



Streets Aligned – Supporting educators towards an LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Education



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the European Union**

LGBTIQ+ Inclusive Education Toolkit: actions, resources and activities for educators

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Jsem pro
rozvoje!

Nora



I.I.S.S Pio La Torre

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Preface

The LGBTIQ+ Toolkit is designed to create a comprehensive set of guidelines and tools that bridge the gap between the concept of LGBTIQ+ inclusive education and its practical implementation in educational settings. Through its educational content, the toolkit aims to seamlessly integrate and facilitate educational discussions, fostering the development of specific skills and heightened awareness of LGBTIQ+ issues. Tailored for educators engaging with diverse learners, including young people, adults, and seniors, as well as members of the LGBTIQ+ community, the toolkit provides educational and supportive materials. It offers suggestions for activities, actions, and teaching methods that can be effectively incorporated into a school environment.

More specifically, the Toolkit includes the following four sections:

- Guided Reading Activities
- Writing, Storytelling and Autobiography activities
- Role Play Sessions
- Revision & Deconstruction Activities

Creating an LGBTIQ+-inclusive education path

Educational centers are places of learning and constitute a part of society, in which their members evolve as human beings. The educational environment has a direct impact on how well learners of any age learn and how well they interact with their peers. Educators are responsible for creating a welcoming classroom environment where each student feels included and appreciated. But despite these efforts, students who are or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, or intersex (LGBTIQ) continue to face discrimination and marginalization.

According to a recent survey, “LGBTIQ students report being harassed at school, both verbally and physically, at twice the rate of non-LGBTIQ youth”¹, LGBTIQ students usually face many hardships like bullying, harassment, discrimination and lack of support from educators and tutors. Due to these hardships, students are more likely to experience negative educational outcomes.

Creating a supportive environment for LGBTIQ students improves educational outcomes for all students, not only for those who identify as LGBTIQ. Addressing these issues at school is beneficial for young people because future societies will be built on respect, solidarity and acceptance rather than hatred, discrimination and wrong perceptions on sexuality. The first step in combatting discrimination in relation to LGBTIQ issues is awareness. By addressing topics on sexuality, gender and identity, educators can deal with all the misconceptions, stereotypes and wrong perceptions associated with the LGBTIQ+ community. Through inclusive policies and nurturing practices, educators and trainers have the power to transform any educational setting into an inclusive and progressive learning environment in which all students will feel free to express themselves.

Conceptual Framework

The essence of LGBTIQ-inclusive education is to make every educational context safe and respectful “for sexual and gender minority students as well as for many heterosexual students who have to

¹ Teaching Tolerance. (2017). Creating an LGBT-inclusive school climate – A Teaching Tolerance Guide for School Leaders. 1-6.

deal with harassment and marginalization on the basis of gender and sexuality”². One of the biggest challenges faced by students is marginalization. The marginalization is the result of homophobic, transphobic, heteronormative and gender normative institutional and cultural practices that find their roots in systems of oppression such as racism, sexism and classism. These practices become norms adopted by the majority of people and LGBTIQ students feel the pressure of hiding their true identity since they feel that they cannot be accepted for who they are. Maintaining such practices serve “to perpetuate patriarchal and heteronormative discourses that further narrow and limit understandings of self-outside normative gender roles and ideologies”³. In order to tackle these issues, schools must ensure that classrooms are safe learning environments and free of violence in any form (physical or otherwise). Celebrating LGBTQ rights through LGBTQ days, gay-straight alliances and positive posters, slogans or t-shirts is not enough to effectively deal with stereotypes regarding sexual identity and gender. LGBTQ issues should be brought to the mainstream of educational discourse to be addressed. Educators have a central role to play in dismantling homophobic, transphobic or misogynistic elements of schooling contexts. They should not only tackle these issues but they should be proactively engaged in practices that promote gender equality and LGBTQ inclusive values and attitudes through a revised curriculum and set of pedagogies.

LGBTIQ+ inclusive Education Best Practices

Educators can develop lessons that avoid bias and that include positive representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people, history and events. The positive aspect of an inclusive curriculum is that it offers students less-hostile school experience and increased feelings of connectedness to the school community.

The LGBTIQ issues should become an integral part of the school curriculum. The learning material can serve as a mirror when it reflects individuals and their experiences back to themselves. Reading can help students to feel confidence and reassurance. When a story in a book explores the relationship between two men or women who face the difficulties of daily life, students can realize that LGBTIQ individuals are human beings going through the same challenges as heterosexual people. At the same time, curriculum can serve as a window, showcasing to learners experiences and perspectives of those who possess different identities. Having a new, more open and progressive outlook on life will help society take another step toward creating a more welcoming and less prejudiced society.

Ensuring Coherent Curriculum and developing content on LGBTIQ+ history and communities: benefits of LGBTIQ-inclusive education

LGBTQ curriculum can have several benefits for students, not only for LGBTQ members but for everyone. The LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum:

- Exposes students to more inclusive and accurate accounts of history
- Help them have a better understanding of LGBTQ people
- Encourages them to question stereotypes about LGBTQ people
- Promotes acceptance

² Catherine G. Taylor, Elizabeth J. Meyer, Tracey Peter, Janice Ristock, Donn Short & Christopher Campbell (2016) *Gaps between beliefs, perceptions, and practices: Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-inclusive education in Canadian schools*, Journal of LGBT Youth, 13:1-2, 112-140

³ Martin, A. (2019). *Exploring Gender and LGBTQ Issues in K-12 and Teacher Education: A Rainbow Assemblage*. Information Age Publishing Inc. USA.

The LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum is beneficial for LGBTQ students. More specifically, the curriculum:

- Validates their existence and experience
- Reinforces their value and self-worth
- Provides space for their voices
- Gives them the ground to express themselves freely and be heard

Guided Reading Activities

Guided Reading Activity: Reading a press article

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Critically analyze a text
- Recognize the LGBTQ topics
- Identify stereotypes, social patterns that should be altered
- Identify ways to make society more inclusive and open

Time

45 minutes

Materials Needed

A4 paper, sticky notes, whiteboard, video projector

Methodology and Techniques

The primary methodological approach employed in this session is guided reading. Guided reading is a small-group instructional framework in which an educator facilitates the learning of each student who works both independently and collaboratively (during group discussions) to analyze a text. Within the guided reading context, students engage in individual reading of a text carefully chosen by the educator to match their instructional reading level. The educator should provide teaching across the lesson to support students “in building a network of strategic actions for processing increasingly challenging texts”⁴.

Guided Reading Main Aspects⁵:

- Small-Group Instruction
- Learners read an educator-selected text in a small group
- The educator provides specialized teaching and support for reading challenging texts
- Students should read the whole text
- Teaching is responsive to individual student strengths and needs

The first guided reading session focuses on studying and analyzing a press article related to LGBTQ topics. Through independent reading, students use critical thinking to analyze and deconstruct the main messages of the article and reflect on LGBTQ topics (same-sex marriage, gay couples having a child, acknowledgement of an openly gay man in the Olympics). Through the discussion on gay

⁴ Fountas & Pinnell Classroom. (2019). *Guided Reading*. Available online at: <https://fpblog.fountasandpinnell.com/what-is-guided-reading>

⁵ Fountas & Pinnell Classroom. (2019). *Guided Reading*. Available online at: <https://fpblog.fountasandpinnell.com/what-is-guided-reading>

rights, students can have a better understanding of all the aspects of LGBTQ people's lives and reflect on the life perspective of LGBTQ members in their school or community.

Instructions & schedule of the session

- Divide learners into small groups (4 -5 students per group)
- Ask learners to seat at a small round table.
- Explain to all students and learners that they are going to read the same text.
- Explain to all students that after reading the text, they will have a group discussion.
- Clarify that while reading the article, they should try to identify ant LGBTQ-related topics
- Introduce the text and allow them 20 minutes to read the text silently
- Each student reads silently the same text individually.
- Observe learners and students as they read the text and provide support if needed.
- Ask them to engage in a group discussion about the article.
- Ask them to write down two positive and two negative things about the article's story.
- Ask them to write down their opinion about the significance of this article for LGBTQ+ members.
- Ask them to discuss the reflection questions.

Group discussion questions to reflect on:

- What is the biggest hardship Tom Daley had to face during his life?
- What is the most important aspect of his life and why?
- What were the contributing factors to his success in the Olympics?
- What is the significance of openly gay men competing in the Olympic Games?
- Knitting is considered to be an activity/hobby suitable for women. Do you think this is correct? Is this a stereotype? Express your opinion.
- Do you think that same-sex couples should be allowed to have their own children?

Article: *Tom Daley: Olympic diving champion on winning gold, his late father, his son and his love of knitting*

Source: BBC SPORT/Diving

Tom Daley "never thought he'd feel emotion" the way he did when, at last, he won Olympic gold at Tokyo 2020.

Britain's Daley has been a household name since he first stepped on an Olympic diving board, aged 14. The public watched as he won major titles, shared his grief when he lost his father to cancer, and his joy when he married and later became a father.

For many, it was the moment of the Tokyo Games when the 27-year-old finally became an Olympic champion, at his fourth Games, alongside Matty Lee in the synchronised 10m platform event.

Daley on... winning Olympic gold as a gay man

Daley came out as gay in 2013 and married Oscar-winning screenwriter and producer Dustin Lance Black in May 2017.

"I feel incredibly lucky to be from Great Britain and being able to stand on that diving board and not feel afraid of any ramifications, or even fear for my life. But there are still those countries where being gay is punishable by death.

"I feel extremely lucky to be able to dive and not have those ramifications, but I also feel like when I was younger, there weren't many out athletes that were still competing.

"Lots of people would come out after they had retired, so I just hope that winning an Olympic gold medal, winning any Olympic medal, going to the Olympics as a gay person, a member of the LGBT community, that any young kids out there that feel like they are less than... who feel like they are on the outside and feel different, or feel like they're never going to achieve anything just because of who they are... they know that with hard work, you can achieve anything.



"No matter who you are, where you come from, you can be the best in the world.

"There were more [out] LGBT athletes in this past Olympics than in all of the Olympics combined previously. So even just knowing that, people will feel less alone."

Figure 1 Figure 1 An image of an emotional Daley on the Olympic podium after he had received the gold medal. Source: BBC Sports, 2021

Daley on... his son

Tom Daley and his husband Dustin Lance Black welcomed their son Robbie in 2018.



Figure 2 Daley with his husband Black and their son Robbie. Source: BBC Sports, 2021

"In 2018, at the Commonwealth Games, I thought I was down and out in my diving career. I had stress responses in both of my shins, I had a lateral hip tear, I had disc problems in my back and I just thought I wasn't going to be able to get back to even being able to go to these Games.

"And then finally the whole thing shifted when Robbie was born. It all fell into place.

"Robbie is the most important thing in my life and when you have that kind of perspective, when you go to training, you can enjoy it for what it is. You know you're going to go home and being a parent is number one. It shifted the way I thought about it".

Feeling that he had a family to go to, regardless of whether he would win or not, gave Daley the confidence and strength to deal with the pressure of competing in the Olympic Games.

Daley on... knitting

"My knitting has become a lot of my mindfulness, I actually only started because I'm terrible at sitting still. My coach is always like: 'You need to rest.' But if there is a cupboard that needs sorting out, I'm going to sort out the cupboard.

"It was actually Lance who said that on set, people will knit squares just to pass the time and I was like: OK, I'll try that. So I started trying it, and fell in love with it and here we are.

"When I say I'm obsessed with knitting, I was knitting on the way, on the bus to the pool, on the bus home from the pool, in the stands, whenever I had a spare moment.



Figure 3 Daley proudly showing a knitted jacket he knitted for the Tokyo Olympic Games 2020. Source: BBC Sports, 2021

"While the other boys in our apartment were playing video games, I would just sit and knit. I'd wake up and if I had time to sit and knit, I would just continually knit.

"In the Olympic village, you can find yourself over-thinking so many things. This is like my form of escapism to get away, pass the time and not have to think about diving".

The full article is available here: <https://www.bbc.com/sport/diving/58218136>

Debriefing

After the completion of the group discussions, the educator can invite learners to have an open discussion, covering the main points of the article. The educator must emphasize that same-sex couples have the same rights and responsibilities as heterosexual couples. LGBTQ members are entitled to have a balanced and happy life and be respected members of society. The educator can also highlight the importance and significance of Pride Month which aims to break down stereotypes and prejudices regarding the LGBTQ community.

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of LGBTQ people's lives
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals
- Reflect on LGBTQ people's rights in their family, educational settings or community
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals)
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions from their classmates
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people
- Reflect on the difficulties LGBTQ people face in their community and how stereotypes maintain the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ individuals

Guided Reading Activity 2: Reading a press article

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Critically analyze a text
- Recognize the LGBTQ topics incorporated in an article
- Identify stereotypes, social patterns that should be altered
- Identify ways to make society more inclusive and open

Time

45 minutes

Materials Needed

A4 paper, sticky notes, whiteboard, video projector

Methodology and Techniques

The primary methodological approach employed in this session is guided reading. Guided reading is a small-group instructional framework in which an educator facilitates the learning of each student who works both independently and collaboratively (during group discussions) to analyze a text. Within the guided reading context, students engage in individual reading of a text carefully chosen by the educator to match their instructional reading level. The educator should provide teaching

across the lesson to support students “in building a network of strategic actions for processing increasingly challenging texts”⁶.

Guided Reading Main Aspects⁷:

- Small-Group Instruction
- Children read an educator-selected text in a small group.
- The teacher provides specialised teaching and support for reading challenging texts
- Students should read the whole text
- Teaching is responsive to individual student strengths and needs

The first guided reading session focuses on studying and analyzing a press article related to LGBTQ topics. Through independent reading, students use critical thinking to analyze and deconstruct the main messages of the article and reflect on LGBTQ topics (same-sex marriage, gay couples having a child, acknowledgement of an openly gay man in the Olympics). Through the discussion on gay rights, students can have a better understanding of all the aspects of LGBTQ people’s lives and reflect on the life perspective of LGBTQ members in their school or community.

Article: *Royal Mail marks 50 years of UK Pride with a colorful set of stamps*

Source: Jamie Grierson, The Guardian, published on 23rd June 2022

Royal Mail pays homage to 50 years of UK Pride celebrating the struggles of the LGBTQ UK community for recognition.



Figure 4 Source: The Guardian, 2022

On 1 July 1972, a crowd of people gathered in London’s Trafalgar Square and marched to Hyde Park chanting “Gay is fun! Gay is proud! Gay is beautiful!”.

It was not the first march for LGBTQ+ rights in the UK, as similar protests had taken place in Highbury Fields, Islington, in 1970 and Trafalgar Square in 1971. But it was the first rally in the UK with the name “Gay Pride”, inspired by Pride events in the US.

⁶ Fountas & Pinnell Classroom. (2019). *Guided Reading*. Available online at: <https://fpblog.fountasandpinnell.com/what-is-guided-reading>

⁷ Fountas & Pinnell Classroom. (2019). *Guided Reading*. Available online at: <https://fpblog.fountasandpinnell.com/what-is-guided-reading>

Fifty years on, Royal Mail is commemorating the landmark event with a set of eight illustrated stamps, art-directed by NB Studio and illustrated by the award-winning artist Sofie Birkin, whose work has featured in campaigns for brands such as Nike and Apple.

The stamps carry vibrantly colored illustrations of typical scenes at Pride events, which are now an annual fixture at cities across the world. One stamp depicts a banner reading “love always wins”.

One of the demands of the first Pride rally in the UK was greater legal equality for gay people. Homosexuality was partially decriminalized in England and Wales in 1967 yet police arrests of gay and bisexual men remained common in the years following.

However, a climate of homophobia only increased in the 1980s as the Aids epidemic led to a rise in attacks on LGBTQ+ people. The health crisis sparked new Pride events such as Manchester Pride, which began as an Aids fundraiser.

