Questioning Gender
A Teacher's Guide to Raising Gender Awareness in the Classroom - Exemplified through Stephanie Meyer's Twilight

Ifrågasätta Genus
En lärares guide till att öka genusmedvetenhet i klassrummet - Exemplifierat genom Stephanie Meyers Twilight

Björn Odot-Andersson
Abstract

In the Swedish school one of the tasks is to work against gender stereotypes and towards equality between the sexes. The purpose with this essay is to present ways of looking at literature that teachers can either implement in their classroom or use to better prepare themselves, ways for both teachers and their pupils to gain a critical view towards literature that can strengthen the work towards such equality. The tools used in the essays are 1) reading previous scholars’ analysis of the text, 2) the Bechdel-Wallace-Test, and 3) the Gender Stairs. My example text will be Stephanie Meyer’s Twilight from 2007. The results shows that the book clearly presents stereotypes of males and females, since the male characters in the book are strong, protective, and active, while the female characters are beautiful, dependent, and passive. The novel also defends, preserves, and amplifies patriarchal structures. This analysis places Twilight as a minus three in Edwertz and Lundström’s Gender Stairs. The novel is thus a good book for teachers to use if they want their students to see a classical example of how gender myths are presented in literature. Showing a classical example of stereotypes in literature may in turn help the students detect stereotypes, which is one step towards equality between men and women, which is one of the tasks of the Swedish schools.
In the Swedish school one of the tasks is to work against gender stereotypes and towards equality between the sexes. This may be a challenge for the teacher when using fictional texts. In the teaching situation it would be useful to be able to spot literature that reproduces and enhances gender stereotypes. The purpose of this essay is to present ways of looking at literature that teachers can either implement in their classroom or use to better prepare themselves, thus helping both teachers and their pupils to gain a critical view towards literature that can strengthen the work towards equality between the sexes. By teaching the students to read and process fiction in a critical manner, the teachers can in turn raise student awareness, helping them to notice stereotypes in literature for themselves. The tools I will be using in the essays are 1) reading previous scholars’ analysis of the text, 2) the Bechdel-Wallace-Test, and 3) the Gender Stairs. My example text will be Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* from 2007. Scholars have unanimously classified this novel as being regressive in its way of handling gender. While we shall see that *Twilight* passes the Bechdel-Wallace-Test, in the Gender Stairs it presents clear gender stereotypes, since the male characters in the novel are strong, protective, and active, while the female characters are beautiful, dependent and passive, and is thus classified as a novel that both enhances the myths and stereotypes of gender and defends, preserves and amplifies the patriarchal structures. In the teachers’ striving towards implementing equality between men and women, *Twilight* is thus a useful novel to work with as an example of a text that maintains the stereotypical qualities associated with a specific gender.

It is explicitly mentioned in the syllabus that education in the Swedish schools is to prevent the construction of gender stereotypes and build equality between men and women, which starts with awareness amongst teachers of which kind of literature is used in class. Lena Gemzöe argues that raised gender awareness is breaking new ground not only in our schools but in society as a whole, and that male dominance is changing on a global level as a
result of feminism gaining ground (25). Gender studies are now a legitimate branch in the academic world, which in a scientific way reveals the reality of women and gender based hierarchies, and identifies obstacles for equality between men and women (Wiklund 32). This awareness has had an effect on the syllabus for the upper secondary school as it explicitly says that equality between women and men are one of the fundamental values that education must mediate (Skolverket 8). In other words, one of the most important tasks for teachers in Swedish schools today is to recognize that no one should be evaluated according to their sex.

The syllabus also states:

The school should actively and consciously promote men and women’s rights and opportunities. The way in which girls and boys are responded to and assessed by in schools, and the demands and expectations that are placed on them, contribute to the forming of their perception of what is considered male or female. The school has a responsibility to neutralize the traditional gender patterns. It shall therefore give students the space to try, and develop, their ability and their interests independent of gender. (Skolverket 8)

This means that teachers must recognize that gender is something that is socially constructed and become aware of how gender is constructed by society.

