

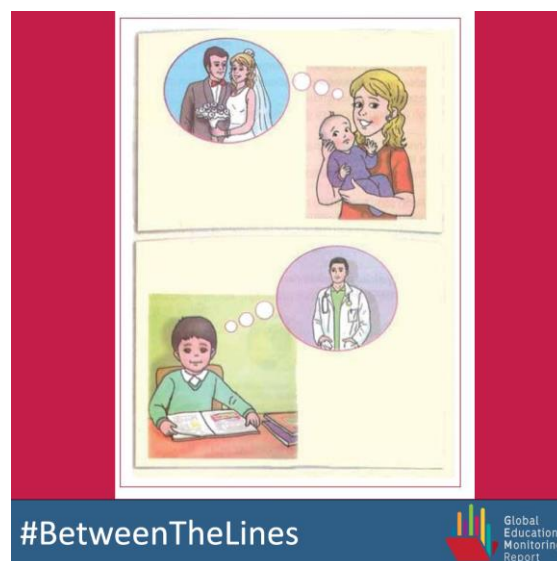
What's between the lines in your textbook?

Textbooks are an important resource in all classrooms – they contain lots of good information, and have exercises and activities that help you learn.

But many textbooks make assumptions about the roles people should play, and can perpetuate stereotypes. Sometimes they tell only a small part of a much bigger story that leaves some people out. Textbooks have both explicit and implicit content: take for example, a mathematics textbook that shows a picture of a row of guns and ask you to count them. Explicitly you are being asked to carry out a calculation, but what does that implicitly tell you about how guns are valued?

Reading between the lines, what does the image on the right tell you?

The text and pictures in our textbooks should reflect the values and norms we want in our society. Take a minute to think about the values that are important to you, and that you would like to see reflected in your textbooks.



Once you've thought about the values and norms that are important to you, take a look through your textbook and consider the questions below:

Who is represented and how are they represented?

- How many pictures of boys and men appear in your textbook? How many pictures of girls and women? What kinds of activities are men and women depicted doing? What does that tell you about how men and women should be or act or behave in your community?
- Do the people portrayed in your textbook reflect what your society looks like? Are people from different ethnic and minority groups represented? Different nationalities? Different religious groups? Does the way your textbook covers different people promote tolerance and understanding, or divisions, stereotypes and prejudice?
- Are there examples of people with disabilities in your textbook? What does it tell you if someone is excluded from your textbook altogether?
- Are there examples of diverse sexualities, like lesbian, gay, transgender, queer or intersex people (LGBTQI) in your textbooks? What does it tell you if they are not mentioned at all?
- Who are the famous people or heroes presented in your textbook? What did they do to contribute to your country? What other well-known figures do you think should be included?
- How does your textbook challenge you to question stereotypes or address discrimination?



Only **9%** of textbooks show people living with disabilities.

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Only **3%** of textbooks cover the rights of LGBTI people

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What do our textbooks teach us about human rights, gender equality, climate change, global citizenship & peace?



Image: Zinat Rehana

What information is prioritised, and whose point(s) of view does it explore?

- Does your textbook consider environmental or ecological issues? Does it discuss peace and conflict resolution or diversity and global citizenship? Can you find references to human rights and gender equality in your textbook?
- If information on climate change is discussed in your textbook, is the content scientifically accurate? Does it outline what is contributing to climate change, and what courses of action can be taken? Is climate change talked about as an urgent problem, or as a problem to be addressed in the future?
- What maps are included in your textbooks and how are contested country borders drawn? Does your textbook glorify the use of military force? Does your textbook consider the effects of conflict on individuals, families, economies and nations? Are there versions of your country's history that are left untold? What perspectives or whose point of view are missing?

Only 30% of textbooks from 2000-11 showed environmental issues as a global problem

11 Climate change
(A hot topic)

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60% of textbooks in the late 2000's don't mention activities outside of their borders

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What does that tell you?

- How are different values and norms represented in your textbook?
- Are there important values that, in your view, are missing from your textbook?
- What does your textbook tell you about your country and the challenges it currently faces?
- What does your textbook tell you about the wider world, and your relation to people in other countries and regions?
- What things in your textbook would you change if you could? Why are they problematic? How could you improve them?

Here at the GEM Report, we've been looking at different countries' textbooks to see what each are prioritising. We would love to receive any interesting things you found reading between the lines of your textbook! Send us examples at gemreport@unesco.org or [tweet/Facebook/Instagram](#) what you find, tagging @GEMReport and using #betweenthelines.