Throughout the 1990s, Pride spread across the UK. Pride Scotia launched in Scotland, with annual

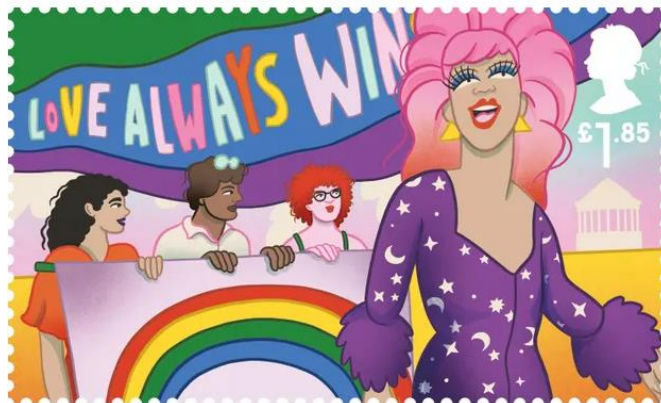


Figure 5 Source: *The Guardian*, 2022

marches alternating between Edinburgh and Glasgow, and the first Cardiff Pride followed in 1999. In the 2000s, attendance at Pride in London grew alongside increasing support for LGBTQ+ rights, and more events were launched under the Pride banner. By 2015 Pride in London was attracting 1 million people, and it continued to grow until the Covid pandemic forced cancellations in 2020 and 2021.

David Gold, the director of external affairs and policy at Royal Mail, said: “The vibrant,

colorful Pride events that take place in towns and cities across the UK today trace their origins to a small number of people who marched through central London half a century ago to raise awareness of discrimination and inequality.”

Instructions & schedule of the session

- Divide learners into small groups (4 -5 students per group).
- Ask learners and students to seat at a small round table.
- Explain to all learners that they are going to read the same text.
- Explain to all learners that after reading the text, they will have a group discussion.
- Clarify that while reading the article they should identify LGBTQ issues.
- Introduce the text and allow them 20 minutes to read the text silently.
- Each student reads silently the same text individually.
- Observe learners as they read the text and provide support if needed.
- Ask them to engage in a group discussion about the article.
- Ask them to write down two positive and two negative things about the article’s story.
- Ask them to write down their opinion about the significance of this article for LGBTQ+ members.
- Ask them to discuss the reflection questions.

Group discussion questions to reflect on:

- What is the significance of the commemoration of Gay Pride by Royal Mail? What does it mean to the LGBTQ community?
- What do the stamps represent for the LGBTQ community?
- Do you think that Gay Prides are successful in promoting LGBTQ rights? Do you think that the LGBTQ gains more acceptance through these actions?
- What could be done by the government authorities or other public authorities to support the LGBTQ community and tackle inequality and discrimination towards members of this community?

Debriefing

After the completion of the group discussions, the educator can invite students to have an open discussion, covering the main points of the article. The educator must emphasize that same-sex couples have the same rights and responsibilities as heterosexual couples. LGBTQ members are entitled to have a balanced and happy life and be respected members of society. The educator can also highlight the importance and significance of Pride Month which aims to break down stereotypes and prejudices regarding the LGBTQ community.

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of LGBTQ people's lives
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals
- Reflect on LGBTQ people's rights in their family, school or community
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals)
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions from their classmates
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people
- Reflect on the difficulties LGBTQ people face in their community and how stereotypes maintain the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ individuals

Guided Reading Activity 3: Reading two interrelated press articles

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Critically analyze a text
- Recognize the LGBTQ topics incorporated in an article
- Identify stereotypes, social patterns that should be altered
- Identify ways to make society more inclusive and open

Time

45 minutes

Materials Needed

A4 paper, sticky notes, whiteboard, video projector

Methodology and Techniques

The primary methodological approach employed in this session is guided reading. Guided reading is a small-group instructional framework in which an educator facilitates the learning of each student who works both independently and collaboratively (during group discussions) to analyze a text. Within the guided reading context, students engage in individual reading of a text carefully chosen by the educator to match their instructional reading level. The educator should provide teaching across the lesson to support students “in building a network of strategic actions for processing increasingly challenging texts”⁸.

Guided Reading Main Aspects⁹:

- Small-Group Instruction
- Learners read an educator-selected text in a small group.
- The educator provides specialized teaching and support for reading challenging texts
- Students should read the whole text
- Teaching is responsive to individual student strengths and needs

The third guided reading session focuses on studying and analyzing a press article related to the status of LGBTQ rights in the European Union. Through independent reading, learners use critical thinking to analyze and deconstruct the main messages of the article and reflect on LGBTQ topics). Through the discussion on the statuses of LGBTQ rights around Europe, students can have a better understanding of all the aspects of LGBTQ people’s lives and reflect on the life perspective of LGBTQ members in their school or community.

⁸ Fountas & Pinnell Classroom. (2019). *Guided Reading*. Available online at: <https://fpblog.fountasandpinnell.com/what-is-guided-reading>

⁹ Fountas & Pinnell Classroom. (2019). *Guided Reading*. Available online at: <https://fpblog.fountasandpinnell.com/what-is-guided-reading>

Article: High levels of discrimination against LGBTI people in EU, survey finds

Source: Euronews, published on 17th May, 2020

Full article: <https://www.euronews.com/2020/05/17/high-levels-of-discrimination-against-lgbti-people-in-eu-survey-finds>

Fear, violence and discrimination remain high among lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people living in Europe, a recent survey found.

The EU agency for Fundamental Rights surveyed nearly 140,000 respondents in 2019 and found that one in five LGBTI respondents felt discriminated against at work and more than one in three felt "discriminated against when going out to eat, drink or being social."

"Despite the important steps forward regarding the equality of LGBTI+ people in the EU in the last years, LGBTI+ people still report high levels of discrimination," said European Commissioner Helena Dalli in a statement released earlier this week.

The survey comes the same week as the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

The international day, marked annually on May 17th, commemorates the day the World Health Organization declassified homosexuality as a mental disorder in 1990.

On Saturday night, the European Commission's building in Brussels displayed the pride flag to recognize the day.

But many people in Europe who identify as LGBTI continue to feel discriminated again.

The FRA survey, entitled 'A long way to go for LGBTI equality', found that six in 10 respondents said they avoid holding hands with partners in public.

One in five trans and intersex people were physically or sexually attacked, the survey found, which was double that of other LGBTI groups.

Unequal rights in the European Union

There are still several EU countries that do not recognize gay marriage or civil unions including Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Slovakia and Poland.

Hungary is set to vote on a bill this week, called Section 33, which would require recording an individual's sex by birth in a registry.

Many human rights organizations have started a campaign #Drop33 to encourage Hungary to not vote on the law that would make it impossible for transgender people to obtain recognition for their gender.

"Mr Orban plans to eradicate legal recognition for #trans people. This would be both a violation of human rights & denial of European values! Show your solidarity with #LGBT people," tweeted Cécile Coudriou, the president of Amnesty International France.

In several European countries, hashtags such as #homophobia, #May 17 and #IDAHOTB were trending on Sunday.



Figure 6 The building of the European Commission lit up with the Rainbow flag, supporting the LGBTQ community. Source: Euronews, 2020

"Too many LGBTI people continue to live in the shadows, afraid of being ridiculed, discriminated or even attacked. Even though some countries have advanced LGBTI equality, our survey findings show that overall, there has been too little real progress, leaving many LGBTI people vulnerable," said Michael O'Flaherty, the head of the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency.

The rights agency has recommended to countries to create a culture of zero tolerance for violence towards the LGBTI community and to help authorities promote respect "in places like schools, offices, and in public spaces" so people do not need to hide.

Article: LGBTQ couple's stateless baby should be given birth certificate, rules court

Source: Euronews, published on the 17th May, 2020

LGBTQ couple's stateless baby should be given birth certificate, rules court

The stateless baby of a married LGBT+ couple should be issued with a birth certificate, a court in Bulgaria has ruled.

Authorities in Sofia had refused to acknowledge the marriage of the child's two mothers, Kalina Ivanova from Bulgaria and Jane Jones from Gibraltar.

Bulgarian law currently states that any child born to a Bulgarian parent has Bulgarian citizenship, but the country does not recognize same-sex unions.

The baby -- named Sara -- was born in Spain in 2019 but was unable to obtain nationality because neither of her parents was Spanish. She was also unable to claim British citizenship because her mother from Gibraltar was not born in the UK itself.

But last year, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that Bulgaria had violated the girl's fundamental rights.

"Member States must recognize the bond of filiation" between a newborn child and its two mothers and "respect ... the freedom of movement and residence of citizens of the European Union", EU judges said.

Municipal authorities in Sofia have now been ordered to issue the girl a birth certificate.

"Bulgaria cannot refuse to recognize that Sara is descended from both her parents on the grounds that the national legislation does not provide for the institution of same-sex marriage," the Sofia court said.

The mothers' lawyer Denitsa Lyubimov has hailed the decision as a landmark for the LGBT+ community.

"After years of tireless work, we have won a step in the fight for equality," she said in a statement.

The couple meanwhile said they were "extremely happy" that their baby would be finally able to leave Spain.

Instructions & schedule of the session

- Divide learners into small groups (4 -5 students per group).
- Ask learners to seat at a small round table.
- Explain to all learners that they are going to read the same text.
- Explain to all learners and students that after reading the text, they will have a group discussion.
- Clarify that while reading the article they should identify LGBTQ issues.
- Introduce the text and allow them 20 minutes to read the text silently.
- Each student reads silently the same text individually.
- Observe learners as they read the text and provide support if needed.
- Ask them to engage in a group discussion about the article.
- Ask them to write down two positive and two negative things about the article's story.
- Ask them to write down their opinion about the significance of this article for LGBTQ+ members.
- Ask them to discuss the reflection questions.

Group discussion questions to reflect on (Article 1):

- Why do you think it is important to recognise gay marriage or civil unions for LGBTQ members?
- Do you believe that the EU is taking all the necessary measures to protect the rights of LGBTQ members?
- What should the EU do more to protect LGBTQ rights?
- Do you think that transgender people should be allowed to obtain recognition for their gender?
- If one of your friends or classmates was afraid of being ridiculed or discriminated because of his/her sexuality, what would you do?

Group discussion questions to reflect on (Article 2):

- Do you think that the Bulgarian court's refusal to recognize the marriage of the two mothers is wrong? If so, why?
- Is the fact that the child was not given Bulgarian citizenship a violation of human rights?
- How important is the involvement of the EU Court of Justice in this case? Does it make a difference?
- If one of your classmates or any close relative was a same-sex couple's child, how would you treat them?

Debriefing

After the completion of the group discussions, the educators can invite learners to have an open discussion, covering the main points of the two articles. The educator must emphasize that same-sex couples have the same rights and responsibilities as heterosexual couples. LGBTQ members are entitled to have a balanced and happy life and be respected members of society. The educator should also clarify that children who have two fathers or two mothers are no different than children who have heterosexual parents. Everyone is equal in any social and educational context and should be treated fairly and respectfully. Moreover, the educator must emphasize the essential role of the EU Institutions in battling discrimination and inequality toward LGBTQ individuals and in protecting EU citizens' rights against discriminating national law.

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the life of LGBTQ individuals
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals
- Realize the important role of the EU in battling discrimination and racism towards the LGBTQ community.
- Reflect on LGBTQ people's rights in their family, school or community
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals)
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions from their classmates
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people
- Reflect on the difficulties LGBTQ people face in their community and how stereotypes maintain the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ individuals

Writing, storytelling and autobiography activities

The LGBTQ community is rich with compelling and inspirational narratives that recount the challenges of growing up in a society marked by oppression. Members of the LGBTQ community have faced the struggle of accepting and embracing their true identities while concealing them, fearing ridicule or discrimination within the prevailing heterosexual culture. Counter-storytelling, a valuable method employed in educational settings, serves to challenge social stereotypes and prejudices. It involves "telling the stories of those whose experiences are often overlooked, including people of color, those living in poverty, and members of the LGBTQ community." Counter-stories aim to offer a fresh perspective on socially accepted norms or myths, particularly those held by the majority. They present a viewpoint that not only helps us comprehend the experiences of others but also invites the reader into a new and unfamiliar world. Counter-storytelling is particularly advantageous for groups that have been marginalized or oppressed, extending beyond the LGBTQ community to encompass individuals of diverse colors, ethnicities, religions, or those with disabilities.

By telling and hearing counter-stories, members of marginalized groups:

- Realize that they are not alone and that others have experienced or still experience the same difficulties
- Feel relieved and healed from recounting their own story of oppression and victimization
- Stop blaming themselves for their position and their condition
- Develop more counter-stories to challenge the dominant story

Through counter-storytelling, even individuals belonging to the dominant culture (heterosexuals, the affluent, white straight individuals, those without disabilities) can derive value. Counter-stories have the potential to assist them in transcending "ethnocentrism and the unexamined conviction that their perspective is the only one—that the prevailing state of the world is inevitable, natural, just, and superior."¹⁰

Counter-storytelling can prove to be a useful tool that gives voice to people whose voices are not heard, whose lives are underrepresented or misrepresented (especially in the LGBTQ community) in the mainstream culture. Moreover, it presents different sides of the concerning issue, providing a space for affirmation and validation. Concerning identity and ethnic issues, it presents the complexity of the formation of racial and ethnic identity. More importantly, counter-storytelling gives the opportunity to groups of people that have been traditionally been marginalized and oppressed to show to non-marginalized people the inequalities they face on a daily basis.

This section illustrated the coming-out stories of several LGBTQ people who struggled to accept themselves first and then seek to be recognized by their family, friends and the society.

¹⁰ Hughes-Hassell, S. (2013). Multicultural Young Adult Literature as a Form of Counter-Storytelling. *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, vol. 83 (3), 212-228.

Creative Writing / Storytelling Activity

1. Write an “I am from” poem

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Draft a poem
- Critically analyze a poem and its meanings
- Present their identity (sexual, racial, ethnic) through a creative writing activity, a poem
- Improve their creativity and critical thinking
- Realize that one’s personality is complex, and multi-faceted including many different elements
- Appreciate the different aspects of one’s personality (LGBTQ, racial or ethnic elements, disabilities)
- Respect their classmates’ personalities and aspects of identity

Time

- 15 minutes: reading the poem
- 15 minutes: poem’s analysis, deconstruction of the main ideas
- 45 minutes: drafting a poem

Materials Needed

Notebook, A4 handout with the poem

Preparation

The educator will introduce the poem “I am From” by George Ella Lyon to learners. The educator invites all learners and students to read the poem and reflect on its meanings. The teacher may also present a short bio of the poet. Once the introduction is complete, the educator explains to learners that they will create their own poem about their own identity in the same format Lyon used. Students and learners should use the poem as a source of inspiration and reference. Through the poem, students are expected to present their identity, aspects of their personality as well as aspects of their childhood, upbringing and family culture. The educator should try to explain that it is not expected from them to draft the perfect poem. The goal is for students to express themselves freely and present a true side of their lives and characters. Students should be encouraged to present any aspect of their identity (ethnicity, racial elements, sexual preferences, ethnic background, forms of disability).

George Ella Lyon was born on April 25th 1949 in Harlan, Kentucky in the USA. She is a poet, writer, teacher, storyteller and social activist. She has Appalachian roots (she belongs to an ethnic minority, whose members are descendants of Native Americans who lived in the Appalachian region). She gained global fame through her writing. She published 10 poetry collections, two adult novels and several children’s picture books. Her poem “Where I am From”, written in 1993 has become a classroom classic, art projects across Kentucky and a writing prompt used by teachers around the world.

Instructions & schedule of the session

1. Introduce the poem “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon, 1993.
2. Allow learners 15 minutes to read the poem and reflect on its basic meaning
3. In the form of an open discussion, analyze the basic meaning of the poem (a poem about identity, childhood, pieces from the past that make up one’s identity,)
4. Explain to students that the word identity can be interpreted freely.
5. After, the poem’s analysis, explain that learners and students will draft their own poem, following Lyon’s poem and writing style
6. Clarify that the poem will be in free verse with no set rhyme scheme.
7. Learners are expected to express their thoughts and ideas through creative writing and not to create the perfect poem.
8. Let learners express their ideas on paper and support them individually if it is needed.
9. At the end, invite learners to recite their poems in front of the rest of the classroom.

Where I’m From

By George Ella Lyon, 1993

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening
it tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia bush,
the Dutch elm
whose long gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.