To deal with gender issues is often problematic since stereotypes based on gender are something that exists in all parts of society and is upheld by e.g. literature that is used for educational purposes every day. According to Kajsa Svaleryd all kinds of texts, in schools and other places of society, must be consciously analyzed so that we can learn to see and understand what kind of picture they give us. This analysis must be done so that the students themselves can learn to recognize and challenge the stereotypes presented to them in their everyday life. Since media often mediate a traditional view of gender, recognizing and challenging stereotypes is an important step towards changing the current gender structures in
society (130). Svaleryd also points out that it is pointless to try and ban literature that does not question the traditional gender roles as people will come in contact with them anyway. It is in fact important that this kind of literature is used and discussed in school (134); banning certain literature in school can be counterproductive in the work for an equal society. It is in fact good to use books that contain traditional gender roles in school as long as the students learn how to look at a text with critical eyes. By having the students read literature the teachers can get their students working towards equality between men and women by making the students aware of stereotypes that exist in society today, so that they can challenge them. However, this awareness has to start with the teacher, helping them to realize how different types of literature can either fortify or diminish gender stereotypes. The teacher’s approach to the texts is of great importance and students’ critical approach starts with the teacher’s awareness (Olin-Scheller 56). If the teacher is unaware of a novel’s impact on the gender stereotype, raising awareness among his/her students will be impossible.

One way for the teacher of forming an opinion of a book and its take on gender and stereotypes is to read scholars’ analysis of it. Since its release, The Twilight Saga has been used as an example by scholars of a novel that represents an antiquated outlook on gender and that in no way treats the subject of gender in an innovative way. Basing his theory on Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex, Reni Eddo-Lodge is one of the scholars who argues that Twilight represents a backlash for women all over the world: “The Twilight Saga ignores the progress of feminism obtained in the past sixty years, and is instead framed in an almost archaic narrative”. The archaic narrative includes Bella, one of the main female protagonists, who shows very little courage and bravery, being in constant need of rescue and protection, a bystander looking at the action, while expecting the men to handle the fights and to watch over her (Eddo-Lodge). Melissa Miller also argues that the Twilight Saga is not an innovative work of fiction when looking at gender stereotypes. Miller states that the
relationship between Bella and Edward, the main theme and focus in the saga, displays a
dangerous and damaging relationship which promotes, enhances and normalizes a patriarchal
society where men is in control of women as Edward shows all the signs which is said to be
significant of an abusive relationship (Miller 165). This makes *Twilight* a book that preserves
the patriarchal structures of society, contributing to the oppression of women all over the
planet (165). Ashley Donnelly also contends that *Twilight* preserves, upholds, and normalizes
patriarchal structures and gender stereotypes, arguing that media today play a big part in
upholding such dated structures in society. Donnelly also explains that patriarchy is a male
centered system, where every characteristic that is seen as male is a desirable one, or the
norm. This way of looking divides the characteristics into male and female categories, which
is damaging to the equality of people in general and to those who do not fit in to the norm and
these stereotypes are upheld and normalized by popular culture and the passive acceptance of
media providing these images (Donnelly 178). When it comes to *Twilight*, this is exactly the
case as it is filled with stereotypical patriarchal beliefs and moral lessons, Donnelly argues:
“The resulting tales perpetuate an ideology that celebrates the oppression of women and
enforced conformity into constrictive gender roles” (179). These three readings of the book
show that *Twilight* is seen as a clear case of a novel that is antiquated in its depiction of
gender stereotypes, and it is obvious that the scholars view it as reinforcing stereotypes and
upholding patriarchal structures. Such readings can be of great aid when teachers are trying to
form an opinion of the impact of the book on its readers.

The second way for teachers to form an opinion of a book’s standpoint on equality is
to use the Bechdel-Wallace Test. According to Lawrence Faith, the Bechdel-Wallace test
originates from a comic strip called *Dykes to Watch Out For* created in 1985 by Alison
Bechdel. In the comic strip one of the characters says that she never watches a film that has
not passed the test. The test has since been popularized and is now used both by scholars and
enthusiasts in efforts to spot patriarchal tendencies in movies, and literature. The test contains three questions that the reader must ask to see if a work of fiction is marginalizing women and upholding patriarchal structures (Faith 1). The questions are 1) Does it contain more than two female characters? 2) Do these two characters talk to each other? 3) Do they talk about anything else than men? (1). If the answer to any of these questions are “no”, the work of fiction does not pass the test and is viewed as being degrading toward women. There are however some difficulties that surround this test as it is not a very thorough one. It only scratches on the surface of the text or the TV show, and therefore has to be used with caution. If a work of fiction passes the test it does not immediately ensure that it does not contain stereotypical images of gender or upholds patriarchal structures. Faith also says: “While not passing judgment on the quality of an individual work being assessed, this rule has been seen as an interesting thinking-point both in regards to single pieces and for looking at, and raising awareness of, trends of representation across bodies of works” (1), which shows that the test is to be seen as very general.

