

THE BOY I AM

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POWER, GENDER & CONSENT

Chapter questions & debate prompts · English · PSHE / RSHE · Citizenship

The Boy I Am flips who holds power: women rule, and boys are schooled, priced and auctioned. That flip makes three things newly visible — **power**, **gender**, and **consent** — and this resource turns each into ready-to-use questions and debate motions.

The questions move from the text outward to the world. Pick a strand for a full lesson, or lift a handful as a starter, a plenary or an oracy task. Every strand pairs with the extracts in the free *Boy I Am* Activity Pack, so it works without the whole novel.

English (AO5 / AO6)

PSHE / RSHE

Citizenship

Oracy & debate

On the consent strand. Consent here is taught as **power and choice** — whether a "yes" can be free when saying no isn't safe — using the book's systems, not its darker chapters. That keeps it usable in the KS3 extract lessons and gives KS4 a serious route into RSHE. See the note at the back of the Activity Pack, and follow your school's usual process if anything raises a concern.

POWER

Who holds it, how they keep it, and what it costs

Chapter questions - Power

Anchored to the auction, the kitchens and the Chancellor's garden

- 1 List every way the House of Boys controls Jude's body, time and future — the auction, the numbering, the smiles, the debt. Who benefits from each one?
- 2 Power here works through *everyday* systems — an auction, a lesson, a garden — not just violence. Why is a system that feels "normal" harder to resist than an obvious villain?
- 3 Boys are given numbers ("number one hundred and fifty"). How does taking someone's name and handing them a number make power easier to hold?
- 4 "Now this is beauty!" the Chancellor says of a garden only she can enter. What does controlling who gets to see a real sky tell you about how total her power is?
- 5 Rank the power of the Chancellor, the House Fathers, Mr Walker, the ladies Above and the boys — then defend your order with evidence.
- 6 **Real-world link.** Where does everyday power sit quietly in your world — school rules, algorithms, contracts, dress codes? Is quiet power easier or harder to challenge than loud power?

Chapter questions - Gender

What the flip reveals

- 1 The book reverses who rules and who is sold. What did the flip make you notice about our own world that you might have missed the other way round?
- 2 Jude must perform "gracious-without-being-smarmy". What rules about how to look and behave are boys given here — and whose real-world rules do they echo?
- 3 Women who refuse the system are called "Hysterics" and banished. Why that word? What does naming rebels as "mad" achieve for those in power?
- 4 Is this a book about girls being bad and boys being good, or something more careful than that? Argue it with evidence.
- 5 Kettle calls herself "an unfinished feminist... always learning about the power I have, the systems I am a part of." How does flipping the genders let a reader feel a system *from the inside*?

THE FLIP, RIGHT NOW

Why the gender-flip reads like a mirror in 2026

Why this book, right now. When *The Boy I Am* was published, its gender-flip felt like a thought experiment. Today it reads like a mirror. A loud online culture sells boys a narrow, often hostile idea of manhood — and sells girls impossible ideals and constant scrutiny; surveys show some young people cooling on gender equality for the first time in a generation; hard-won rights for women and minorities are being questioned or rolled back in places; and debates about gender identity have rarely been more heated. The flip is for every reader — girls and boys alike feel a gender system *from the inside*, as the powerful and the priced. Keep discussion analytical and balanced — the aim is critical thinking about how gender roles are made and sold, not telling students what to think.

Chapter-to-world questions · Gender in 2026

- 1 In the novel, boys are taught exactly how to look, smile and behave to be "worth" something. Where do young people today get their scripts for how to be a "real" man or woman — and who profits from selling them?
- 2 Online, some voices sell one narrow model of manhood very loudly. How do you tell the difference between advice, persuasion, and someone selling you an identity for their own gain?
- 3 Women who refuse the system are renamed "Hysterics" and pushed out. How are people who challenge gender rules — of any gender — mocked or silenced today? What does the choice of insult reveal about who feels threatened?
- 4 In the book, your rights are fixed by who you are born as. In the real world, rights for women, LGBTQ+ people and minorities can move forward — or backward. What makes a right feel permanent, and what makes it fragile?
- 5 The flip lets a reader imagine being the one sold and scored. Why might stepping into another group's position change how you argue about fairness — and does empathy weaken an argument or strengthen it?
- 6 **Balanced debate.** Some argue equality has "gone too far"; others that the backlash proves it never went far enough. Using the book as a shared reference, build the strongest version of *both* cases before you decide what you think.

Keep it safe and open. Anchor every question to the fiction first, keep any personal angle optional, protect students of all views and identities from being put on the spot, and follow your school's usual process if a discussion raises a concern.

CONSENT & CHOICE

Can a "yes" be free when "no" isn't safe?

How to teach this strand. Keep it anchored to the book's systems — the auction, the inherited debt, the flipped world. The aim is the RSHE idea underneath consent: that a real "yes" needs freedom, information and equal power. Nothing here requires the novel's darker chapters.

Chapter questions - Consent as power and choice

- 1 Jude can "choose" to smile and be sold, or refuse and be sent to the mines. Is a choice with no safe alternative a real choice? What's the difference between *agreeing* and *consenting*?
- 2 Every boy is born owing a debt he never agreed to. Can you consent to something decided before you were born? Where in the real world are people bound by rules they never chose?
- 3 The auction dresses being sold as being "selected", "lucky", a "lot". How does soft language hide the absence of consent? Find three words the system uses to make it sound like a gift.
- 4 The Chancellor is charming, generous and powerful all at once. Why can an imbalance of power make "yes" complicated — even when someone is being kind?
- 5 Jude's friend quietly draws in the margins instead of copying the lesson. Is that consent, refusal, or something in between? What other small acts of "not agreeing" can you find?
- 6 By the end, Jude chooses to fight for "freedom for as many of us as possible." How is choosing *for others* different from the false choices the system offered him?

Oracy option. Run questions 1 and 4 as a "line of consent" — students stand along a line from *free choice* to *no choice* for each scenario (the auction, the debt, a kind but powerful adult), then explain where they stood and why.

DEBATE & CURRICULUM

Motions for PSHE and English, and where it all fits

Run each motion as for-and-against with a genuine counter-argument, and take a class vote *before* and *after* — the movement is the learning. Reward reasoning anchored in the text.

PSHE / RSHE • POWER & CONSENT

- "A choice made under threat is not a real choice."
- "You cannot consent to a system you were born into."
- "Kindness from someone more powerful can be a kind of pressure."
- "It is harder to grow up free of gender rules now than ten years ago."

ENGLISH • ARGUMENT & RHETORIC

- "This is a feminist book." — argue for and against.
- "Flipping the genders makes the point better than a realistic story could."
- "The most dangerous power in this novel is the power that looks normal."
- "This book is more relevant in 2026 than when it was written." — argue both ways.

English

Writing and speaking to present a viewpoint (AO5/AO6); analysing how language normalises power; structured discussion and discursive/argument writing (KS3 & KS4, incl. GCSE).

PSHE / RSHE

Consent as freedom, information and equal power; coercion and pressure; autonomy and who "owns" a person's choices; recognising unequal power in relationships and systems.

Citizenship

Rights and fairness; how societies justify inequality; who consents to be governed, and what happens to those who refuse.

Teaching consent through the fiction. These prompts build genuine RSHE consent education on the book's power systems rather than its most difficult content — safe for the KS3 extract lessons and a serious way in for KS4. See the note at the back of the Activity Pack, keep any real-life angle optional, and follow your school's usual process if a discussion raises a concern.