

# LIVING IN BARBIELAND

*King's Christian Collegiate Model United Nations*



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Dear King'sMUN 2024 delegates,

We are truly honoured, as this year's Co-Secretary Generals of King'sMUN, to welcome you to our 10th annual conference. The Secretariat has been working hard throughout this school year to deliver you an incredible, in-person conference with a variety of creative committees, experienced chairs, and an overall successful day of debate.

Model United Nations, a reenactment of the function of the United Nations, is designed for students to come together to debate, discuss, and develop creative resolutions to some of the world's most pressing issues that plague our world today. In most committees, students take on the positions of various countries, characters, or political figures to create solutions for both real and fictional issues and crises. We also offer unique committees that explore historical, future, and fictional issues.

In our personal experience with MUN we have developed many valuable skills that we will take with us throughout our lives, such as confidence in public speaking, leadership, and creative problem-solving. Furthermore, MUN promotes lifelong connections, as we are constantly meeting delegates who share similar passions to us in committee sessions. We truly believe that your participation in MUN will guide you throughout your high school journey and beyond.

At King'sMUN, we provide a variety of committees to ensure that we have something of interest for everyone. From very current pressing issues (ie. UNSC and the African Union) and issues in sports (ie. International Cricket Council and WSF) to fictional, yet real, controversies (ie. Barbieland) and issues set in the past (ie. The Manhattan Project). We strive to ensure that there is appeal for a variety of delegates. Whether you have no experience or have been to a multitude of conferences, there is a place at King'sMUN for you!

Once again, we are thrilled to welcome all delegates, new or returning, back to King'sMUN. We hope that you engage in fruitful debate and have an amazing time at King'sMUN 2024.

Sincerely,

Serena Kalsi and Georgia Apostolopoulos

Co-Secretary Generals

King'sMUN 2024

## The History of Barbie

Barbie, the fashion doll, made its debut on March 9, 1959 under the creative vision of American entrepreneur Ruth Handler. Ruth Handler, who co-founded Mattel with her husband, Elliot, spearheaded the introduction of the doll. Barbie's physical appearance was modeled on the German Bild Lilli doll, a risqué gag gift for men based upon a cartoon character featured in the West German newspaper *Bild Zeitung*. Originating from Handler's observation of her daughter Barbara's imaginative play with paper dolls, the concept of Barbie sought to introduce a doll that would serve as a conduit for children's aspirations. The inaugural

Barbie doll, officially named Barbara Millicent Roberts in homage to Handler's daughter, was unveiled at the American International Toy Fair in New York. Characterized by blonde hair, blue eyes, and an expansive wardrobe reflecting diverse careers and lifestyles, Barbie swiftly captivated the global imagination of children. And in response to consumer demand, in 1961 Mattel brought out Barbie's ultimate "accessory", her boyfriend, Ken. (Britannica)



Over the ensuing decades, Barbie underwent a progressive change, adapting to shifting to culture by diversifying in terms of ethnic presentation, professional pursuits, and body types. Despite occasional critique for perpetuating unrealistic beauty ideals, Barbie persists as an enduring cultural icon, symbolizing and also reflecting societal expectations and the changing roles of women over time. The evolution of Barbie as a cultural icon extends beyond its physical representation, the world of Barbie a multimedia empire that includes animated movies, merchandise, and a significant online presence. Barbie has become a symbol not only of childhood play but also of broader societal conversations around diversity, inclusion, and female empowerment. many

Women who played with the doll credit Barbie with providing an alternative to restrictive 1950s gender roles. Unlike baby dolls, Barbie did not teach nurturing. Outfitted with career paraphernalia, the doll was a model for financial self-sufficiency. Mattel, the company behind Barbie, has actively responded to societal critiques, introducing dolls with varying skin tones, body shapes, and professions, aiming to mirror the diversity of the contemporary world over its 65 year stretch. Mattel responded by changing the body mold for Barbie on several occasions. At the turn of the 21st century the doll was given smaller breasts, a wider waist, and slimmer



hips, and in 2016 the company released three additional sizes of Barbie: petite, tall, and curvy. Furthermore, Barbie's ventures into STEM careers through themed dolls and initiatives signal a conscious effort to inspire young girls to envision themselves in fields traditionally underrepresented by women. As Barbie continues to adapt to the changing world, its influence on popular culture and its role in shaping perceptions of femininity remain undeniable

### **SDG Gender Equality**

The SDG Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. This involves eliminating discrimination, violence, and harmful practices based on gender. Barbie, as a cultural icon and a symbol of femininity, has the potential to influence perceptions and attitudes toward gender roles, stereotypes, and empowerment, especially among young audiences. Over more than 60 years, Barbie has had over 250 careers ranging from cheerleader to robotics engineer and everything in between along the way, inspiring young girls to dream big. In our society, gender inequality almost exclusively references women, but in Barbie land, gender inequality refers to the unusual status of the Barbies and Kens residing there.