*Twilight* passes the Bechdel-Wallace Test as it does contain more than one female character, the female characters talk to each other, and they talk about more than men to each other. The first two female characters that are presented in *Twilight* are Bella and her mother Renée who are introduced right from the start of the book, Bella naturally since she is the main character of the novel. The third female character in the book is Jessica who Bella meets in Spanish class on the first day of school (15). It is then Jessica who introduces the female characters Alice, Rosalie and Mrs. Cullen. The book thus quickly introduces six characters who are female and thereby passes the first criterion of the Bechdel-Wallace test easily.

*Twilight* also passes the second criterion of the Bechdel-Wallace Test as the female characters talk to each other throughout the book. One does not have to search for very long since Bella and her mother have a conversation right in the beginning of the text (4). Another example of
when Bella and her mother have a conversation is when Bella is in hospital and her mother comes to check up on her (404). The third criterion is passed as the conversations of the female characters of the book involve more than talking about the male characters. Examples of this are when Bella talk to her mother. The talks between these two characters are in general about Bella and do not involve any boys; for example, in the opening scene when Renée asks if Bella feels she is being forced out of her house (4), or in the e-mails that Bella and Renée send to each other (28). Twilight also passes this criterion, and, according to the Bechdel-Wallace Test, should thus not be considered a book that promotes patriarchal structures. However, the problem with this test is shown when using the Gender Stairs on Twilight, which gives the reader a deeper insight about the book.

The Gender Stairs can be used by teachers to classify in what manner a book presents and handles gender stereotypes. In the report *Jämställdhets- och Genusperspektiv i Kurslitteraturen* from 2003, Mona Edwertz and Lars Lundström present the Gender Stairs, which is an instrument that is to be used to clarify to what degree a book can be said to problematize stereotypical gender roles and equality between the sexes (9). The instrument consists of eight steps. The steps are numbered from minus three up to four, minus three being the most gender unaware and 4 the most gender aware. Books that qualify for the level minus three can be said to amplify gendered power relations, according to Edwertz and Lundström, and can be said to defend and/or preserve patriarchal power structures. They also often contain oppression techniques that are uncritically dealt with and most of the times they deal with ways of exercising power over women and in some cases children. The second step is minus two. Books that belong here enhance myths about gender and give the different genders properties in an antiquated way, e.g. the passive female and the active male (Edwertz and Lundström 11). The third step is minus one and contains books that are gender blind or gender unaware. This means that books that can be placed as minus one ignore gender perspectives
even though they contain enough material to deal with these issues. The fourth step is Zero and is gender neutral or unaware of gender. Edwertz and Lundström say that books that can be graded as Zero completely lack gender or equality perspectives by presenting a subject where these perspectives are neutral (10). Step Zero is followed by step one. Books that are placed here are said to be gender aware, since they describe and pay attention to differences between the sexes but do not discuss these differences to a high degree. Number two is the sixth step in the gender stair. According to Edwertz and Lundström the books that are graded as twos also describe differences between the genders but do so in a way that can be said to be equality aware, as they discuss rights and duties of men and women and deal with the unfair terms on which the rights and duties rest (9). Step number three, Edwertz and Lundström call a genus aware one. Books that are graded as being a three contain the concept of power. These books separate equality from genus as equality is used as a term that is not political and does not problematize structures as power and hierarchies, while genus on the other hand is about how power is expressed and reproduced. Edwertz and Lundström also say that reasoning concerning patriarchal patterns and how gender is constructed socially shall be included in books on this level. On step four, or the final step in Edwertz and Lundström’s Gender Stairs, books are placed that contain the same gender awareness as can be found on step three. What separates the two is that step four takes the reasoning of step three even further by describing not only how females are oppressed in the patriarchal system, but also shows the exploitation that both men and women are exposed to in this system (Edwertz and Lundström 11).