I am from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.
I’m from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons,
from perk up and pipe down.
I’m from He restoreth my soul
with cottonball lamb
and ten verses I can say myself.

I’m from Artemus and Billie’s Branch,

fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
to the auger
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.
Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures.
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments --
snapped before I budded --
leaf-fall from the family tree.

[Analysis of the poem \(supporting material for the educator\)](#)

The poem “Where I’m From” focuses on the writer’s childhood which is full of things of the past. In the process of looking back, the speaker is clarifying her identity as of now. The “I am from” entails that her identity is made up of all these things from her past.

The whole poem feels that it is an answer to the question “Who am I?” The poet takes the reader on a journey through her childhood, through time and into the home she was brought up in.

In the poem, many domestic objects are presented and each one is connected back to the poet. The home and its environs become alive through simple suggestions and memories.

The poet is not only related to her house and the everyday objects she used but also to the surrounding nature. She mentions the forsythia bush and the elm, whose limbs (branches) feel like her own. This is an allegory, meaning that her roots are found in her homeland, and her true DNA is found there.

The second stanza focused on her religious upbringing. The phrase “*He restoreth my soul*” is derived from Psalm 23, from the Old Testament of the Bible. The phrase “*cottonball lamb*” is a reference to Jesus Christ and the influence of religion in her life. The phrase “ten verses I can say myself” denotes that she knew some of the Bible’s verses by heart, meaning that she attended the church regularly or that she had to study the verses herself at home.

Her upbringing must have been modest. This is illustrated through the phrase “pass-it-ons”. It can be assumed that she had to wear clothes from an older member of the family, instead of new ones bought at a store. It could also be assumed that the phrase refers to the secret message whispered quietly in the ear, showing that her family members would keep secrets and avoid sharing them with everyone.

The “know-it-alls” could be people the poet has met in her life that had ego and arrogance thinking that they know everything about life. This phrase has an ironic tone depicting that the writer dislikes people who have such a personality.

There is a sense that while she was growing up, she had to follow rules and not express her real thoughts freely. The phrase “*perk up and pipe down*” could be a reference to the guidance or advice

she received as a child by her parents or teachers. It can be assumed that as a child she had to rely on herself to overcome difficulties by finding her inner strength. Moreover, as a child, she must have been told to keep her thoughts to herself.

The third stanza introduces the reader to the state of Kentucky, to places that the poet is familiar with like Artemus and Billie's Branch. The poet takes the reader on a journey to her homeland which is rural. This stanza illustrates the traumatic experiences she had in her life. The finger that her grandfather lost in an accident with an auger (wood boring drill made of metal) and her father's eye accident depict the difficulties she had to face during her childhood, and the trauma she carries in her heart.

In the final stanza, the poet presents the most intimate childhood memories of her. Under her bed, she finds a box full of pictures from her past. She enjoys being connected to her past memories, that include her ancestors probably. In this part, the poet presents a very vivid imagery of her memories. The last phrase "leaf-fall from the family tree" denotes that she no longer feels part of her family tree, since she is a leaf that fell from it, depicting a disconnection from her 'roots'. It can be assumed that she disappointed her family due to her life choices or that she was not allowed to follow her dreams.

The poem "Where I'm From" is a free verse poem including 29 lines contained within 4 stanzas. There is no set rhyme scheme and the meter is varied. The tone is very personal and intimate since the poet uses the first person depicting that this poem is a journey to her memories and past.

Senses are an essential part of the poet's journey down the memory lane. The poem is full of sensory images that depict that every moment of her life, good or bad, is connected to a sense.

Through this poem, learners can be inspired to express themselves freely. LGBTQ individuals are invited to express their feelings, memories and thoughts about their sexuality and finding their identity while growing up.

Debriefing

After drafting their poems, learners will be asked to present their poems to the rest of the class. The educator should encourage all students, especially students that identify as LGBTQ individuals, to recite their poems. After reciting poems, the teacher should emphasize that every individual may face difficulty, hardships and challenges throughout their lives and people should be empathetic and respectful towards everyone's life journey. Before closing the session, the teacher should emphasize that people who have experienced discrimination in their lives (e.g., ethnic minority members, LGBTQ individuals, disabled people) should be given support and ensure that the future society will hopefully develop as more inclusive, critical and responsive towards any form of identity, background and self-expression.

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the life of LGBTQ individuals
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals
- Realize the important role of the EU in battling discrimination and racism towards the LGBTQ community.
- Reflect on LGBTQ people's rights in their family, school or community
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their peers

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals)
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions from their classmates
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people
- Reflect on the difficulties LGBTQ people face in their community and how stereotypes maintain the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ individuals

2. Switch up a story's POV

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Draft a story
- Recreate a story using a different point of view
- Realize that sexuality does not define one's personality
- Critically analyses the social norms attributed to gender and sexuality
- Present their identity (sexual, racial, ethnic) through a creative writing activity.
- Improve their creativity and critical thinking
- Realize that one's personality is complex, and multi-faceted including many different elements
- Appreciate the different aspects of one's personality (LGBTQ, racial or ethnic elements, disabilities)
- Respect their classmates' personalities and different aspects of identity

Time

60 minutes

Material needed

Notebook, video projector (screening of Superman clips for inspiration)

Preparatory analysis

This creative writing activity focuses on rewriting a scene or chapter of an established book from a different character's point of view. In this exercise, students are expected to change the main storyline or change the main character's characteristics to present a completely different story. This activity will be based on the worldwide famous story of Clark Kent, commonly known as Superman. Superman is a comic superhero that first appeared in *Action Comics* in 1938. He was created by Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster. Superman is a powerful superhero that exhibits the

following superhuman powers: incredible strength, the ability to leap incredible distance and super speed, and invincibility). He is also called the “Man of Steel” that refers to his incredible strength that cannot be bound.

Superman is a character featured in numerous films and TV series. He represents a very masculine, powerful personality and he is regarded as a role model for young boys and men around the world. According to the dominant culture, Superman has the ideal body physique and characteristics for every young man. However, this is the stereotypical representation of Superman. It is regarded that Superman has all the characteristics a man should have to be successful and respected by society.

There are numerous different variations of the typical Superman storyline but for the purpose of this activity, students will be asked to review the plot of the 2013 film *Man of Steel*, in which Superman is the main character, portraying the superhero’s origin story.

Man of Steel Plot

The planet Krypton is destabilized due to the mining of the planet’s core. Before the destruction of the planet, Krypton’s supreme council chief advisor Jor-El infuses the genetics codex into his infant son, Superman, the first naturally born Kryptonian child in centuries. Superman is sent to Earth in a spacecraft by his father who wanted to save his child. The spacecraft lands in Kansas and Superman is adopted by Jonathan and Martha Kent who name him Clark. As he grows older, Clark develops superhuman powers that his father urges him to keep hidden. During a tornado his father gets killed and burdened with guilt over Jonathan’s death, Clark travels the globe seeking a purpose in life.

Lois Lane is a young reporter who is given the assignment of investigating the discovery of a Kryptonian scout ship in the Canadian Arctic. Clark enters this ship disguised as a worker and through the spaceship’s artificial intelligence he finds out that he was sent to Earth by his real father, Jor-El. While following Clark, Lois turns on the ship’s security system by accident. After wearing a uniform with artificial intelligence elements, Clark saves Lois from the ship’s defence system.

After returning to Earth, Lois tries to convince her manager Perry White to publish an article on the incident but he refuses to do so. Following this event, Lois tracks down Clark with the intent of exposing him. However, she changes her mind when she learns about Jonathan Clark’s sacrifice. She decides to keep Clark’s identity safe.

Zod (the film’s villain) and his crew escape the Phantom Zone (a prison-like parallel dimension) where they were imprisoned for treason for their actions against Krypton. Zod decides to turn Earth into a new Krypton using several destructive devices. He manages to capture Clark and Lois and with the help of a scientist he extracts Clark’s genes to create Kryptonian colonists who will build a society of citizens of genetic purity. Clark and Lois manage to escape and they warn the US military of Zod’s plan. This results to a big fight between Clark and Zod’s troops.

When Zod employs a deadly weapon aiming to destroy humanity, Clark (Superman) decides to destroy the weapon, while the US military embarks on a mission to sent Zod’s troops back to Phantom Zone. Following a big battle between Zod and Superman, Superman manages to

kill him saving humanity from extinction. Superman persuades the government to let him act independently with the aim of protecting humanity.

Preparation

For the purpose of this activity, the story will be altered. Superman will be a homosexual man that has all the characteristics of a superhero (strong, masculine, courageous) but he is sexually attracted to men.

Based on the above scenario, students are asked to rewrite the Superman story presenting the life of a homosexual superhero. Superman maintains the same superpowers and characteristics (physical strength, stamina, self-confidence, courage) that are usually attributed to heterosexual men in the new story.

Students will need to retell the story of Superman from a different point of view, presenting the story of a homosexual superhero.

Possible scenarios for the retold story:

The reporter in the new story can be a man, with whom Superman will have an intimate affair or relationship. Exploring the relationship of a heterosexual couple will be beneficial for all students and especially LGBTQ students who may present their thoughts and concerns or experiences through the writing activity.

The aim of this activity is to help students realize that homosexuality does not define one's personality and that all people regardless of their sexuality, can be courageous and maintain masculine or female characteristics. Through this activity, LGBTQ students will feel free to express themselves and reflect on their personality, thoughts and concerns through the depiction of the homosexual superhero.

Instructions & schedule of the session

1. Introduce the official trailer of the film *Man of Steel* (available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6DJcgm3wNY>) or a clip depicting Superman.
2. Ask learners to reflect on it and present the main characteristics of Superman.
3. In the form of an open discussion, analyze Superman's personality.
4. Help learners identify the social norms and characteristics that are attributed to young boys and men, based on Superman's personality
5. Present the Man of Steel plot to students.
6. Allow them 20 minutes to study the plot and identify its main points
7. Ask learners and students to present the story from a different POV, that of a homosexual superhero (30 minutes)
8. Let learners express their ideas on paper and support them individually if it is needed.
9. Ask students to present all aspects of Superman's life (childhood, bullying at school, hardships,
10. At the end, invite students to present their stories to their classmates.
11. At the end of each presentation, analyses the main points and point out that sexuality is not the only defining factor of one's personality.
12. Encourage LGBTQ learners to present their stories and invite others to ask questions.

13. The activity can be completed with an open discussion on socially attributed characteristics to genders, sexuality and heteronormativity.

Debriefing

After drafting their own stories, the learners will be asked to present them to the rest of the class. The teacher should encourage all students, especially students that identify as LGBTQ individuals, to share their versions of the heterosexual Superman. After presenting the stories, the educator should emphasize that sexuality is just one aspect of one's personality and people's ethics should be determined based on their abilities, strengths and character and not on their sexual orientation. Moreover, it should be noted that the characteristics and norms attributed to men and women are socially constructed norms that can be altered or reinterpreted. Every human being must be respected and valued upon their values and not their sexuality. The educator can emphasize that even someone like Superman, must have experienced rejection, bullying or disapproval because of his powers and his sexual orientation. Anti-bullying practices can be presented to students at this point to help them realize the negative impact bullying has on young people.

Before closing the session, the teacher should emphasize that people who have experienced discrimination in their lives (e.g., ethnic minority members, LGBTQ individuals, disabled people) should be given support and ensure that the future generation will be more inclusive.

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the life of LGBTQ individuals.
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals.
- Reflect on LGBTQ people's rights in their family, school or community.
- Deconstruct socially constructed norms related to sexual orientation and gender.
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates.

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals)
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions from their classmates
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people
- Reflect on the difficulties LGBTQ people face in their community and how stereotypes maintain the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ individuals

3. Tell your story

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Draft a story based on their personal experiences.
- Analyze all the aspects of one's life story
- Present their identity (sexual, racial, ethnic) through a creative writing activity
- Improve their creativity and critical thinking
- Realize that one's personality is complex, and multi-faceted including many different elements
- Appreciate the different aspects of one's personality (LGBTQ, racial or ethnic elements, disabilities)
- Respect their classmates' personalities and aspects of identity

Time

15 minutes: reading and studying the coming out stories

15 minutes: analysis of the stories, reflection on one's life, hardships and challenges

45 minutes: discussion on students' personal stories with an emphasis on LGBTQ+ issues

Materials Needed

Notebook, A4 handout with the LGBTQ+ coming out stories

Preparation

This activity focuses on storytelling and autobiographical narration. Through narration, learners will have the opportunity to share their stories, thoughts and concerns and listen to their peers' stories. This activity involves studying the coming out stories of 4 LGBTQ+ individuals covering a wide spectrum of the community (gay, lesbian, transgender and disabled gay). According to IGLYO's¹¹ recent study "Teacher's Guide to Inclusive Education"¹², it is important to discuss and tackle issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression and even if there are no LGBTQ students in a classroom, inclusive education is important in order for students to be open to diversity.

Through the four coming out stories, students will get a deeper understanding of the difficulties, hardships and doubts every LGBTIQ individual goes through until they fully embrace their identity and come out to their families. In fact, students will understand that LGBTIQ+ individuals have their own personal struggle and their ultimate goal in life is to be accepted and loved. This activity contributes to a great extent to creating a safe learning environment and combatting homophobia and transphobia.

According to many studies, homophobia and transphobia in the school environment have a detrimental effect on LGBTQ individuals. Many LGBTIQ+ students encounter discrimination in school on a regular basis. Discrimination includes "negative comments, verbal harassment, cyber-bullying, as

¹¹ IGLYO is the world's largest LGBTIQ Youth and Student organization. The members of the organization include more than 100 organisations in over 40 countries across Europe. The organisation's mission is to advocate for the LGBTIQ youth rights, fight for equality and inclusion and give voice to LGBTIQ+ youth through events and trainings and research or advocacy campaigns. More info at IGLYO's official website: <https://www.iglyo.com/>

¹² IGLYO. (2015). *Teacher's Guide to Inclusive Education*. IGLYO Publications. pp 1-28.

well as physical and psychological abuse and violence”¹³. These occurrences are common and they can lead to a feeling of insecurity at school, reduced school attendance and early school leaving. These students tend to conceal their identity and they have low self-esteem or even depression. Therefore, addressing these issues through interactive sessions can really help students to feel that they belong in an inclusive and open society that supports their healthy upbringing.

After studying the four coming out stories, the teacher can invite students to discuss issues like discrimination, social discrimination, racism and marginalization of certain social groups. It is important for the educator to understand that the stories presented in this section do not refer only to the LGBTQ+ community but to every social group that is discriminated against its members’ sex, race, skin color, sexual orientation or disability.

After discussing issues of discrimination and acceptance, the teacher can ask the students to prepare their own stories presenting their experiences, concerns or fears during their upbringing. For the purpose of this activity, the LGBTQ+ students should be encouraged to share their stories with the rest of the class.

LGBTQ+ individuals’ coming out stories

Harma Hartouni, author

“When I was growing up as an Armenian kid living in Iran, I always knew something was different about me, but I didn't dare say it out loud. I was attracted to other boys. People definitely had their suspicions; I was generally less soccer and more dance. I was teased and bullied throughout my childhood, and I could never let my guard down, even at home. Let's say my ultra-conservative Middle Eastern parents weren't exactly in the running for any PFLAG awards. Iran is not accepting of LGBTQ people, and it's very dangerous to be gay in Iran. But as they say, a mother always knows,



Figure 7 Source: Schumer Lizz, *Coming Out Is a Journey: 20 LGBTQ+ People Share Their Stories*, goodhousekeeping.com, 2021

and mine did; she was just in denial. There was always a giant rainbow-colored elephant in the room. Eventually, after we moved to the U.S., where being gay was safer than in Iran, I realized I didn't have to lie about who I was, so I came out to my mom. After telling her, she locked herself in our apartment and threatened suicide unless I stopped being gay. Later, she tried to enroll me in conversion therapy.

