or characteristics does a successful person have? Working in a pair or a small group, highlight which of the following words you would associate with a successful person:

Driven

Ambitious

Focused

Happy

Imaginative

Ruthless

Creative

Satisfied

Team player

Independent

Compassionate

Determined

Understanding

Curious

Kind

Makes mistakes

Task 2

What does a successful person's career path and life look like? Working in a pair, read the three stories below, then have a go at the discussion question. You may want to jot your answers down to refer back to later.

Naimah is 23. She did well at school and went to a very good university at age 18 to study Economics, knowing from the outset that she wanted to work in banking and finance in the future. She did lots of work experience during the summer months whilst at university, and got an internship at an investment bank after she graduated. She is very competitive and focused: she worked harder than all of the other interns on the programme, and was given a permanent job once the internship was over.

Ellen is 32. She didn't do particularly well in her GCSEs and A Levels, and she ended up resitting Year 13 twice. She wasn't sure what she wanted to study at University, so she went travelling for 12 months. Whilst travelling in South America she began taking pictures of the people she met and writing down their stories. She realised that what she was really passionate about was story-telling, so she applied to do English at University. She was a journalist for five years, but she didn't find the work fulfilling, and she's now left her job to retrain as a teacher. She is really enjoying her training, and feels that she has found what she was meant to do.

Stella is 43. She works part-time as a school receptionist in a local primary school: she loves her work because she feels part of the local community. She volunteers at the school as an after school club leader, runs a reading club for dyslexic children at lunch times, and always signs up to help out with school trips and the Christmas play. When she isn't working, she looks after her three children and her elderly dad, who lives nearby. Her partner, Claire, works long hours as an accountant, so they have worked out how to split childcare and domestic work between them so that they both have a good work/life balance.

Q: Who do you think is most successful – Naimah, Ellen, or Stella? Why?

You may want to compare your answers with other groups, or with the whole class. Is everybody in agreement about who is most successful? If not, why not?

Task 3

Now think in a bit more depth about your own definition of success. Draw a picture of a successful woman, and annotate your picture with adjectives describing her. If art isn't one of your strengths, don't worry - you can just draw a stick figure. Don't spend too much time thinking about the details: draw what comes into your head. You may want to think about the following things:

- What is this successful woman's personality like? What personal characteristics does she have that have helped her to become successful - is she driven, intelligent, curious, brave?
- What is her body language like? What is her facial expression like?

-Is she wearing or carrying things that represent her success?

-Do you automatically think of her as doing a certain job, and if so, how have you represented that in your drawing?

Swap your drawing with a partner. What similarities and differences are there between your pictures of success?

Thought Box

What did your pair or group come up with when thinking about what success means? How did you envision a successful person? Was your successful person focused, ruthless and ambitious - or was she gentle, curious, and willing to make mistakes?

The conventional image of a successful person has tended to focus on ambition and drive, and often on financial success as well – perhaps this is something that came out for you in the exercises above. However, when we were interviewing our Female Leads we were struck by something: although these conventional aspects of success were things that many of our Female Leads valued at least to some extent, they weren't the main things they focused on when talking about their own success. Our Female Leads didn't necessarily see themselves as 'ambitious' or 'driven' or 'career-oriented' – or if they did, they didn't always see these aspects of themselves as the most important parts of their stories. Our Female Leads talked about personal qualities, values and strategies that are not conventionally associated with success, but that have been really important in helping them to build their careers and their lives. Our Female Leads were describing a different definition of success, based on 5 big ideas or 'pillars':

- **Feed Your Passions**

The Female Leads believed that having deep and authentic passions and interests, and spending time pursuing them, can transform your life. To them, exploring your passions is more important than single-mindedly pursuing career goals. The end destination may not always be clear when you start out, but committing time and energy to the things that you care about leads to success.

- **Stay Curious**

The Female Leads were driven by curiosity about the world – they were hungry to expand their horizons and to learn new things, even if what they were learning did not seem to be relevant to their jobs or their studies. They saw value in learning for learning's sake, and their learning nearly always took them in new directions that contributed to their success.

- **Dare To Be Different**

The Female Leads revealed how different they were to their peers in either themselves or their approach, but embracing their difference and turning it to an advantage was a

key part of their success. Standing out might feel uncomfortable, but often it's a smart thing to do.

- **Ask For Help**

The Female Leads gained strength from others: from families, from allies and mentors, through collaboration with colleagues and by building support networks throughout their lives. Asking for help is a strength not a weakness and women often break new ground by asking for help and through successful teamwork.