Stephanie Meyer’s *Twilight* contains several stereotypical images of the male and female gender. Maria Nikolajeva says that a gender stereotype is when the characters in a text acts in accordance with the existing norms of men and women. It is easy to see a pattern in the stereotypes as the male and the female are in many cases opposites (130). The male stereotype
can be said to be the norm and the stereotypical female is often seen as “the other” (Pilcher and Whelehan 83). Yvonne Hirdman calls this the male prototype, and describes the prototype as having all the “right” qualities, while the female is left with the “other” qualities (59). This is something that occurs throughout *Twilight*. Firstly, *Twilight* enhances the picture of the strong male and the beautiful female, which are two of the stereotypes that Nikolajeva mentions. These stereotypes can clearly be seen when the protagonist Bella, who can be said to represent the female gender throughout the book, sees the vampires for the first time:

They didn’t look anything alike. Of the three boys, one was big – muscled like a serious weight lifter, with dark, curly hair. Another was taller, leaner, but still muscular, and honey blond…

The girls were opposites. The tall one was statuesque. She had a beautiful figure, the kind you saw on the cover of the Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue. (Meyer 16)

Meyer describes two of the male vampires as muscular and strong and one of the female vampires as beautiful. This is also enhanced when Edward, who can be said to represent the male gender throughout the book, describes his feelings for the girl he likes:

“But honestly,” I teased, “for that to bother you, after I have to hear that Rosalie – Rosalie, the incarnation of pure beauty, Rosalie- was meant for you… How can I compete with that?”

“There’s no competition.” His teeth gleamed…”Of course Rosalie is beautiful in her way”. (Meyer 266)

Here Meyer again focuses on the beautiful female, which is then contrasted with male strength, seen in how Edward is portrayed throughout the book, having a “sculpted, incandescent chest… scintillating arms… and looking like a perfect statue carved in stone” (Meyer 228), or “the statue of Adonis” (Meyer 277). The first description, containing words
like incandescent, scintillating, and stone, contributes to the picture of a strong male, just as a statue can be associated with strength. This stereotype is further reinforced when Edward and Bella are out hiking and are heading back to the car. Edward asks Bella to jump onto his back, as it will be a faster way to get back to their car, and as Bella climbs up she says that Edward is hard as stone (Meyer 244). Again Edward is described by the word *stone*, again reinforcing the stereotype of the strong male. The fact that he is taking her on his back and carrying her back to the car also contributes to the stereotype. Bella on the other hand is on several occasions described to fit in the stereotype of the beautiful female, e.g. when Edward says Rosalie’s beauty cannot compare to the beauty of Bella (Meyer 266), or when Bella doubts what it is that Edward sees in her and he tells her how incredibly beautiful she is (Meyer 249). All of the above fits in and follows Nikolajeva’s stereotypes of the strong male and the beautiful female.

Secondly, Bella is described as being dependent, which conforms to stereotype of the dependent woman (Nikolajeva 129). Bella shows this in her constant longing for Edward throughout the book. It starts the first time she meets him and sits next to him in class (Meyer, 20). From then on Bella’s dependency is shown in numerous ways, e.g. when she is in gym class after the first encounter with Edward and she thinks about how he seems to dislike her (Meyer 23), and it becomes really obvious when Bella the next day notices that he is not there:

I was relieved that I had the desk to myself, that Edward was absent. I told myself that repeatedly. But I couldn’t get rid of the nagging suspicion that I was the reason he wasn’t there. It was ridiculous, and egotistical, to think that I could affect anyone that strongly. It was impossible. And yet I couldn’t stop worrying that it was true. (Meyer 25)
The fact that Bella cannot get Edward of her mind really shows how Bella right from the beginning of the relationship starts to become dependent on Edward. The dependency continues in the way Bella describes Edward as being almost godlike, e.g. when they sit next to each other in class looking at a video and Bella describes how she is about to burst by his sole presence (Meyer 202). This culminates when Edward stays the night at Bella’s house and during the following morning:

“Edward! You stayed!” I rejoiced, and thoughtlessly threw myself across the room and into his lap… I laid my head cautiously against his shoulder, breathing in the smell of his skin.

“I was sure it was a dream”… It seemed like a miracle that he was there, his arms still waiting for me. (Meyer 274)

The section clearly shows how Bella is totally absorbed by Edward and it is a clear representation of a dependent woman.

Thirdly, Edward is pictured as a stereotypical protective male, a stereotype that Nikolajeva mentions as frequently occurring in literature (129). Edward is a clear representation of a protective male as he throughout the book works as Bella’s protector:

I was standing by the back corner of the truck… the dark blue van that was skidding, tires locked squealing against the brakes, spinning wildly across the ice of the parking lot. It was going to hit the back corner of my truck, and I was standing between them. I didn’t even have time to close my eyes. Just before I heard the shattering crunch of the van folding around the truck bed something hit me… I felt something solid and cold pinning me to the ground. It was absolutely silent for one long second… I could hear Edward Cullen’s low, frantic voice in my ear.