Things came to a head when she called into the most popular Armenian radio show in L.A. asking for advice on having a gay son. Though it was anonymous, she gave so much detail about me; I had been outed to our entire tight-knit Armenian community by morning. Thanks for doing the legwork, Mom! My mom's struggle to accept me was rooted in fear. She feared judgment from our community, but more than anything, she feared for my safety and the challenges I would face as a gay man. I can't blame her. I had the same fears. After all, it took me the first 21 years to accept myself; how could I expect it to be instant for my family? So, my advice to

¹³ IGLYO. (2015). *Teacher’s Guide to Inclusive Education*. IGLYO Publications. pp 1-28.

any parent trying to navigate allyship for their LGBTQ child is this: if you want a glittery gold star, lean into your love, not your fear. I guarantee your kid is scared too¹⁴.

Gabrielle Korn, author of *Everybody (Else) is Perfect*

“There's a big difference between coming out, and coming out to yourself. I came out to myself when I was single-digit aged. But for whatever reason in my brain that was broken from being a queer kid in a straight world, I didn't think I would ever be allowed to integrate that part of myself into the whole. That is, until there was someone who actually liked me back. Up until this point, all my crushes on girls had been deep, dark secrets. Then, when I was between my freshman and sophomore years of college, I roomed with someone who was out and queer and, well, we were girlfriends in just a couple of



weeks. After that, it was easy to tell people I was gay. I think I just felt like I needed proof, which in hindsight is so silly. These days, I still come out all the time, because when you're super-femme presenting, people assume certain things about you. It bothers me less than it used to. There are tons of things we can't tell about each other upon first glance. I'm happy and proud to be able to come out, and once I claimed the word lesbian for myself, I never doubted its validity or importance again¹⁵.

Figure 8 Source: Schumer Lizz, *Coming Out Is a Journey: 20 LGBTQ+ People Share Their Stories*, *goodhousekeeping.com*, 2021

Randi Dee Robertson, pilot

I knew as a preschooler I was somehow different. By nine years old, I was certain that I was a girl. But my family, and the community I was in growing up, was certain I was a boy. Blessed with loving parents, three wonderful siblings, and a caring community, I thrived all while hiding the truth because I knew sharing it would have consequences, I was not ready to confront. By my early 30s, I was happily married with two children and a nephew to raise and well into a career as a United States Air Force officer and pilot. Because of my commitments and love for my family, as well as my career, I stayed deeply closeted to ensure financial stability for my family. I first came out to my spouse in 2006. My spouse confronted me after finding my hidden collection of women's clothing and accessories. I shared details of my journey and we decided to keep it between the two of us until I retired from the Air Force, which was still several years away. After retiring in the spring of 2011, I came out to my counsellor, siblings, parents and children. While this revelation was shocking to everyone, my family reassured me that I would always be accepted and loved.

¹⁴ Schumer, L (2021). *Coming Out Is a Journey: 20 LGBTQ+ People Share Their Stories*. Available at: <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/a36755913/coming-out-stories-lgtbq/>

¹⁵ Schumer, L (2021). *Coming Out Is a Journey: 20 LGBTQ+ People Share Their Stories*. Available at: <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/a36755913/coming-out-stories-lgtbq/>



Figure 9 Source: Schumer Lizz, *Coming Out Is a Journey: 20 LGBTQ+ People Share Their Stories*, *goodhousekeeping.com*, 2021

My mother's response was particularly interesting. She asked me, "Why would you give up your male privilege?" Knowing some of the challenges my mother has encountered as a woman based solely on the basis of her gender, I have come to appreciate that remark, especially having inherited some of those characteristics. Over the next few years, I slowly came out to friends, colleagues, associates and strangers. Each time I met someone new and I get to know them, I have to decide if they are worthy of knowing the truth. If I decide they are, I come out to them as well. Now, at age 58, I actively advocate for policies, and practices that create a more welcoming environment for LGBTQI+, women, and other underrepresented groups. My personal experience can prove that businesses, organizations, communities, and our nation can be stronger and better when we create inclusive spaces so each person can be the best of who they are.

Andrew Gurza, TV Presenter



Figure 10 Source: Schumer Lizz, *Coming Out Is a Journey: 20 LGBTQ+ People Share Their Stories*, *goodhousekeeping.com*, 2021

"For me, the most impactful experience has been all the times that I have had to come out as disabled in queer spaces. All the times that I have had to show queer non-disabled people that we exist, that disabled queer people matter, are sexy and worthy of attention. I remember a time when I wanted to go to this big gay Halloween party. I called the bar, knowing they were inaccessible, and asked if I could get in with my chair. When I explained the dimensions, the person on the phone said, "Ooooooh, your chair won't fit. Can't you just get another one?" That's like asking me to get other legs. Those times are most impactful for me as a queer person"¹⁶.

¹⁶ Schumer, L (2021). *Coming Out Is a Journey: 20 LGBTQ+ People Share Their Stories*. Available at: <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/a36755913/coming-out-stories-lgtbq/>

Instructions & schedule of the session

1. Introduce the activity to the class.
2. Explain to learners the aim of the activity.
3. In the form of an open discussion, discuss the importance of listening to the personal stories of LGBTIQ+ individuals.
4. Allow learners and students 20 minutes to read the stories individually.
5. Ask learners to form groups (4-5 persons) and discuss the concerning issues of the stories (discrimination, hardships, rejection, personal struggle, feelings before and after coming out).
6. Allow learners 30 minutes to draft their own personal stories.
7. Explain to them that their stories should include personal experiences related to difficulties while growing up, discrimination, racism and personal struggles.
8. Ask learners to read their story in front of their classmates.
9. After the completion of this part of the activity, have an open discussion to talk about how some people are targeted or attacked because their characteristics are not considered 'normal'.
10. Ask the following questions in relation to the 4 coming out stories:
 - Why was X discriminated or targeted?
 - How did the situation make X feel?
 - How would you feel if you were in X's position? What would you do?
11. In relation to the stories shared by learners, ask the following questions:
 - Why people are discriminated against their race, skin color, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation?
 - Why are people attacked?
 - Could it be because others feel threatened by their difference?
 - How would you feel if you were discriminated?

Debriefing

The aim of the open discussion is to help students express their thoughts and feelings about their upbringing and to realise that LGBTIQ+ individuals have been through similar difficulties and challenges as 'normal' people. The teacher should emphasize that no one should be judged based on their race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. School, as an institution that contributes to the formation of one's character, should only promote love, solidarity, acceptance and openness. The discussion on the coming out stories can include other related issues like bullying and gender-based discrimination.

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the life of LGBTQ individuals.
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals.
- Reflect on LGBTQ people's rights in their family, school or community.
- Deconstruct socially constructed norms related to sexual orientation and gender.
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates.

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals)
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions from their classmates
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people
- Reflect on the difficulties LGBTQ people face in their community and how stereotypes maintain the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ individuals

Role Play Activities

Learning through experience

Understanding the issues related to the LGBTQ+ community and the notions of sexual orientation and gender identity is challenging for students. The learning process of gender and sex-related issues can be facilitated and supported through an active learning method, role-playing. These issues are usually examined at a distance and from a theoretical point of view. This is where role play comes into its own. Role-playing can provide useful simulations of human experiences that might otherwise have remained at an abstract level for students. It is a process of enactment based on theories derived from role-taking in everyday life¹⁷.

Experiencing a simulation of a real-life situation can be more enlightening than examining or analyzing theoretically a certain situation. When players have been assigned certain roles, they are placed into “simulated situations which reveal, as closely as possible, the beliefs, attitudes and behavior of those who hold these roles in real life”¹⁸. An important element of the successful execution of a role play is for the players to have the right perception of how people do or should behave within certain social contexts. The scenario is a specific context in which “the selection of roles, description of events and role relationships focus deliberately on predetermined human dilemmas”¹⁹. The participants in such activities will put their selves in other people’s shoes, experiencing what it is like to be in a certain position in society or to face a challenging problem. Role players then seek to resolve a problem.

The emphasis of role-playing games is not so much on winning but on how the role players as learners engage in the decision-making process. In fact, role-play engages students in a more ‘direct, this is happening to me now’ way.

The value of role-play activities

Through role-playing and active learning people can:

- Express their personal and shared views regarding LGBTQ+ issues
- Explicitly present their beliefs and attitudes on LGBTQ-related issues, for which they can be scrutinized
- Test out their theories in practice
- Argue against their previous/personal position by taking a role which represents opposing or alternative viewpoints
- Interact with their classmates in a way that helps them develop critical thinking
- Critically reflect on their experience

Role-playing: enhancing team-building

Role-playing can help educators and learners form stronger relations with one another, through discussions that take the form of informal conversations, group discussions, public meetings, formal debates, international forums and so on. “Learners, in and out of role, create the fiction and share

¹⁷ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15.

¹⁸ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15.

¹⁹ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15.

the on-going content and negotiation of issues in a realistic fashion”²⁰. Through role-playing, all people involved develop a sense of empathetic understanding towards marginalized people. This is a very important aspect of this activity. “It is assumed that by playing the role of someone else, possibly with different viewpoints from their own, students may have more respect for the stances of others”²¹. Being part of a scenario makes students to employ convincing arguments to defend their strand. Therefore, “the more kinds of roles students adopt in role play, the more empathetic they are likely to be towards the imagined predicaments of other players and, ultimately, to people in real life”²².

Role-playing activity 1: Having a homosexual roommate

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Express themselves through a simulated game
- Examine the aspects of one’s life that are different than theirs
- Have a clear perception of how people behave within certain social contexts
- Improve their creativity and critical thinking
- Realize that one’s personality is complex and multi-faceted
- Present their beliefs and attitudes on LGBTIQ-related issues
- Appreciate the different aspects of one’s personality (LGBTQ, racial or ethnic elements, disabilities)
- Become more empathetic towards LGBTIQ+ individuals

Time

50 – 60 minutes

20 minutes: reading the scenarios

10 minutes: analysis of the LGBTIQ issues

15 minutes: execution of the scenario

15 minutes: open discussion, feedback

Materials Needed

Notebook

Preparation

The role-playing activity aims to help learners have the right perception on how people behave within certain social contexts. Through a simulated social context, in which learners themselves will be the actors determining the scenario’s course of action, the learning process is facilitated helping them to have a deeper understanding of the issues related to the LGBTIQ+ individuals. The scenario presents specific role relationships and predetermined human dilemmas but it is up to students and learners to “consider what it is like to take on someone else’s role in society or to face a challenging problem

²⁰ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15.

²¹ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15.

²² Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15.

within some selected situation”²³. The learners are expected to identify the real problems and relevant issues presented in the scenarios and identify ways to resolve or alleviate a problem.

The educator should present the scenario to learners, giving them some guidance on how to execute their roles. Learners should be given 15 minutes to identify the ‘real’ problems and issues presented in the scenario. The educator can guide the students by asking them certain questions (presented in the following section), giving the moral and ethical aspects of the issues raised. The learners should be encouraged to play their role freely even if they have predispositions or stereotypical views on the issues related to the LGBTIQ+ community. The educator or trainer should also encourage them to ask their own questions. “Questions help determine real issues and, in turn, give rise to other questions, thus representing the real world of problem-solving”²⁴. A set of questions that learners can ask themselves during analyzing their part in the scenario are presented below.

The trainer should emphasize that students are free to express any thoughts and feelings about their role and the relationship between the characters. However, while developing their role, participants should have in mind that they must deal with any LGBTIQ-related issue with respect, empathy and understanding. Moreover, in role-playing activities, students may have a sense of uncertainty dealing with such delicate issues but they should feel free to play their part as they deem most appropriate. However, they should be advised to deal with the scenario in a problematical manner, critically analyzing the issues raised with openness.

Scenario

Paul is an undergraduate student studying law. He shares an apartment with George, an undergraduate student studying Politics. They are both 21 years old. This is their second year at the university. They met at a student party last year and since then they have become good friends. For their second year, they decided to live together in a 2-bedroom apartment. A few weeks after the beginning of the academic year, George tells Paul that he is homosexual. Paul felt shocked and confused. After the first shock, Paul thought that this would not affect or change their relationship. However, now George has been having his partner stay over on the weekends, spending time in the living room and the kitchen. Paul now feels like their relationship has changed and he doesn't understand why his roommate has to be so open about his sexuality. He feels uncomfortable and he locks himself in the bathroom every time he changes his clothes so that George won't hit on him. He is even considering leaving the apartment. He has a conversation about this situation, his feelings and concerns with Mr Andrew, the university psychologist.

Roles to be taken on: Paul, George, psychologist

In order to identify real problems, the educator can ask the following questions to help students get into the role:

- From which standpoints are we looking at this issue?
- How might we contest the issue using role play?
- What would be this role holder's beliefs and perceptions?
- How can the interests of LGBTIQ+ individuals be investigated through role play in relation to the built and physical environment?

²³ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15.

²⁴ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15

Questions for learners:

- What are my thoughts and feelings about the issues?
- Why Paul is intimidated by George's revelation?
- What is the main reason for Paul's reaction to George's sex life?
- Should Paul react in a negative or positive way towards George?
- What could help Paul realize that George has the right to live his sexual life openly?
- In case Paul expresses his dissatisfaction or disapproval for his roommate's preferences, what should George do?

Instructions & schedule of the session

1. Introduce the role-playing activity.
2. Explain the main aims of the activity.
3. Discuss with learners the main LGBTIQ-related issues.
4. Allow learners time to identify the real problems raised through the scenario.
5. Ask students to express their thoughts freely without hesitation or fear.
6. Ask students to work in groups for the execution of the scenario.
7. When the role-playing activity is completed, invite students to have an open discussion on the issues related to the scenario.
8. Emphasize that in any real-life scenario, LGBTIQ+ individuals should be treated with respect and empathy.

Debriefing

The aim of the open discussion is to help learners express their thoughts and feelings on having LGBTIQ+ individuals as roommates or classmates. Through the discussion, any misconceptions or stereotypical ideas about LGBTIQ+ individuals should be clarified. The trainer should emphasize that LGBTIQ+ individuals have the right to live their lives openly and freely, without discrimination. LGBTIQ+ individuals seek to find love and be part of a healthy relationship that is based on mutual trust, love and understanding. It should be noted that if someone does not feel comfortable sharing an apartment with an LGBTIQ+ individual, has every right to do so. However, they are not in any position to criticize or tell an LGBTIQ+ individual what they ought to do. Moreover, the teacher should note that school is an institution that aims to educate people and help everyone feel included and accepted.

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the life of LGBTQ individuals.
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals.
- Reflect on LGBTQ people's rights in their family, school or community.
- Deconstruct socially constructed norms related to sexual orientation and gender (e.g., Homosexual men and women cannot have a normal healthy relationship)
- Reconsider biased perceptions and conduct, including homophobic and transphobic language
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates.

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals).
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions from their classmates.
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people.
- Reflect on the difficulties LGBTQ people face in their community and how stereotypes maintain the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ individuals.
- Develop a more inclusive and open attitude towards people who faced discrimination and marginalization (e.g., LGBTIQ+ individuals, disabled people, people of different skin tone, religion or race).

Role-playing activity 2: Family dynamics

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Express themselves through a simulated game
- Examine the aspects of one's life that are different from theirs
- Have a clear perception of how people behave within certain social contexts
- Improve their creativity and critical thinking
- Realize that one's personality is complex and multi-faceted
- Present their beliefs and attitudes on LGBTIQ-related issues
- Appreciate the different aspects of one's personality (LGBTQ, racial or ethnic elements, disabilities)
- Become more empathetic towards LGBTIQ+ individuals

Time

50 – 60 minutes

20 minutes: reading the scenario

10 minutes: analysis of the LGBTIQ issues

15 minutes: execution of the scenario

15 minutes: open discussion, feedback

Materials Needed

Notebook

Preparation

The role-playing activity aims to help learners have the right perception on how people behave within certain social contexts. Through a simulated social context, in which learners themselves will be the actors determining the scenario's course of action, the learning process is facilitated helping them to have a deeper understanding of the issues related to the LGBTIQ+ individuals. The scenario presents specific role relationships and predetermined human dilemmas but it is up to learners to "consider what it is like to take on someone else's role in society or to face a challenging problem within some selected situation"²⁵. The learners are expected to identify the real problems and relevant issues presented in the scenarios and identify ways to resolve or alleviate a problem.