## Important characters

### Barbie:

Barbie is a 64-year-old fashion model and cultural icon who has been at the forefront of American pop culture for decades. Known as a fashion queen who has embraced a variety of styles and outfits over the decades, Barbie has also had a remarkably diverse career history throughout her life, working in more than 250 different professions. They have included surgeons, airplane pilots, astronauts, military officers, Olympic athletes, rock musicians, and many more. Barbie has also run for president of the United States seven times, though she has never won her party's nomination. Barbie is well known for her highly publicized, on-again-off-again relationship with Ken (Barbie Wiki).



### Ken:

Kenneth Sean "Ken" Carson is a fashion doll introduced by American toy company Mattel in 1961 as the counterpart of Barbie, who had been introduced two years earlier. Similar to Barbie, Ken is from Willows, Wisconsin and has a fashionable line of clothing and accessories. Many different versions of Ken have emerged throughout the years, including Ken from animated cartoon shows and movies, as seen below, Barbie Doll Ken, and live-action Ken, played by Ryan Reynolds. In the movie Barbie by Greta Gerwick, Ken is seen revolting from the swapped gender roles within Barbie Land when he sees how our male-dominated world compares. Throughout the movie, Ken is revealed as a multifaceted character on the quest for love, acceptance, and purpose (Barbie Wiki).



### **Characters in the committee**

1. Stereotypical Barbie
2. Ken (Ryan Gosling)
3. CEO of Mattel
4. Allan
5. Midge
6. Mermaid Barbie
7. President Barbie
8. Physicist Barbie
9. Writer Barbie
10. Weird Barbie
11. Judge Barbie
12. Journalist Barbie
13. Diplomat Barbie
14. Dr Barbie
15. Lawyer Barbie
16. Ken #1
17. Ken #2
18. Ken #3
19. Ken #4
20. Merman Ken
21. Gloria
22. Sasha
23. Ruth Handler's ghost
24. Original Barbie
25. Earing Magic Ken

## Topic 1: Gender roles in Barbie Land

The setting of *Barbie: The Movie* is called Barbie Land. It is overseen by President Barbie. Barbieland is not portrayed as a fictitious place, but rather as an alternate reality where characters can simply travel between the two worlds. Barbie Land is obviously patterned after the United States, as shown by the national flag and landmarks that resemble American landmarks. However, as the name suggests, Barbie and Ken dolls are the main residents of Barbie Land, with other similar dolls like Allan, Skipper, and Midge making up the minority.



Gender roles in society mean how we're expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct ourselves based on our assigned sex. Fighting gender roles is important because it helps create a fair and inclusive society. Old-fashioned ideas about what men and women should do can limit opportunities and reinforce stereotypes. When we challenge these expectations, people can be themselves and go after what they want without unnecessary limits. It is about making sure everyone has the opportunity to succeed.



At the beginning of the film, Barbie highlights female empowerment and women in leadership roles. However, as the movie progresses, it also presents the downsides of an intensely feminine society as the Barbies do not treat the men in Barbie Land, the Kens, with equal respect, forcing the lens to live in their shadows. Throughout the movie, it is regularly used as a tool to comment on how our society functions outside of the Barbie universe. There is an obvious gender divide within Barbie Land; the Kens aren't appreciated as functioning members of society and act as glorified accessories to the Barbies who take on actual careers within this world. This can be seen playing out through the lens of the male character, Ken. Ken expresses a need for more purpose. When Ken is exposed to a more male-centered society, he quickly embraces the patriarchy. He brings it back to Barbie Land, where the commentary on gender norms enters a dramatized yet pointed display.

## **Topic 2: Sexism & Power - Equality and Authority in Society**

Sexism is any expression (act, word, image, gesture) based on the idea that some persons are inferior because of their sex. Every society, ethnic group, and culture has gender role expectations, but they can differ from group to group.

Sexism and power imbalances persist in today's society, revealing deeply rooted biases that impact various aspects of life. Despite strides toward gender equality, women often encounter challenges in attaining leadership roles in the workplace. Stereotypes and societal expectations related to gender roles continue to shape and constrain individuals based on their sex. Movements like #MeToo have shed light on the prevalence of sexism, particularly in professional settings, exposing instances of harassment and unequal treatment. Although progress has been made to challenge these norms and promote inclusivity, systemic sexism remains a significant issue. Ongoing efforts are necessary to break down these structures and foster a more fair power distribution in our contemporary social landscape.

This, however, is flipped on its head within the Barbie universe and Barbie Land; Ken dolls are now expected to be the subservient accommodating accessory to the Barbie, who has the opportunity to chase a career and have purpose beyond a relationship; this evokes an important questions,

1. Why does society accept that one's success must rely on another's downfall?
2. What does gender equality mean to you, and how do you see it manifesting in different aspects of our society?
3. How can individuals, communities, and institutions contribute to fostering an environment that promotes gender equality on a day-to-day basis?
4. In what ways do you think cultural norms and societal expectations impact gender roles, and how can we challenge or change these norms to promote equality?

Taking on sexism and power imbalances is crucial for creating a just and equal society. When we confront unfair treatment based on gender, we break down barriers that hold certain groups back. Sexism, especially in positions of power, can limit opportunities and reinforce harmful stereotypes. By challenging these dynamics, we open space for everyone to contribute based on their abilities, not their gender. It is about ensuring that power is shared more fairly and that everyone, regardless of gender, has the chance to influence and succeed.

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