“Bella? Are you alright?” (Meyer 48)
This is the first time Edward saves Bella’s life and in a very stereotypical way works as her protector. The same stereotypical protectiveness can be seen when Bella visits Port Angeles and is followed by a group of men who obviously is going to hurt her. Edward then comes to the rescue and saves Bella from the attackers (Meyer 138-140). In this section Meyer builds up the tension with a lone, poor, and helpless girl that is being chased by evil men. But, just as it should be, the girl gets rescued just in time by a knight in shiny armor, or in this case the protective male protagonist, Edward. As this is the second time Edward acts as Bella’s protector, the gender roles in the book are pretty clearly divided. The role of the protective male is also cemented in an excerpt of the second book that is included at the end of Twilight, as Edward and Bella are celebrating Bella’s birthday at the vampire’s house. Bella cuts her finger and starts to bleed and the vampires turn on her and Edward yet again steps in to save her (Meyer 445-47). This is the last part of Twilight and the book ends by cementing the role of the protective male that is protecting the helpless girl.

Finally, the stereotype of the active male and the passive female, as explained by Nikolajeva (129), occurs frequently and is enhanced throughout Twilight. Meyer clearly presents these stereotypical roles, e.g. after Bella has met Edward and they meet in the school restaurant:

When I reached his table, I stood behind the chair across from him, unsure.

“Why don’t you sit with me today?” he asked, smiling. I sat down automatically, watching him with caution. He was still smiling. It was hard to believe that someone so beautiful could be real… He seemed to be waiting for me to say something.

“This is different,” I finally managed. (Meyer 75)

Here Edward is active and Bella passive on two occasions. Firstly, when she is afraid to sit down beside him and stands passive by his chair. Edward acts and more or less tells her to sit
down beside him. Secondly, Bella feels that Edward wants her to say something, so she does.
This means that even though Edward does not say anything he is still the active one as he makes Bella speak, whether she wants to or not. The same pattern can be seen when Mike is taking Bella to the school nurse when she feels sick. Edward shows up and although Bella does not want him to take her to the nurse, Edward does so, not considering Bella’s wish to leave her alone (Meyer 83). This pattern is further built up when Bella and Edward leave the nurse’s office and Edward again decides to take Bella home not listening to her objections (Meyer 89). Again Edward is the active one, telling Bella what to do. She clearly wants to drive herself, but does not act and passively follows Edward into his car, which further enhances the reader’s impression of an active male and a passive female. The same pattern can clearly be seen just after Edward has rescued Bella from the followers in Port Angels and they go to meet up with Bella’s friends at a restaurant:

“That’s fine – I’m not hungry.” I shrugged.

“I think you should eat something.” Edward’s voice was low, but full of authority. He looked up and spoke slightly louder.

“Do you mind if I drive Bella home tonight? That way you won’t have to wait while she eats.”…

“Okay.” Angela was quicker than Jessica. “See you tomorrow, Bella… Edward.” She grabbed Jessica’s hand and pulled her toward the car…

“Honestly, I’m not hungry,” I insisted, looking up to scrutinize his face. His expression was unreadable.

“Humor me.” He walked to the door of the restaurant. Obviously, there would be no further discussion. I walked past him into the restaurant with a resigned sigh.

(Meyer 144)
Edward is again the active one and decides that Bella should eat, even though she is not hungry. He also makes the other female characters passive, by telling them what to do, which contributes even more to the stereotype of the active male and the passive female. He controls the situation which makes him the active one. Bella on the other hand just follows along, which makes her passive. This behavior continues inside the restaurant, throughout the dinner, as Edward tells Bella where they should sit, that she should get more coke, and that she should take his jacket (Meyer 148). A few days after the visit to Port Angels, in the school’s cafeteria, the same scenario is set:

“He led the way into the line, still not speaking, though his eyes returned to my face every few seconds, their expression speculative. It seemed to me that irritation was winning out over amusement as the dominant emotion in his face... He stepped up to the counter and filled a tray with food.

“What are you doing?” I objected. “You’re not getting all that for me?” He shook his head, stepping forward to buy the food.

“Half is for me, of course.” I raised one eyebrow. He led the way to the same place we’d sat that one time before…

“Take whatever you want,” he said, pushing the tray toward me. (Meyer 181)

Edward is again active as it is he who leads the way into the cafeteria, who puts the food on the tray, and who leads the way to the table. Bella on the other hand is passive as she only follows his lead, again fitting right in to the classic stereotype of male and female. This can also be seen when Edward convinces Bella not to go Seattle:

“Do you really need to go to Seattle this Saturday, or was that just an excuse to get out of saying no to all your admirers?...