- **Find Strength In Setbacks**

The Female Leads emphasised how the acceptance of failure and setbacks was a critical part of achieving their goals. Each failure or obstacle became a learning experience which made them stronger and more focused. Instead of getting hung up on perfection, they just kept moving forward.

Task 4

In the Appendix, you'll find five quotations from some of our Female Leads, along with a table. Cut the quotations out and decide which quotation belongs to which pillar of success. Stick each quotation on the relevant column in the five pillars table. If you think a quotation belongs to more than one pillar, that's fine – stick it to one column, and then write the names of any other relevant pillars of success underneath.

Task 5

By now, you should have had a chance to explore some of the interviews with our Female Leads in the book, and perhaps in the videos on our website. Choose your favourite interview from those you've read or listened to (if you're stuck, pick an interview at random – there's something wonderful in each of them). Read or listen to the interview again – how many of the five pillars of success can you identify in this woman's story? Write her name under the relevant column headings on your table.

Task 6

How would you describe this woman – what personal qualities or characteristics stand out in the interview? Jot them down. Is this similar or different to how you thought of a successful person?

Extension Task

If you've finished the other tasks in this section and want to keep on exploring this theme, have a go at this extension task, and the extension questions below.

Our Female Leads have achieved remarkable things, but there are still many women whose potential is ignored, and whose achievements are not given the recognition they deserve. You have spent some time learning about the obstacles that stand in women's way. Imagine that you're made Prime Minister, and you've been given the task of ensuring that all women have the best possible chance of achieving success in whatever they choose to do. What will you do to make sure this can happen?

You may wish to think about the following things:

- What will you do to make sure women are paid fairly for the work that they do?
- How will you combat gender stereotypes?
- How will you encourage businesses to employ women at senior level?
- How will you support women who are caring for family members or other dependents at home?
- Who else do you need to involve to ensure that real change happens, and how will you persuade them to work with you?

Tip: For more ideas, look back at Section One. Remind yourself of the obstacles that women face, and think about what you could do to overcome them.

Write down all of your ideas. You should complete this activity independently, but feel free to discuss your ideas with other people.

Extension Questions

- Are there different ways to be successful, or just one way?
- Do you think women and men have different definitions of success?
- Do you think women and men measure success differently? If so, how?
- Do some women have to work harder than others to achieve success? If so, which groups of women, and why?

Section Three: Pathway to Success

Before you go, we want to take some time to focus on you. The purpose of our work is to inspire you, and help you to be as successful as you can be in whatever way you choose. You can take your first step today – right now!

Task 1

Write down your biggest goal for the future. This could be a career ambition (e.g. ‘I want to be an engineer’), something you want to achieve in life (‘I want to be able to speak French fluently’), an experience you want to have (‘I want to travel the world’), or even a less specific personal goal (‘I want to be a confident person’). Choose your goal carefully – it has to be something you really want for yourself, something that makes you feel excited when you think about achieving it. It doesn’t matter if it feels completely unrealistic at the moment – dream as big as possible! Write down your goal, and why you want to achieve it.

Task 2

Imagine how you will feel when you achieve this goal. Write down your feelings – or, if you prefer, draw a picture of yourself having achieved this goal.

Task 3

Think really hard: do you feel confident about your ability to achieve this goal? Can you see any obstacles in your path that worry you? If you do, write them down. Giving voice to your worries can make them less scary!

Task 4

Take a minute to think back over all you've learned about the ways in which successful women have faced down the obstacles in their path. Look back at the 5 pillars of success you learned about in the last section.

Task 5

You've spent some time thinking about the personal characteristics of some of our Female Leads – now what about you? What personal qualities do you have that might help you to be successful in achieving your goal? Are you brave, resourceful, kind? Are you intelligent, hard-working, daring? Are you a good listener, creative, resilient? Try to think of as many personal qualities as you can and write them down on a piece of paper that's small enough to fold up and fit in your pocket, wallet, or somewhere else where it will always be with you.

Find someone in the group that you trust (remember your teacher is also an option!) and ask them to contribute to your list – sometimes, other people will see good things in you that you can't yet see yourself. When you've finished, read over the list.

Keep a copy of it with you – whenever you feel scared, or you doubt yourself, read back over all these amazing attributes that you're capable of appreciating in yourself.

Task 6

One of our 5 pillars of success is 'Asking for help': nearly all of our Female Leads have drawn on support networks to help them be successful, whether that's their families, their colleagues, a mentor, a teacher, or a role model. The majority of our Female Leads quote their support network as one of the single most important factors in helping them get to where they are today.

In order to achieve your ambitions for the future, you need to know your network: who may be able to help you, and how? Fill out the network table to help you to identify the people in your network – you can find a copy of the table in the Appendix. Even if you feel like you don't have a network, we can guarantee that there is at least one person out there rooting for you, or willing to root for you: your network can include friends, family, teachers, your Head Teacher, careers advisers, business mentors, youth leaders, religious leaders – or anybody else who helps and supports you, or may be able to do so in the future.

In the first column, you should write the name of the person or organisation; in the second column, write down how you know them; in the third column, write down whether, and how, they have already helped you make some progress towards your goal; and in the fourth column, write down how they may be able to help you make progress towards your goal in the future. Remember that it's very important to appreciate your support network! The best networks are those where you and your supporters respect and celebrate each other. We've already filled in one supporter for you – have a look and see...

Task 7

Now that you've reflected on your ability to achieve your goals, and the people who can help you get there, you're ready to take the first step. Your goals might feel like unachievable dreams at the

moment, but you can break them down into smaller steps. Every step, no matter how small, takes you closer to achieving your dream. Spend some time thinking about an action you can take that will bring you closer towards achieving the goal you set for yourself in task 1. This will be your first goal: it can be as large or small as you like, but it should be something that brings you a step closer to fulfilling your ambition. Your goal should be SMART:

S – Specific: What action are you going to take? If you set a really vague goal, it's hard to tell when you've achieved it and hard to measure your success. The best goals are focused on a very clear action – for example, if your ultimate ambition is to become an engineer, your goal could be to find a work experience placement in a relevant organisation.

M – Measurable: How will you know when you've achieved your goal? Will there be a concrete outcome (for example, a qualification gained, an artwork finished or a work placement undertaken), or will your evidence of having completed your goal be less specific – for example, feeling more confident or being more organised with your schoolwork? What evidence will you be able to give to show that you've met your goal?

A – Achievable: Have the confidence to set yourself a goal that will challenge you, but make sure you choose something that's possible. If you need to, do some research to make sure that your goal is something you can do, and make sure you can do it in the time you have set for yourself.

R – Realistic: Dream big, but don't set yourself a goal that is impossibly ambitious or you'll get discouraged. If you're working towards becoming an engineer and you're currently in year 9, it's unrealistic for your first goal to be 'get an internship with a top engineering firm', because most internship programmes will only accept university students. A more realistic goal would be 'research which GCSE subjects and post-16 qualifications I need in order to study engineering after I leave school'. Once you've met this goal, you can move on to the next, then the next... and before you know it, you'll be ticking that internship off your to-do list.

T – Time-bound: When do you want to achieve this goal? Set yourself a timeframe that's realistic, but not so generous that you'll lose focus. It's a good idea to also set a date to review the progress you've made towards your goal before your final deadline, and think about what's still left to do.

Fill out the table in the Appendix when you're ready to set your goal. No goal is too insignificant – as long as it's carrying you forward, it's worthwhile!

Conclusion

Remember: sometimes on your journey, you'll make mistakes. You'll fail to meet a goal, or you'll get halfway there and realise that you want to switch your focus and pursue something else. Sometimes switching your focus will be the right choice, and sometimes it won't be. Sometimes you'll meet your goals and sometimes you won't. Sometimes you'll meet other goals instead – goals you never dreamed of having when you first began to think about what you wanted from your future. All of this is fine. Our Female Leads tell us that you don't need to have it all worked out from the very beginning – you just need to stay curious, stay interested, and keep moving forward.

We think you'll agree that our Female Leads have achieved incredible things, in spite of the barriers that may have stood in their way. It has always been our hope that hearing these women's stories will inspire young people: we want you to feel empowered to decide what success looks like for you, and motivated to strive for that success, not just in the future but now. We want our interviews, and these teaching resources, to equip you with useful knowledge about the difficulties that may lie ahead; and inspire you with the confidence and the resources to face those difficulties down.

We hope that our Female Leads will provide you with a rich range of role models whose stories are useful as well as exciting, offering you lots of practical examples you can follow as you move forward into your own future. We hope that our Female Leads will give you the courage to fail – to make mistakes, to explore your passions and interests first and foremost without worrying too much about a perfect result, to take risks sometimes and follow your creative instincts.

Come back to these stories as often as you like, whether on the page or online: whether you dip in and out or read every single interview, you'll always find something new here to help you on your way.

We sincerely believe that you will be the greatest innovators, the most daring artists, and the most inspiring leaders, and we hope that our work will be some help to you as you take your first steps. We can't wait to follow your lead.