The educator or trainer should present the scenario to the learners giving them some guidance on how to execute their roles. Learners should be given 15 minutes to identify the 'real' problems and issues presented in the scenario. The educator can guide the students by asking them certain questions (presented in the following section), giving the moral and ethical aspects of the issues raised. The learners should be encouraged to play their role freely even if they have predispositions or stereotypical views on the issues related to the LGBTIQ+ community. The trainer should also encourage them to ask their own questions. "Questions help determine real issues and, in turn, give rise to other questions, thus representing the real world of problem-solving"²⁶. A set of questions that learners can ask themselves during analyzing their part in the scenario are presented below.

The educator should emphasize that learners are free to express any thoughts and feelings about their role and the relationship between the role-playing characters. However, while developing their role, students should have in mind that they must deal with any LGBTIQ-related issue with respect, empathy and understanding. Moreover, in role-playing activities, students may have a sense of uncertainty dealing with such delicate issues but they should feel free to play their part as they deem most appropriate. However, they should be advised to deal with the scenario in a problematical manner, critically analyzing the issues raised with openness.

Scenario

John is a 20-year-old young man living with his parents and his sister, Monica. Monica is three years older than him and she studies at the university. She has a boyfriend that spends some nights at their home. John is a homosexual but he has not told his sister yet. He has only spoken to his parents who are supportive but they don't feel comfortable talking to their son about his personal life. John has a boyfriend but he does not want to invite him home. One night, Monica's boyfriend is in the kitchen talking with Monica. John overheard Mark saying: "I met a guy in my lecture today and he was trying to flirt with me. I got so angry and told him to stay away from me". Monica responded, saying: "Come on John! You should not have talked to him like that. He was just trying to flirt with you. You could politely tell him that you are not interested". Mark said: "Well, I got shocked and I don't want him to hit on me ever again. That's why I tried to be firm with him. I don't want anyone to think that I am gay". John felt so bad and uncomfortable that he rushed into his room, holding back his tears.

Roles to be taken on: John, Monica, Mark (Monica's partner)

²⁵ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15.

²⁶ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15

In order to identify real problems, the educator can ask the following questions to help students get into the role:

- From which standpoints are we looking at the relationship between John and his sister, Monica and Mark or John and his parents?
- What would be Mark's beliefs and perceptions?
- What would be Monica's beliefs and perceptions?
- How can the interests of LGBTIQ+ individuals be investigated through role play in relation to the built and physical environment?

Questions for learners:

- What are my thoughts and feelings about John's situation?
- Is John feeling uncomfortable talking to his sister about his sexuality because he is afraid of her reaction or her boyfriend's reaction?
- What could help Mark realize that LGBTIQ individuals should be free to flirt with anyone without being harassed or discriminated for their actions?
- How should Monica react if her brother tells her about his sexual orientation?
- How should John's parents react if their son is mocked by Monica and Mark?
- How should Monica react if her boyfriend tries to mock John for his sexuality?

Instructions & schedule of the session

1. Introduce the role-playing activity.
2. Explain the main aims of the activity.
3. Discuss with learners the main LGBTIQ-related issues related to the scenario.
4. Allow students time to identify the real problems raised through the scenario.
5. Ask learners to express their thoughts freely without hesitation or fear.
6. Ask learners to work in groups for the execution of the scenario.
7. When the role-playing activity is completed, invite students to have an open discussion on the challenges and difficulties LGBTIQ+ individuals face on a personal and social level.
8. Emphasize that in any real-life scenario, LGBTIQ+ individuals should be treated with respect and empathy.

Debriefing

The aim of the open discussion is to help learners express their thoughts and feelings on having LGBTIQ+ individuals as roommates or classmates. Through the discussion, any misconceptions or stereotypical ideas about LGBTIQ+ individuals should be clarified. The educator should emphasize that LGBTIQ+ individuals have the right to live their lives openly and freely, without discrimination. LGBTIQ+ individuals seek to find love and be part of a healthy relationship that is based on mutual trust, love and understanding. This scenario highlights the difficulties and challenges an LGBTIQ+ individual has to deal with within his/her family. Acceptance and understanding what LGBTIQ+ people seek from their families.

Moreover, the scenario deals with the issue of family acceptance or rejection of LGBTIQ+ youth. According to surveys²⁷, LGBTIQ+ individuals who face prejudice and discrimination from their parents are more likely to develop stress. Moreover, the Institute of Medicine in U.S argues that “LGBTIQ+ youth are at elevated risk for poor mental and physical health compared to heterosexual peers”²⁸. The stress caused by parental rejection is experienced at the hands of LGBTIQ+ people as victimization. It can also be internalized because LGBTIQ+ individuals victimize themselves and, in some cases, “they possess negative attitudes towards homosexuality, an attitude known as internalized homonegativity or homophobia”²⁹. The issue of homophobia should be brought up by the educator or trainer, who needs to emphasize that homophobia undermines students’ sense of security at school and affects all parties involved, including those who are bullied as well as bullies. Any educational environment should have no tolerance towards homophobic or transphobic incidents. The trainer can also highlight the importance of creating a gender-neutral educational setting which means that heterosexuality will not be viewed as superior. In such an open environment LGBTIQ+ individuals will not be forced to restrict their identity. Therefore, the second role-playing activity aims to bring up the issue of homophobia within family and the importance of acceptance and students will have the opportunity to learn how traumatizing it is for an LGBTIQ+ individual to be rejected by their family.

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the life of LGBTQ individuals.
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals.
- Reflect on LGBTQ people’s rights in their family, school or community.
- Deconstruct socially constructed norms related to sexual orientation and gender (e.g., Homosexual men and women cannot have a normal healthy relationship)
- Reconsider biased perceptions and conduct, including homophobic and transphobic language
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates.

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion

²⁷ Institute of Medicine. (2011). *The health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people: Building a foundation for better understanding*. The National Academies Press: Washington D.C.

²⁸ Institute of Medicine. (2011). *The health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people: Building a foundation for better understanding*. The National Academies Press: Washington D.C.

²⁹ Katz-Wise SL, Rosario M and Tsappis M. (2016). *Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Youth and Family Acceptance*. *Pediatr Clin North Am*. Vol 63 (6), 1011 – 1025.

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals).
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions from their classmates.
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people.
- Reflect on the difficulties LGBTQ people face in their community and how stereotypes maintain the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ individuals.
- Develop a more inclusive and open attitude towards people who faced discrimination and marginalization (e.g., LGBTIQ+ individuals, disabled people, people of different skin tone, religion or race).

Role-playing activity 3: Discrimination in the workplace

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Express themselves through a simulated game
- Examine the aspects of one's life that are different from theirs
- Have a clear perception of how people behave within certain social contexts
- Improve their creativity and critical thinking
- Realize that one's personality is complex and multi-faceted
- Present their beliefs and attitudes on LGBTIQ-related issues
- Appreciate the different aspects of one's personality (LGBTQ, racial or ethnic elements, disabilities)
- Become more empathetic towards LGBTIQ+ individuals

Time

50 – 60 minutes

20 minutes: reading the scenario

10 minutes: analysis of the LGBTIQ issues

15 minutes: execution of the scenario

15 minutes: open discussion, feedback

Materials Needed

Notebook

Preparation

The role-playing activity aims to help learners have the right perception on how people behave within certain social contexts. Through a simulated social context, in which learners themselves will be the actors determining the scenario's course of action, the learning process is facilitated helping them to have a deeper understanding of the issues related to the LGBTIQ+ individuals. The scenario presents specific role relationships and predetermined human dilemmas but it is up to students to "consider what it is like to take on someone else's role in society or to face a challenging problem within some

selected situation”³⁰. The learners are expected to identify the real problems and relevant issues presented in the scenarios and identify ways to resolve or alleviate a problem.

The educator or trainer should present the scenario to the students giving them some guidance on how to execute their roles. Learners should be given 15 minutes to identify the ‘real’ problems and issues presented in the scenario. The trainer can guide the students by asking them certain questions (presented in the following section), giving the moral and ethical aspects of the issues raised. The learners should be encouraged to play their role freely even if they have predispositions or stereotypical views on the issues related to the LGBTIQ+ community. The educator should also encourage them to ask their own questions. “Questions help determine real issues and, in turn, give rise to other questions, thus representing the real world of problem-solving”³¹. A set of questions that learners can ask themselves during analyzing their part in the scenario are presented below.

The educator should emphasize that learners are free to express any thoughts and feeling about their role and the relationship between the characters. However, while developing their role, learners should have in mind that they must deal with any LGBTIQ-related issue with respect, empathy and understanding. Moreover, in role-playing activities, learners may have a sense of uncertainty dealing with such delicate issues but they should feel free to play their part as they deem most appropriate. However, they should be advised to deal with the scenario in a problematical manner, critically analyzing the issues with openness.

Scenario

In a law firm, three colleagues are having a lunch break in the kitchen. Helen, Mary and Jessica are three young women in their 30s. They discuss about their new colleague Amy who has recently started working and is a graduate from Harvard University. She is disabled using a wheelchair. Amy didn’t have the chance to spend time with her colleagues and get to know them. She is closer to Mary. During their conversation, Mary told the others that Amy is the protégée of the law firm’s director getting a lot of support and attention. Helen says that this is unfair for the rest of the team. Mary then says: “There is something more you should know about our new colleague. She is a lesbian. Last Saturday I was at the mall and I saw Amy with another red-haired woman sitting at a café. As I approached them, I saw the redhead leaning toward Amy kissing her on the lips. I felt uncomfortable, turned away and left”. Jessica responded, saying: “ I am not sure that our director would love to hear that his beloved protégé is a lesbian. If the office partners knew about this, I think it would be a problem”. Mary and Helen agreed that this would be a problem because the director is very conservative. The director, Mr Paul was standing by the kitchen door and overheard the conversation. Feeling distressed, he rushed back into his office. He calls Amy into his office for a private conversation.

Roles to be taken on: Helen, Mary, Jessica, Amy, Mr. Paul (director)

In order to identify real problems, the teacher can ask the following questions to help students get into the role:

- From which standpoints are we looking at the relationship between Helen, Mary, Jessica and Amy?

³⁰ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15.

³¹ Errington, E. (1991). Role Playing and Environmental Issues. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*. Vol 7, pp. 1-15

- What would be the three women's beliefs and perceptions?
- What would be the director's beliefs and perceptions?
- How often do we encounter the attitude the three women had towards Amy in real-life situations?
- How should employees be treated in their workplace in terms of sexual orientation?
- Is sexual identity a factor that could negatively affect one's performance at work?
- Should LGBTIQ+ individuals be diminished or treated unfairly by their colleagues at work due to their sexual orientation?
- How can the interests of LGBTIQ+ individuals be investigated through role play in relation to the built and physical environment?

Questions for learners:

- What are my thoughts and feelings about Amy's situation?
- How should Amy deal with her colleagues if one of them makes fun of her because of her sexuality?
- What is the appropriate attitude the director should have towards Amy?
- What could help Helen, Mary and Jessica realize that their colleague is free to live her life openly, without being criticized by others?
- If Amy is bullied or harassed at work by her colleagues, how should the director react?

Debriefing

The aim of the open discussion is to help learners express their thoughts and feelings on having LGBTIQ+ individuals as roommates or classmates. Through the discussion, any misconceptions or stereotypical ideas about LGBTIQ+ individuals should be clarified. The educator should emphasize that LGBTIQ+ individuals have the right to live their lives openly and freely, without being discriminated. LGBTIQ+ individuals seek to find love and be part of a healthy relationship that is based on mutual trust, love and understanding. This scenario highlights the difficulties and challenges an LGBTIQ+ individual has to deal with at their workplace.

Another challenge that an LGBTIQ+ individual has to face is receiving discriminating or homophobic comments from their colleagues at work. The third role-playing activity aims to highlight the difficulties LGBTIQ+ individuals face at their workplace due to their sexual orientation. During the open discussion, the educator must emphasize that LGBTIQ+ people should be treated with respect at their workplace and there should be no tolerance towards discriminating attitudes against those people. LGBTIQ+ rights are human rights and companies or businesses should respect their LGBTIQ+ employees. In fact, the human rights of working LGBTIQ+ people are protected by the United Nations. UN has issued the report *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*³² which is a concrete set of standards for the protection of LGBTIQ+ rights in the workplace. These standards are grounded in existing international human rights law.

The educator can introduce the 5 basic standards of the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights* to students, *emphasizing the importance of respecting, supporting and elevating LGBTIQ+ individuals in their workplace*³³:

³² United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2017). *Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans & Intersex People: Standards of Conduct for Business*. United Nations.

³³ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2017). *Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans & Intersex People: Standards of Conduct for Business*. United Nations.

1. Respect Human Rights - Businesses are expected to develop policies, exercise due diligence, and, in cases where their decisions or activities have adversely affected the enjoyment of human rights, remediate such impacts. Businesses should also establish mechanisms to monitor and communicate about their compliance with human rights standards.
2. Eliminate Discriminations - Businesses should ensure that there is no discrimination in their recruitment, employment, working conditions, benefits, respect for privacy, or treatment of harassment.
3. Provide Support - Businesses are expected to provide a positive, affirmative environment within their organization so that LGBTI employees can work with dignity and without stigma. Businesses must ensure inclusion, including addressing the specific workplace needs of LGBTI people.
4. Prevent Other Human Rights Violations - Businesses should ensure that they do not discriminate against LGBTI suppliers or distributors, or against LGBTI customers in accessing the company's products and/or services.
5. Act in the Public Sphere – Businesses are encouraged to use their leverage to contribute to stopping human rights abuses in the countries in which they operate. Preventing the violation of LGBTI rights requires from businesses to take the further steps: public advocacy, collective action, social dialogue, financial and in-kind support for organizations advancing LGBTI rights, advocating against abusive government actions that undermine LGBTI rights.

Moreover, the educator should also discuss the negative effects of homophobia, and in the case of the third role-playing activity, homophobia in the workplace. It should be noted that homophobia undermines the employee's sense of security, performance and wellbeing. Therefore, the third role-playing activity aims to bring up the issue of homophobia at the workplace and the importance of battling discrimination. Students will have the opportunity to learn how traumatizing it is for an LGBTIQ+ individual to be discriminated or criticized by their co-workers.

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the life of LGBTQ individuals.
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals.
- Reflect on LGBTQ people's rights in their family, school or community.
- Deconstruct socially constructed norms related to sexual orientation and gender (e.g., Homosexual men and women cannot have a normal healthy relationship)
- Reconsider biased perceptions and conduct, including homophobic and transphobic language
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates.

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals).
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions from their classmates.
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people.
- Reflect on the difficulties LGBTQ people face in their community and how stereotypes maintain the discrimination and hatred toward LGBTQ individuals.
- Develop a more inclusive and open attitude towards people who faced discrimination and marginalization (e.g., LGBTIQ+ individuals, disabled people, people of different skin tone, religion or race).

Revision & Deconstruction Activities

This section includes various literary works and film extracts related to LGBTQ+ issues. The aim of this section is to familiarize students with topics such as LGBTQ+ love, sex and relationship education and to present them with alternative narratives on the changing nature of gender identity. The most effective and illustrative way to familiarize students with these narratives is through literature, films and poetry.

According to IGLYO's Guidelines for Inclusive Education³⁴, sex and relationship education should be mandatory fields in the school curriculum. Sex and relationship education are two notions related not only to LGBTQ+ issues but also to the emotional side of sex and its physical aspects. Lessons should focus on relationships, affectionate interaction and emotions rather than only on reproductive functions.

The discussion on gender should remain diverse. All learners should understand their sexual health, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Studying gender representation in literature and films and especially LGBTQ+ identities can be a challenge for both educators, trainers and learners or students. It is usually uncomfortable studying about LGBTQ+ issues but the educator should have all the necessary tools and material to cover these issues and discuss all the aspects of LGBTQ+ identities.

In order to facilitate teaching on sex and relationship education, the educators should³⁵:

- Focus on feelings and the emotions associated with relationships. This could be done by examining the portrayal of LGBTQ+ relationships in films or literature
- Discuss sex and being safe in broader terms and not only in relation to procreative sex or health risks. The term sex should not be interpreted only in relation to sexual activity that could result in pregnancy. This approach created the assumption that other kinds of sexual activity or attraction are unusual and therefore strange or unnatural.
- Focus on the feelings, worries and desires that people have rather than how men or women feel. Instead of categorizing men and women and attributing to them certain patterns of behavior that they ought to have, according to social norms, it would be better if learners

³⁴ IGLYO. (2014). Guidelines for Inclusive Education – Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression. IGLYO: Belgium, Brussels.

³⁵ GLYO. (2014). Guidelines for Inclusive Education – Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression. IGLYO: Belgium, Brussels.

could examine behaviors and feelings in a broader sense. This prevents perpetuating gender stereotypes and enables students to feel comfortable with their emotions and feelings.

- Openly talk with all learners about sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as relationships for LGBTQ+ people. Through these discussions, misconceptions, stereotypes and heteronormative beliefs on LGBTQ+ relationships will be addressed. Learners will realize that LGBTQ+ rights are human rights and these people should be treated with respect and not be regarded as unnatural.

This section will explore the representation of gender and queer identities through literature, films and poetry. Reading LGBTQ+ authors is important not only for LGBTQ+ students but also for heterosexual students. LGBTQ+ literature includes the concept of the disruption of norms. The portrayal of LGBTQ+ relationships disrupt sexual norms through the means of desire, action and explicit identifications. “The characters defy the heteronormative standards that dominate society by both implicit and explicit acts that challenge the self-evidence of homosexual desires being deviant”³⁶. Therefore, LGBTQ+ literature aims to normalize LGBTQ+ relationships and tackle misinformation and stereotypes that are generated by the heteronormative point of view.

Moreover, these stories can educate and inform readers who do not identify as part of the LGBTQ community and they can also portray a path in life that LGBTQ readers may have not considered possible. For LGBTQ+ individuals who are struggling to come to terms with their sexuality can benefit a lot from reading LGBTQ+ literature. In fact, LGBTQ+ individuals who belong in ethnic or religious minorities and they already face discrimination or marginalization have a double burden to carry when it comes to their sexuality. LGBTQ+ stories reflect on readers’ lives and they empower them in many ways, both mentally and emotionally. Many LGBTQ+ individuals grow up in conservative and very secluded communities and expressing their thoughts about their sexuality is not possible. Therefore, LGBTQ+ literature is a shelter that brings them solace, joy and boosts their self-esteem. It can also help them realize that they are not the only ones going through these difficulties.

1st Revision & Deconstruction Activity: Studying “Call Me By Your Name” (2017), a film by Luca Guadagnino

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Express themselves through a simulated game
- Examine the aspects of one’s life that are different than theirs
- Have a clear perception of how people behave within certain social contexts
- Improve their creativity and critical thinking
- Realize that one’s personality is complex and multi-faceted
- Present their beliefs and attitudes on LGBTIQ-related issues
- Appreciate the different aspects of one’s personality (LGBTQ, racial or ethnic elements, disabilities)
- Become more empathetic towards LGBTIQ+ individuals

³⁶ Van den Bogaard, N. (2020). *The Changing Perceptions of Gay Identities – Queer Representation in Call Me By Your Name and The Song of Achilles*. Radboud University. The Netherlands.

Time

60 minutes

20 minutes: watching the film scenes

20 minutes: film scenes' analysis (themes, topics, LGBTQ+ topics)

20 minutes: open discussion

Material Needed

Notepad, pens, highlighters

Preparation

In order to help students familiarize themselves with the film's main themes and topics, the teacher can briefly present a synopsis of the film script which is introduced in the following section. When the main themes are discussed, the teacher can proceed to the next part of the activity, the detailed analysis of the film scenes.

Synopsis of the film

Call Me by Your Name is a 2017 coming-of-age³⁷ romantic drama directed by Luca Guadagnino. It is based on the 2007 novel of the same title written by Andre Aciman. The plot is set in 1983 in northern Italy and it chronicles the romantic relationship between 17-year-old Elio Perlman and Oliver, a 24-year-old university student assistant to Elio's father Samuel, an archaeology professor. Samuel invites Oliver to stay in the family villa and spend the summer helping him with his academic research. Elio is an introspective, shy and talented musician who enjoys reading books, playing the piano and spending time with his childhood friends, two girls Chiara and Marzia. Initially, he thinks he has little in common with Oliver who appears confident and carefree.

Their romantic relationship starts blossoming through a series of elegant glances and gentle gestures. During a volleyball match, Oliver touches Elio's back, and this is the first sign of interest on his part. Elio slowly starts having deeper feelings for Oliver. They spend more time together going for long walks in town and to archaeological sites where Elio's father and Oliver conduct research. Elio confesses his feelings to Oliver who initially refuses to engage in any romantic encounter, but they eventually kiss for the first time in a secluded spot (the kissing river scene is included below).

In the first half of the film, Elio and Oliver are attracted to one another, but they try to disguise their true feelings. There is a charming competition between them, and they seek to flaunt their own skills to one another whenever the opportunity arises. Oliver tries to do so by demonstrating his academic knowledge while Elio gets an opportunity to show off his musical talent.

³⁷ Coming-of-age can be defined as the growth of a person from childhood to adulthood



Figure 11 Photo from the film, the tension and attraction are gradually building up

They both use their sexuality as a means of self-expression while trying to get each other's attention. Elio is sexually involved with her friend Marzia while Oliver openly flirts with Chiara. While this film tells the story of a homosexual romance, it isn't explicitly a homosexual movie. The two protagonists "could more accurately be described as bisexual or pansexual, attracted to men and women alike"³⁸. Therefore, this film does not explicitly refer to the LGBTQ+ community and it portrays a

more open interpretation of sexual identity.

In addition, this film presents the development of a purely romantic relationship that has the whole spectrum of human feelings and reactions (jealousy, desire, disappointment, fear of rejection, longing for attention and love). "The tension of the first act is very much rooted in the awkwardness of young love, in the guessing-gam of knowing when to show vulnerability and when to shield from harm"³⁹. All these elements are human characteristics and every young person goes through these feelings and thoughts, no matter of their gender or sexual identity, LGBTQ+ individuals or not. This is the most important message of this film. The relationship between these two men could be the relationship between a man and a woman or between two women. Self-expression and identity are crucial themes in this film and they are portrayed in such a beautiful and illustrative way.

Acceptance and respect for one's self-expression are depicted in the father's speech scene while romanticism and love are depicted in the river scene. The ending scene, with Elio crying, depicts the pain and sadness of separation, the feeling of despair people feel when they break up. While watching Elio crying, taking in everything, realizing that they are separated brings a perfect end to this story which does not refer only to LGBTQ+ love but to human love. In fact, "the film is a celebration of love, and its ultimate message is that openness and a willingness to share yourself with others is the key to finding happiness"⁴⁰.

Instructions & schedule of the session

1. Introduce the film *Call Me By Your Name* (2017) to learners.
2. Discuss the main themes and topics of the film.
3. Explain the main aims of the activity.
4. Divide learners into groups of 3 – 4.
5. Ask them to watch the first film scene.

³⁸ Adanielfilm. (2018). *Call Me By Your Name* Script Analysis: Time, Love and Identity. *Scriptophile*. Available at: ["Call Me By Your Name" Script Analysis: Time, Love, and Identity – Scriptophile \(wordpress.com\)](https://scriptophile.wordpress.com/2018/05/24/call-me-by-your-name-script-analysis-time-love-and-identity/)

³⁹ Adanielfilm. (2018). *Call Me By Your Name* Script Analysis: Time, Love and Identity. *Scriptophile*. Available at: ["Call Me By Your Name" Script Analysis: Time, Love, and Identity – Scriptophile \(wordpress.com\)](https://scriptophile.wordpress.com/2018/05/24/call-me-by-your-name-script-analysis-time-love-and-identity/)

⁴⁰ Adanielfilm. (2018). *Call Me By Your Name* Script Analysis: Time, Love and Identity. *Scriptophile*. Available at: ["Call Me By Your Name" Script Analysis: Time, Love, and Identity – Scriptophile \(wordpress.com\)](https://scriptophile.wordpress.com/2018/05/24/call-me-by-your-name-script-analysis-time-love-and-identity/)

6. Ask them to analyze the scene by answering the questions for the 1st scene.
7. Ask them to watch the second film scene.
8. Ask them to analyze the scene by answering the questions for the 2nd scene.
9. Ask them to watch the third scene.
10. Ask them to analyze the scene by answering the questions for the 3rd scene.
11. Ask learners to compare and contrast the three scenes.
12. In the form of an open discussion, discuss the further analysis questions.
13. Have an open discussion on the main themes (love, fear of rejection, desire, jealousy) of the film.

Comparing & Analyzing three scenes from *Call Me by Your Name*

Watch the following clips and answer the following questions:

1st scene: River love scene



Photo credit: George Hutson Warren. (2019). Love Dream-George Hutson Warren-Call Me By Your Name-Kiss scene. Available on YouTube

Watch the scene here: [Love Dream - George Hutson Warren - Call Me By Your Name - Kiss scene - RESCORE - YouTube](#)

Questions for the first scene:

- What is the general mood of this scene?
- What does it signify for the relation between Elio and Oliver?
- How does this scene make a viewer feel or think about LGBTQ+ relationships?

2nd scene: Elio crying – Last scene of the film

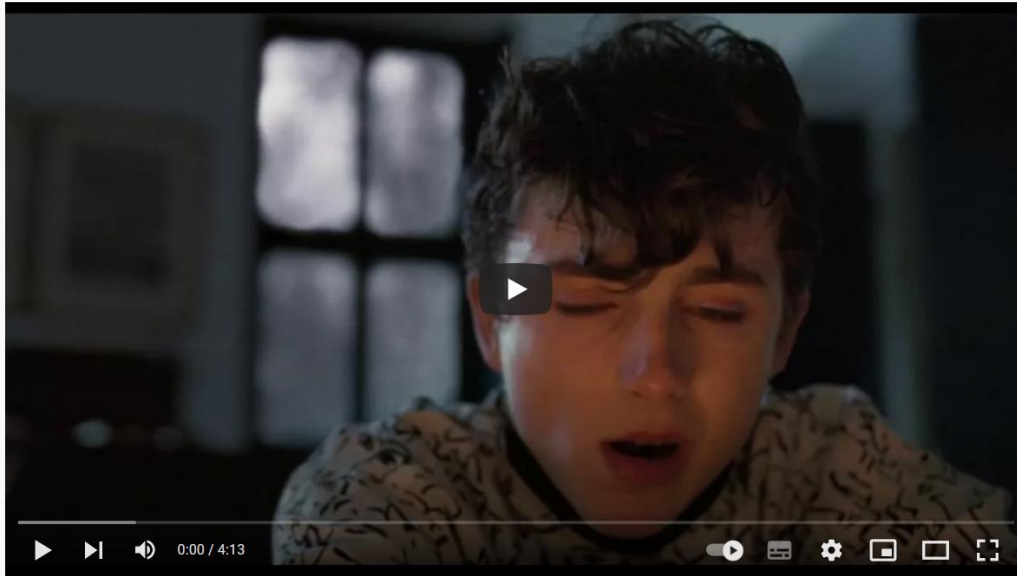


Photo credit: Allisxn. (2018). *The Final Scene – Elio crying in front of the fireplace*. Available on YouTube

Watch the scene here: [The Final Scene / Elio crying in front of the fireplace / Call Me By Your Name \(2017\) - YouTube](#)

Questions for the second scene:

- What is the general mood of the scene?
- How does it differ from the first scene?
- Where is the camera placed and how is the actor framed? What does it signify?
- What are Elio's feelings and thoughts in this scene?
- What is going on in the background? Discuss the background action in relation to Elio's mental state.
- What does this scene signify for people and LGBTQ+ individuals who go through a breakup?

3rd scene: Father's speech



Photo Credit: *Best Scenes*. (2021). *Call me by your name – Elio and his father scene (best father son conversation)*. Available on YouTube

Watch the scene here: [Call me by your name- Elio and his father scene \(best father son conversation\) - YouTube](#)

Questions for the third scene:

- What is the general mood of the scene?
- How would you describe the relationship between Elio and his father?
- What does this scene signify for the attitude parents should have towards their LGBTQ+ children?
- Is the father compassionate, uninterested or cold towards his son?
- How does the father's reaction make Elio feel?

Script of the Father's speech (for further analysis)

"You had a beautiful friendship. Maybe more than a friendship. And I envy you."

"In my place, most parents would hope the whole thing goes away, or pray that their sons land on their feet soon enough," Mr. Perlman says. "But I am not such a parent. In your place, if there is pain, nurse it, and if there is a flame, don't snuff it out, don't be brutal with it. Withdrawal can be a terrible thing when it keeps us awake at night, and watching others forget us sooner than we'd want to be forgotten is no better. We rip out so much of ourselves to be cured of things faster than we should that we go bankrupt by the age of 30 and have less to offer each time we start with someone new. But to feel nothing so as not to feel anything—what a waste!"

"I'll say one more thing. It'll clear the air: I may have come close, but I never had what you two have. Something always held me back or stood in the way. How you live your life is your business. Just remember, our hearts and our bodies are given to us only once, and before you know it, your heart's worn out. And as for your body, there comes a point when no one looks at it, much less wants to come near it. Right now, there's sorrow, pain; don't kill it, and with it, the joy you've felt".

Questions for further analysis of each scene

The following questions will help learners analyze the scenes and identify all the elements that contribute to their meanings.

Setting

- Is the setting natural or constructed?
- When and where does the scene take place?
- What costumes/make-up do actors wear?

Lightning

- How does the director use color in the scene? Are these soft or dark colors? What do they signify?
- Are there any colors that stand out? Support your answer.
- Does the director use hard lightning (clear sharp shadows and edges) or soft lightning (diffused, low shadows)?

Camera

- Where is the camera positioned? Is it moving or fixed?
- What is the effect created by moving or positioning the camera in this way?

Framing

- Where are the actors standing in the frame or in relation to the other characters?
- What facial expressions, and gestures do actors use?
- Do they have a soft or loud voice?

Objects

- Describe what elements you observe in the scenes.
- On which elements does the camera focus? Does the camera focus more on some elements than on others? Why?
- What emotions does the combination of all the elements in the scenes evoke?

Mood

- What is the general mood of each scene?
- How do color, camera angles, and movement contribute to this mood?
- What emotions does the director want to convey? In your opinion is he successful?

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the life of LGBTQ individuals.
- Critically analyze a film and examine themes related to human nature and relationships.
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals.
- Deconstruct socially constructed norms related to sexual orientation and gender (e.g., Homosexual men and women cannot have a normal healthy relationship)
- Reconsider biased perceptions and conduct, including homophobic and transphobic language
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates.

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion
- Improve their aesthetics
- Learn basic vocabulary related to script and film analysis (e.g., mise-en-scene, camera angles, framing).

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals).
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions of their classmates.

- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people.
- Comprehend the universality of human nature, feelings and relationships.
- Develop a more inclusive and open attitude towards people regardless of their sexual or gender identity.

2nd Deconstruction Activity: Analyzing a poem

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, students will be able to:

- Study and analyze poems (style, content, LGBTQ+ related issues)
- Analyze the work of a queer/LGBTQ+ poet
- Identify the elements that make a poet part of queer culture
- Examine how life and queer writing intersect
- Improve their creativity and critical thinking
- Present their beliefs and attitudes on LGBTIQ-related issues
- Become more empathetic towards LGBTIQ+ individuals

Time

60 minutes

20 minutes: reading the poems

20 minutes: poems analysis

(Cavafy's poetic style, Cavafy's poetry and queer literature, LGBTQ+ rights)

20 minutes: open discussion

Material Needed

Notepad, pens, highlighters

Preparation

In order to help students familiarize themselves with Cavafy's poetry and main themes, the educator can briefly present a synopsis of Cavafy's biography which is introduced in the following section. When the discussion on the poets' life and poetic style is completed, the educator can proceed to the next part of the activity, the analysis of the poems.

This section explores the poetry of C.P. Cavafy (1863 – 1933), a famous poet who is considered the most distinguished Greek poet of the 20th century. He was born in Alexandria, Egypt and he spent his early years in England, Constantinople and France before he moved back to Alexandria. His work was characterized by a unique, personal poetic style and his poetry was dominated by the themes of homosexual desire, eroticism and self-expression. This the reason that his work is very important for LGBTQ+ inclusive education.

Instructions & schedule of the session

1. Introduce C.P. Cavafy to students
2. Read Cavafy's biography and focus on his life aspects related to queer and LGBTQ+ culture
3. Read and analyze *Cavafy's Note* and the poems *He Had Come There To Read & Their Beginning*.
4. Divide students into groups of 3 – 4.

5. Ask them to analyze the poems and answer the questions for each poem.
6. Analyze and discuss the meaning of each poem and Cavafy's main themes
7. Ask students to read and analyze the extra two poems (compare and contrast the poems)
8. Ask them to work individually or in pairs.
9. Ask them to identify the main Cavafian themes (hiding sexuality, homoeroticism, concealing/revealing dialectics) based on the analysis done in the first section of the activity.
10. Ask learners to answer the questions below the poems.
11. Summarize the main points and emphasize the importance of the Cavafian poetry for the LGBTQ+ community.



Photo Credit: Cavafy Archive Onassis Foundation, Athens, available: [Cavafy Archive – AN ARCHIVE OPEN TO ALL | Onassis Foundation](#)

C.P. Cavafy - Short biography

C.P Cavafy was born in Alexandria, Egypt on the 29th of April 1863. His parents moved to Alexandria in the mid-1850s. Cavafy's father was an importer-exporter whose business responsibilities obliged him to travel frequently to Liverpool in England. His father died in 1870, and the business he left in Alexandria could financially support Cavafy's mother and his eight siblings. For this reason, the family moved to Liverpool, where the eldest sons assumed control of the family's business operations.

Cavafy spent his adolescence in England, where he became a fluent English speaker. In England, he developed a preference for the writings of William Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde. Due to the mismanagement of the family business, Cavafy's mother was forced to move the family back to Alexandria, where they lived until 1882. Then, due to political turbulence, they left Alexandria for Constantinople. The family house in Alexandria was destroyed and all of Cavafy's books were lost.

In 1885, Cavafy returned to Alexandria along with some of his brothers. He found work as a newspaper correspondent and in the late 1880s he obtained a position as his brother's assistant at the Egyptian Stock Exchange. He then became a clerk at the Ministry of Public Works.

Cavafy was a unique poet who lived his life in relative seclusion. He published little of his work. In fact, a short collection of his poetry was privately printed in the early 1900s. He was very selective to whom he showed his poems. He chose to circulate his verse among friends. Cavafy was homosexual, and his poems evoke homoeroticism. He wrote sexually explicit poems that did not reveal his sexual orientation but only assumed his sexuality and his secret desires.

Cavafy was passionate about history, particularly ancient civilizations. In many of his poems, many historical figures from the Greek and Roman empires are presented and subjectified by the poet who interprets them in his own way.

Cavafy expressed his gender identity and sexuality through his poetry. According to Watson⁴¹, Cavafy was a queer man who lived in a decidedly un-queer age; open about his sexuality to friends, but so coy about its homosexual nature that he rarely spoke openly about his desires for men. His poetry is filled with eroticism and sensual images that are created in the poet's imagination. Gazing and admiring male bodies is a central element in his erotic poems. Most importantly, "Cavafy is not only a homosexual man who wrote about beautiful men, but his poetry is deeply concerned with queerness and queer articulations"⁴².

Cavafy is a great example of queer expression within the context of LGBTQ+ education. The notion of 'queerness' is more appropriate for analyzing Cavafy's work than 'homosexuality'. While homosexuality describes sexuality in terms of relationships between people, queerness is an articulation of individuals in relation to society. "Queerness is concerned with issues of normativity and difference and is a condition marked and defined by the fact that it is not mainstream"⁴³. Cavafy was a man ahead of his time, and he sensed that one should be free to form their own identity against all the mainstream social norms. This may be seen in a note he prepared in 1905:

Cavafy's note (1905)

The wretched laws of society—the result of neither hygiene nor judgement—have lessened my work. They have blocked my freedom of expression; they have impeded me from giving light and emotion to those who are made just like me. The difficult circumstances of my life made it hard for me to become a [fluent] English speaker. What a shame! If I put the same struggles in French, maybe I could have expressed myself more freely, because of the ease with which the pronouns both reveal and conceal—if circumstances had allowed me, if the French tongue was just as useful to me... But, what can I do? I'm wasting away, aesthetically. And I will remain the object of conjecture; and they will understand most deeply from the things I denied.

Questions for Cavafy's note:

- What are the main issues that concern Cavafy?
- To which wretched laws of society does the poet refer? What is the interpretation of these laws in the modern society?
- The poem is an expression of the poet's suffocating and frustrating feeling of not belonging to society. Do you think that there are people in our modern times that have the same feeling? Why?
- What would be Cavafy's position in today's world in relation to the LGBTQ+ community?

Analysis of Cavafy's note (supporting material for the teacher/trainer/facilitator)

From the first words, Cavafy separates himself from the customs of society, the horrible laws of society. "Instead, he has carved out for himself a different community, consisting of 'those who are made just like me'". The verb make is used in the sense of create, denoting a constructed state of being. Cavafy recognizes that there is a group of people (who are made just like me), a group

⁴¹ Watson, J.L. (2022). Bodies Out of Time: Sculpting Queer Poetics and Queering Classical Sculpture in the Poetry of C. P. Cavafy. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*. Vol 29, 190-213.

⁴² Watson, J.L. (2022). Bodies Out of Time: Sculpting Queer Poetics and Queering Classical Sculpture in the Poetry of C. P. Cavafy. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*. Vol 29, 190-213.

⁴³ Watson, J.L. (2022). Bodies Out of Time: Sculpting Queer Poetics and Queering Classical Sculpture in the Poetry of C. P. Cavafy. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*. Vol 29, 190-213.

identity that is different from the heteronormative mainstream group of people. Although the term heteronormative did not exist at Cavafy's time, he clearly denotes that society includes different social groups that are queer or homosexual.

Cavafy feels disappointed by the fact that he cannot express himself freely and openly about those people who are just like him. The most important element of Cavafy's work and style is his ability to say something while keeping it silent. "Even in what is purportedly written as a private memo, the silenced words (homosexuality, homophobia) are not referred to openly but remain only implied"⁴⁴.

In today's terms, Cavafy is trying to find the language of coming out of the closet while maintaining the closet as a way of speaking. He aims to reveal his sexuality but indirectly using language as the medium for the hide-and-seek game. He wonders whether he could express himself better in French but the matter is not only linguistic. "He is in search of something larger, a dialectic of telling and hiding, of performing the silence, that would eventually characterize most of his poetry- written neither in French nor English but in his own idiosyncratic Greek"⁴⁵. The last phrase of his note denotes that he will remain in the margins in terms of identity expression. His true identity lies in what he hides and not in what he tells. His true self does not belong to the society he lives in, to the society he denies.

He Had Come There to Read-

He had come there to read. Two or three books lie open,
books by historians, by poets.
But he read for barely ten minutes,
then gave it up, falling half asleep on the sofa.
He's completely devoted to books—
but he's twenty-three, and very good-looking;
and this afternoon Eros entered
his ideal flesh, his lips.
An erotic warmth entered
his completely lovely flesh—
with no ridiculous shame about the form the pleasure took....

Analysis of the poem *He Had Come There to Read* (supporting material for the teacher/trainer/facilitator)

The poem is about a young man (23 years old) that goes into a library, picks up books by poets and historians (books that Cavafy himself might have chosen to read), and after reading them for some time, he falls asleep. The young man becomes a subject of desire for Cavafy who admires his beauty. It is implied through the carefully selected words that the young man had a sexual encounter before coming to the library. The phrase "This afternoon Eros entered his ideal flesh, his lips" denotes that

⁴⁴ Papanikolaou, D. (2005). "Words that tell and hide": Revisiting C.P. Cavafy's Closets. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. Vol 23. 235 -260.

⁴⁵ Papanikolaou, D. (2005). "Words that tell and hide": Revisiting C.P. Cavafy's Closets. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. Vol 23. 235 -260.

the young man had a sexual encounter that gave him pleasure and made his body look more seductive. Eros is the act of love but also the God of love and sexual desire, according to Greek mythology. Cavafy implicitly presents a form of a sexual identity that is different from the mainstream (queerness) in a sensual and erotic way that is a reflection of his own identity. In fact, the young man's action, the sexual act results in a particular form of pleasure that is turned into a spectacle by the body sleeping. "As a result of it, the same body is imbued with a fully conscious sexual identity (hence there is no shame in 'the form of pleasure')"⁴⁶.

Cavafy presents the young man's sexual activity as a form of pleasure, denoting that homosexual love is not unnatural or sinful but it is a mere expression of one's sexual and gender identity. The secrecy of a homosexual act is depicted in the title of the poem. "He had added to the phrase: He had come to read-" a dash which remains hanging, unfinished introducing the half of the title that is not there, symbolizing the unsaid"⁴⁷. The title is another depiction of the concealing/revealing tactic the poet deploys to express his thoughts. The unclear meaning of the poem and the uncertainty of whether there had been a homosexual act or not creates the mystical world of Cavafy who could not directly express his true identity to his readers. However, he employed his expressive tone and sensual poetic style to present his deepest thoughts and desires in an indirect yet revealing way.

Questions for the poem:

- What is the central point of the poem?
- How does Cavafy describe the young man he is looking at?
- Cavafy's gaze is erotic and sensual. Which words does he use to describe the young man? How would you characterize the way he presents the young man?
- Does Cavafy explicitly or implicitly express his desire for the young man's body?

Their Beginning

Their illicit desire has been fulfilled.

They get up and dress quickly, without a word

They come out of the house separately, furtively;

and as they move along the street a bit unsettled,

it seems they sense that something on them betrays

what kind of bed they've just been lying on.

But what profit for the life of the artist:

tomorrow, the day after, or years later, he'll give voice

to the strong lines that had their beginning here.

⁴⁶ Papanikolaou, D. (2005). "Words that tell and hide": Revisiting C.P. Cavafy's Closets. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. Vol 23. 235 -260.

⁴⁷ Papanikolaou, D. (2005). "Words that tell and hide": Revisiting C.P. Cavafy's Closets. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. Vol 23. 235 -260.

Questions for the poem *Their Beginning* (supporting material for the educator/teacher/trainer/facilitator)

- How would you react if someone described the love between two women or men as an ‘illicit desire’?
- The two young men have a feeling of guilt for their sexual preference and their actions. Do you think that in today’s world they would have felt the same way?
- How would Cavafy express his desire for another man if he lived today?

Analysis of the poem *Their Beginning*

This poem has the same erotic and sensual tone as the poem *He Had Come to Read*. The two men who emerge from their secret meeting still bear like the young man of “He Had Come to Read”, the mark of their preceding sexual encounter. This poem describes the small routines of hiding that immediately follow a sexual encounter. In Cavafy’s time, even the assumption that someone is having a homosexual encounter was considered to be sinful. The poem begins as the gazing on an encounter and ends as a poem in which the poet is one of the two protagonists. It is “a game of trying to hide and uncover the mark that the sexual act has left behind”⁴⁸. The poem focuses more on the actions the two lovers take to hide their encounter and not on the sexual act itself. They both hide the sexual act they had been engaged in, but they sense that their action has left a mark on them, a mark of a deviant identity that others can see or feel.

A modern interpretation of the poem would focus on the feeling of guilt and frustration that the two lovers would have because of their sexual encounter. In today’s world and in many parts of the planet, this is still the case. People are afraid and ashamed to reveal their true identity and they keep their personal life secret. The sensual and secret world of Cavafy that is indeed filled with passion and desire may seem seductive, but in terms of LGBTQ+ rights, what the poem describes is a horrible incident that no LGBTQ+ individual should experience.

In terms of poetic style, “hiding becomes a semiotic act that connects poetry and personal identity and leaves the object of hiding (homosexual desires and acts) as the hidden substance of both. Hiding is not the result but rather the consequence of conservative social norms and a lack of empathy for one’s true feelings and desires.

It should be noted that while Cavafy focuses on the social effort people take to contain and hide homosexuality at the same time, he manifests homosexual love and desire. The concealing and revealing technique is applied here too, and it showcases the poet’s courage and forward-looking attitude.

Supplementary material for analyzing Cavafy’s poetry

Cavafy’s poetry is characterized by a sensual tone, homoeroticism and performative silences. The poet uses his open secrets to “frame his poetry within a multidimensional discourse of power/knowledge related to sexuality (his own, as well as that of his writings and characters)”⁴⁹. Silence and the constant attempt of hiding refer to homosexuality and to the ‘illicit desire’. Indeed, Cavafy’s main concern, in both his life and his writings, was hiding. “His socially condemned passions were isolating him from society; his fear of being exposed for his unmentionable tendencies

⁴⁸ Papanikolaou, D. (2005). “Words that tell and hide”: Revisiting C.P. Cavafy’s Closets. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. Vol 23. 235 -260.

⁴⁹ Papanikolaou, D. (2005). “Words that tell and hide”: Revisiting C.P. Cavafy’s Closets. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. Vol 23. 235 -260.

made him hide from his own people during his whole life”⁵⁰. Although he was isolated from society, and rightfully, since heterosexuality was compulsory, he managed to stay true to himself and express his true identity through his poetry.

After carefully reading the above Cavafy’s poems, please analyze the following two poems:

Questions for analysis:

What is the significance of Cavafy’s poems in terms of LGBTQ+ rights recognition?

Cavafy’s poetry is characterized by the dialectics of concealing/revealing. Do you believe that his poetry aims to conceal or rather to reveal, indirectly aspects of his sexuality? Why?

How does Cavafy deal with the issue of sexuality and how would he define sexuality and gender identity had he lived today?

Compare & contrast the following poems (work in pairs or groups)

Hidden Things (C.P. Cavafy, 1908)

From all I did and all I said
let no one try to find out who I was.
An obstacle was there that changed the pattern
of my actions and the manner of my life.
An obstacle was often there
to stop me when I’d begin to speak.
From my most unnoticed actions,
my most veiled writing—
from these alone will I be understood.
But maybe it isn’t worth so much concern,
so much effort to discover who I really am.
Later, in a more perfect society,
someone else made just like me
is certain to appear and act freely.

Gray (C.P. Cavafy, 1917)

While looking at a half-gray opal
I remembered two lovely gray eyes—
it must be twenty years ago I saw them...

⁵⁰ Papanikolaou, D. (2005). “Words that tell and hide”: Revisiting C.P. Cavafy’s Closets. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. Vol 23. 235 -260.

We were lovers for a month.

Then he went away to work, I think in Smyrna,
and we never met again.

Those gray eyes will have lost their beauty—if he's still alive;
that lovely face will have spoiled.

Memory, keep them the way they were.

And, memory, whatever of that love you can bring back,
whatever you can, bring back tonight.

Questions for the poems:

- Compare and contrast the two poems. Analyze the poetic style.
- In the first poem, Cavafy refers to an obstacle. What is this obstacle (considering his aim of hiding his sexuality)?
- What is the message of the first poem?
- What is the main theme of the second poem?
- What is the significance of memory for the poet? What role does memory play in Cavafy's life?
- In today's world, would Cavafy express himself in a different way? Do you believe that he would conceal or reveal his sexual orientation?
- How would you react if your friend or family member felt excluded from society because of his/her sexual identity?

Cavafy's photos (material for further analysis)



Figure 13 Cavafy at a young age. Source: Cavafy Archive Onassis Foundation



Figure 12 Cavafy in his 50s. Source: Cavafy Archive Onassis Foundation

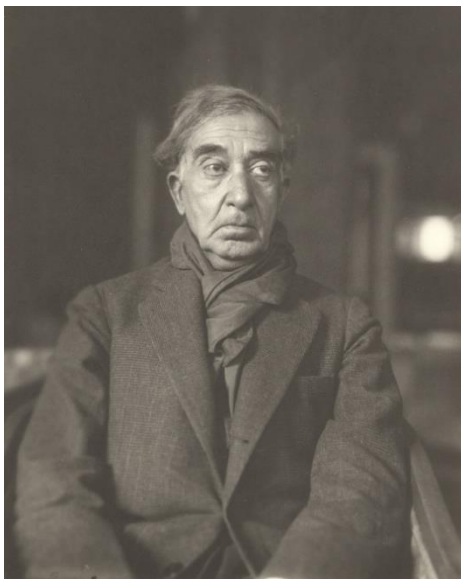


Figure 14 Cavafy in his later life. Source: Cavafy Archive Onassis Foundation

Debriefing

This activity aims to familiarize students with poetry analysis and to help them identify the notion of queerness in LGBTQ+ literature. While summarizing the main points in relation to Cavafy's poetry, the educator should emphasize the following:

The issue of sexuality was central in the Cavafian universe, and it was transferred to the center of his poetry. Cavafy did not make any compromises in his life. He chose not to live a life according to the social norms of the heteronormative society in which he lived, but he rather created his own rules.

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The only sacrifice he did is that he tried to hide his sexuality. However, “even though he started out by hiding, he did not stop becoming progressively more daring especially when he got older until he reached a realistic representation of the behavior of homosexual love”⁵¹.

This is the significance of his poetry in relation to LGBTQ+ rights. He did not fear to express himself through his work at a time in which homosexuality was considered illegal. He was a respected member of society who managed to live a dignified life as a homosexual man. Through his poetry, he transformed the expression of sexual and gender identity into a form of art. In today’s world, he continues to inspire and motivate people, LGBTQ+ or not, to express their true feelings in a respectful manner.

Expected Outcome

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of poetry analysis (poetic style, writing)
- Critically analyze queer poetry and examine themes related to human nature, queerness and LGBTQ+ love.
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals.
- Examine how poetry is linked to the expression of sexual and gender identity
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates.

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion
- Improve their aesthetics
- Familiarize themselves with the vocabulary related to poetry analysis

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals).
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions of their classmates.
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people.
- Comprehend the universality of human nature, feelings and relationships.
- Develop a more inclusive and open attitude towards people regardless of their sexual or gender identity.

⁵¹ Papanikolaou, D. (2005). “Words that tell and hide”: Revisiting C.P. Cavafy’s Closets. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*. Vol 23. 235 -260.

3rd Deconstruction Activity: Analyzing Love Letters by LGBTQ+ Authors

This section presents a series of love letters composed by great authors who belong to queer/LGBTQ+ literature. Through the study of love letters, students will have the opportunity to examine the writing style of authors who have expressed their feelings and love through writing. The authors presented in this activity are all renowned and respected authors, and they have enriched queer literature in numerous ways.

Aim & Objectives

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Study and analyze prose writing
- Analyze the work of queer/LGBTQ+ authors
- Identify the interconnection between queerness, love and writing
- Examine how life and queer writing intersect
- Improve their creativity and critical thinking
- Present their beliefs and attitudes on LGBTIQ-related issues
- Become more empathetic towards LGBTIQ+ individuals

Time

60 minutes

20 minutes: reading the love letters

20 minutes: love letters analysis

(love, desire, social and political norms, queer relationships, LGBTQ+ rights)

20 minutes: open discussion

Material Needed

Notepad, pens, highlighters

Preparation

In order to help students familiarize themselves with the notion of love letters and the 19th-century writers and poets, the teacher can briefly present the writers' biography and their most important literary works which are introduced in the following section. When the introductory part is completed, the teacher can proceed to the next part of the activity, the analysis of the love letters.

The main LGBTQ-related topic of this activity is love. Love is a notion that haunts the human psyche perhaps more persistently than any other. It is an inextricable part of the human collective imagination which has inspired philosophers, writers and painters. Love is an important element of novel writing, and nothing defines it with more expressiveness than the love letter. In a love letter, the reader can see the purest and most innocent personal feelings of a writer that are transformed into a universal expression of love. In fact, a writer from another era or another culture captures the all-consuming complexity of love with more richness, colour and dimension. Love is a theme that has always had a central role in literature, and this section includes some of history's most beautiful and timeless bewitching LGBTQ+ love letters.

1st Love Letter: Virginia Woolf & Vita Sackville - West

The renowned English author Virginia Woolf (1882 – 1941) was considered one of the most important modernist authors of the 20th century and a pioneer in the use of the notion of

consciousness as a narrative device. While she is best known for her novels, especially *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Woolf also wrote essays on artistic history, women's writing and the politics of power.



Vita Sackville-West (1892 – 1962) was an English novelist, poet and a garden designer. Through her writing she explored the Kentish countryside where she spent most of her life. Apart from her many novels, she also wrote biographies and several gardening books. “She was the chief model for the character Orlando in the novel of that title written by Virginia Woolf”⁵².

Figure 15 Sackville-West (on the left), Woolf (on the right). Source: Papava M (2022). *The greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time*.

Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West were lovers for over ten years. It was this relationship that inspired *Orlando*. This novel tells the life of the titular protagonist, who changes sex from male to female and lives for over 400 years. Both Virginia and Vita were women of the upper and upper-middle class. Their lives were filled with material abundance but also intense social restrictions.

Orlando is thought to have been written about the love affair between the two authors. In fact, the love expression evoked through the story was so intense that Sackville-West's son, Nigel Nicholson has described it as “the longest and most charming love letter in literature”⁵³.

Both women were married to respectable wealthy men – Virginia to the publisher and author Leonard Woolf, Vita to the diplomat and writer Harold Nicholson. Despite the oppressive social norms of the time, both women had open marriages, which allowed them to conduct relationships with both women and men of the unconventional, forward-thinking Bloomsbury Set⁵⁴. However, these encounters had to be conducted in secrecy.

The un compelling love between the two authors is captured in the following letter that was sent in 1927 by Virginia to Vita, shortly after the two had fallen madly in love⁵⁵:

Look here Vita — throw over your man, and we'll go to Hampton Court and dine on the river together and walk in the garden in the moonlight and come home late and have a bottle of wine and get tipsy,

⁵² Britannica. (2022). *Vita Sackville-West – British writer*. Available at: [Vita Sackville-West | British writer | Britannica](#)

⁵³ Popova, M. (2022). *The Greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time*. *The Marginalian*. Available online at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/14/greatest-queer-love-letters/>

⁵⁴ Bloomsbury Set: A group of English writers, philosophers and artists who frequently met between 1907 and 1930 at the houses of renowned authors Clive and Vanessa Bell in the Bloomsbury district of London (near the British museum). The group was a type of a literary association in which they discussed aesthetic and philosophical questions.

⁵⁵ Popova, M. (2022). *The Greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time*. *The Marginalian*. Available online at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/14/greatest-queer-love-letters/>

and I'll tell you all the things I have in my head, millions, myriads — They won't stir by day, only by dark on the river. Think of that. Throw over your man, I say, and come.

Vita's response to Virginia⁵⁶:

I am reduced to a thing that wants Virginia. I composed a beautiful letter to you in the sleepless nightmare hours of the night, and it has all gone: I just miss you, in a quite simple desperate human way. You, with all your undumb letters, would never write so elementary a phrase as that; perhaps you wouldn't even feel it. And yet I believe you'll be sensible of a little gap. But you'd clothe it in so exquisite a phrase that it should lose a little of its reality. Whereas with me it is quite stark: I miss you even more than I could have believed; and I was prepared to miss you a good deal. So this letter is really just a squeal of pain. It is incredible how essential to me you have become. I suppose you are accustomed to people saying these things. Damn you, spoilt creature; I shan't make you love me any more by giving myself away like this — But oh my dear, I can't be clever and stand-offish with you: I love you too much for that. Too truly. You have no idea how stand-offish I can be with people I don't love. I have brought it to a fine art. But you have broken down my defenses. And I don't really resent it.

Questions on the love letters:

- What best describes the relationship between Woolf and Sackville-West?
- Describe the emotions and feeling Woolf and Sackville-West express to each other.
- How would they have expressed their love to each other if they had lived in today's world?
- Can you analyse Woolf and Sackville-West's personalities through their writing style?

2nd love letter: Edna St. Vincent Millay & Edith Wynn Matthison

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) was an American poet and playwright. She became a respected poet when she received a Pulitzer Prize in 1923 for her work *Ballad of the Harp-Weaver*. The same year, she got married to Eugen Jan Boissevain, a Dutch businessman. Millay was an independent and dynamic person. Her political and social ideals made her a symbol of the youth of her time.

Edith Wynne Matthison (1875 – 1955) was an Anglo-American stage actress who appeared in two silent films. She was married to the playwright Charles Rann Kennedy and she acted in many of his plays.

⁵⁶ Popova, M. (2022). The Greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time. *The Marginalian*. Available online at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/14/greatest-queer-love-letters/>



Figure 16 Edna St. Vincent Millay (on the left), Edith Matthison (on the right). Source: Papava M. (2022), *The greatest LGBT Love Letters of all time*.

Edna and Edith met in 1917 when Edna was in her final year of college. She met and befriended Edith, who was at the time, 15 years older than her. Their love affair began as a platonic attraction that blossomed into an intense romantic infatuation. Edna was seduced by Edith's fierce spirit, beauty and impeccable style. After having their first kiss, Edith invited Edna to her summer home. During their relationship, they exchanged a series of passionate letters.

Edna's letter to Edith⁵⁷:

Listen; if ever in my letters to you, or in my conversation, you see a candor that seems almost crude, — please know that it is because when I think of you I think of real things, & become honest, — and quibbling and circumvention seem very inconsiderable.

I will do whatever you tell me to do. ... Love me, please; I love you. I can bear to be your friend. So ask of me anything. ... But never be 'tolerant,' or 'kind.' And never say to me again — don't dare to say to me again — 'Anyway, you can make a trial' of being friends with you! Because I can't do things that way. ... I am conscious only of doing the thing that I love to do — that I have to do — and I have to be your friend.

Edna's real, honest and complete love is depicted in the following letter that reveals her true feelings for Edith⁵⁸:

You wrote me a beautiful letter, — I wonder if you meant it to be as beautiful as it was. — I think you did; for somehow I know that your feeling for me, however slight it is, is of the nature of love. ... nothing that has happened to me for a long time has made me so happy as I shall be to visit you sometime. — You must not forget that you spoke of that, — because it would disappoint me cruelly. ... I shall try to bring a few quite nice things with me; I will get together all that I can, and then when you tell me to come, I will come, by the next train, just as I am. This is not meekness, be assured; I do not come naturally by meekness; know that it is a proud surrender to you; I don't talk like that to many people.

With love,

⁵⁷ Popova, M. (2022). The Greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time. *The Marginalian*. Available online at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/14/greatest-queer-love-letters/>

⁵⁸ Popova, M. (2022). The Greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time. *The Marginalian*. Available online at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/14/greatest-queer-love-letters/>

Vincent Millay

Questions on the love letters:

- What best describes the relationship between Millay and Matthison?
- Describe the emotions and feelings Millay has for Matthison.
- How would they have expressed their love to each other if they had lived in today's world?
- Can you analyze Millay's writing style?

3rd love letter: Oscar Wilde & Sir Alfred "Bosie" Douglas



Figure 17 Oscar Wilde (on the left), Bosie Douglas (on the right).
Source: Papava M. (2022), *The greatest LGBT Love Letters of all time*.

Oscar Wilde (1854 – 1900) was an important Irish poet and playwright whose reputation rests on his only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) and on his comic plays *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Importance of Being Ernest*. Wilde is an important figure for queer literature and culture and a symbol of freedom. He was sentenced to two years of hard labor because of his homosexuality. He was imprisoned multiple times for his crime of homosexuality, driven into bankruptcy and exile.

Lord Alfred Douglas (1870 – 1945), also known as Bosie Douglas was an English poet and journalist and Oscar Wilde's lover with whom they had a close but stormy relationship.

Their love affair began in June 1891. Bosie Douglas "was a 21-year-old Oxford undergraduate and talented poet who became the author's own Dorian Gray, his literary muse, his restless lover"⁵⁹. It was during this affair, that Wilde wrote some of his most notable literary works. During their relationship, they exchanged several love letters that prove Wilde's enormous capacity for verbally expressing his passionate love and his poetic romanticism.

Wilde's letter to Douglas⁶⁰:

In January 1893

My Own Boy,

Your sonnet is quite lovely, and it is a marvel that those red rose-leaf lips of yours should be made no less for the madness of music and song than for the madness of kissing. Your slim gilt soul walks between passion and poetry. I know Hyacinthus, whom Apollo loved so madly, was you in Greek days.

⁵⁹ Popova, M. (2022). The Greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time. *The Marginalian*. Available online at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/14/greatest-queer-love-letters/>

⁶⁰ Popova, M. (2022). The Greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time. *The Marginalian*. Available online at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/14/greatest-queer-love-letters/>

Why are you alone in London, and when do you go to Salisbury? Do go there to cool your hands in the grey twilight of Gothic things, and come here whenever you like. It is a lovely place and lacks only you; but go to Salisbury first.

Always, with undying love, yours,

Oscar

The following letter captures their stormy relationship⁶¹:

Dearest of All Boys — Your letter was delightful — red and yellow wine to me — but I am sad and out of sorts — Bosie — you must not make scenes with me — they kill me — they wreck the loveliness of life — I cannot see you, so Greek and gracious, distorted with passion; I cannot listen to your curved lips saying hideous things to me — don't do it — you break my heart.

I must see you soon — you are the divine thing I want — the thing of grace and genius — but but I don't know how to do it — Shall I come to Salisbury — ? There are many difficulties — my bill here is £49 for a week! I have also got a new sitting-room over the Thames — but you, why are you not here, my dear, my wonderful boy — ? I fear I must leave; no money, no credit, and a heart of lead —

Ever your own,

Oscar

After Wilde's conviction for two years imprisonment, he writes to Douglas⁶²:

My dearest boy,

This is to assure you of my immortal, my eternal love for you. Tomorrow all will be over. If prison and dishonor be my destiny, think that my love for you and this idea, this still more divine belief, that you love me in return will sustain me in my unhappiness and will make me capable, I hope, of bearing my grief most patiently. Since the hope, nay rather the certainty, of meeting you again in some world is the goal and the encouragement of my present life, ah! I must continue to live in this world because of that.

Questions on the love letters

- How would you describe the relationship between Wilde and Douglas?
- Describe the emotions and feelings Wilde expresses for Douglas in his letters.
- How would they have expressed their love to each other if they had lived in today's world?
- What subjects and metaphors does Wilde use in his letters to address Douglas? What is the significance of these words
- Analyze Wilde's expressive tone and writing style. Which words denote his passion and longing for his lover?

⁶¹ Popova, M. (2022). The Greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time. *The Marginalian*. Available online at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/14/greatest-queer-love-letters/>

⁶² Popova, M. (2022). The Greatest LGBT Love Letters of All Time. *The Marginalian*. Available online at: <https://www.themarginalian.org/2014/02/14/greatest-queer-love-letters/>

Expected Outcomes

Knowledge

Learners are expected to:

- Have a deeper understanding of the terms *prose writing* and *love letter*
- Critically analyze queer writing and examine themes related to human nature, queerness and LGBTQ+ love.
- Examine the sociopolitical circumstances (oppression, lack of sexual freedom) in which these works have been produced.
- Critically evaluate the social issues related to LGBTQ individuals.
- Examine how literature is linked to the expression of sexual and gender identity
- Exchange views on LGBTQ topics with their classmates.

Skills

Learners are expected to:

- Develop their critical and analytical thinking
- Develop their communication skills (express thoughts clearly and coherently and negotiate)
- Develop the trait of being an active listener
- Learn how to be part of a constructive discussion
- Improve their aesthetics
- Familiarize themselves with the vocabulary related to prose writing.

Attitudes

Learners are expected to:

- Adopt a reflective attitude (reflect on LGBTQ topics, show understanding towards the rights and needs of LGBTQ individuals).
- Display openness and genuine interest in the contributions of their classmates.
- Realize the importance of accepting and respecting the life choices of LGBTQ people.
- Comprehend the universality of human nature, feelings and relationships.
- Develop a more inclusive and open attitude towards people regardless of their sexual or gender identity.