“Probably not,” I admitted…
He was confident. “It’s all in the leading.” He could see I was about to protest, and he cut me off.

“But you never told me – are you resolved on going to Seattle, or do you mind if we do something different?”…

“I’m open to alternatives,” I allowed. (Meyer 186)

Bella is yet again the passive one as she agrees to change her plans. Edward is the active one as he makes Bella change her mind and in a way decides for her what she should do. As Edward then plans their day together and takes her hiking without her having a say (Meyer 222) the stereotype is further cemented and the idea of the active male and the passive female is set.

Upholding the gender stereotype through characters who act in accordance with the existing norms of men and women, Twilight also amplifies gendered powered relations, and can be said to defend and/or preserve patriarchal power structures. Patriarchy is today used to describe the current social system where women are dominated and subordinated to men. There are a number of theories concerning how the patriarchy is upheld. Some say it is due to the institution of the family. The fact that men control women’s bodies through sexuality or male violence is another reason, others say. Biological reasons are also discussed as a key to the upholding of the patriarchal structures in our society (Pilcher and Whelehan 93). All of these explanations may be more or less true. It is a fact, though, that specific stereotypical gender roles and expectations are learned through socialization since individual people learn about femininity and masculinity within social contexts. Inequality between the sexes and the patriarchal system can only be opposed and eradicated by changing the roles and then carrying them out in different forms, by socialization (Pilcher and Whelehan 162). As Twilight contains the stereotypes it does, it is supporting and upholding these stereotypes and is therefore vindicating, maintaining and reinforcing the patriarchal structures.
Containing several stereotypical images of males and females, *Twilight* would be classed as minus three in Edwertz and Lundström’s Gender Stair. When given the grade minus three, a book not only enhances the myths and stereotypes of gender, it also defends, preserves and, amplifies the patriarchal structures. This is exactly what Stephanie Mayer’s *Twilight* does, since the female characters are passive, dependent, and beautiful and the male characters are strong, protective and active. Some may argue that *Twilight* could be graded a minus two, since it can be argued whether it contains and preserves some patriarchal power structures. It is not as easy to detect this as it is to detect the stereotypes of the novel. Though as is presented in the essay these two are parallel in this case and *Twilight* must be considered to be a grade three in the Gender Stairs. *Twilight* does contain stereotypes of gender and does therefore uncritically defend patriarchal power structures, which is why it is to be graded as being a minus three in Edwertz and Lundström’s Gender Stairs.

To summarize, a challenge that teachers in the Swedish schools are faced with today is the issue of stereotypes and traditional gender roles and whether fiction used in schools upholds or questions these roles. This essay has proposed ways to deal with this issue. Raising awareness amongst teachers is quite naturally the first way of working towards equality between men and women. There are several ways a teacher can go about this and find out a text’s position on gender. Firstly, they get a picture of its position on gender by reading scholarly analyses of the text. If there are no studies available on the text the teacher may use the Bechdel-Wallace Test to get a quick view of whether the book enhances and reproduces a patriarchal and stereotypical point of view. Thirdly, if one finds the Bechdel-Wallace Test a bit shallow and feels it has its shortcomings, teachers can make their own in-depth analysis by using Edwertz and Lundström’s Gender Stairs. With the help of the Gender Stairs, teachers can make themselves aware of literature that may be harmful to the cause of working towards equality of gender. By applying the Gender Stairs on the picture of gender that the teachers
get from a text, the Gender Stairs help teachers classify the text and thereby make them aware of what its position is on gender. In this essay, this is exemplified through the novel *Twilight*, a text that has been used as an example of having a negative effect on the struggle for equality. This essay shows that the book clearly presents stereotypes of males and females, since the male characters in the book are strong, protective, and active, while the female characters are beautiful, dependent, and passive. The novel also defends, preserves, and amplifies patriarchal structures. This analysis places *Twilight* as a minus three in Edwertz and Lundström’s Gender Stairs and is thus a good book for teachers to use if they want their students to see a classical example of how gender myths are presented in literature. Showing a classical example of stereotypes in literature may in turn help the students detect stereotypes, which is one step towards equality between men and women, which is one of the tasks of the Swedish schools.
Works Cited

Primary Source:

Secondary Sources: