



Understanding True Self — LGBTQ+ Lens: Craig Rodwell

Introduction

This lesson focuses on the ideal of understanding one's true self through the LGBTQ+ lens of Craig Rodwell. Some themes that could be explored with the lesson include childhood choices, gay rights pioneers, and the creation of Pride celebrations. Through the narrative of Craig Rodwell, students gain a new perspective on how childhood choices can affect an individual's true self and a new understanding of the importance of LGBTQ+ history.

This lesson was created as part of the Making Gay History / National Education Association Teaching Fellowship. Each lesson specifically uses a podcast episode and related resources from the *Making Gay History* podcast. These lessons have been created so that teachers across the country have the context and tools to bring archival audio from the *Making Gay History* podcast into middle and high school classrooms.

The *Making Gay History* podcast brings LGBTQ+ history to life through the voices of the people who lived it. We strive to create a world where everyone understands, respects, and honors the experiences and histories of LGBTQ+ people by providing engaging and accessible entry points to their largely hidden history. The podcast is hosted by historian and journalist Eric Marcus, who has been documenting LGBTQ+ history for more than 35 years.

Grade Level

Grades 9-12.

This lesson has been implemented in a multi-level English learner classroom that includes students from the 9th through 12th grades with varying English language proficiency levels, utilizing the WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework.

Disciplines / Unit Recommendations

This lesson was created for English language learners, embedded into the Hampton-Brown Edge: Reading, Writing & Language Level A curriculum, Unit 3: True Self. In this unit, attention to developing reading and writing skills is an integral part of the lesson.

Essential question: Do we find or create our true selves? (Discovery of struggles that people face about their identities.)

[WIDA](#) English Language Development Standard 2: English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success in the content area of Language Arts.

The lesson utilizes a modified [Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol \(SIOP\) Model](#) with specific target WIDA language domains (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) for multilingual learners. The visual and auditory components are comprehensive inputs that create a lesson that all multilingual learners will understand. The final product of the lesson—the Claim, Evidence, and Reasoning (CER) paragraph—is the summative assessment for the entire lesson.

Estimated Time

Two 90-minute block sessions.

Preparation

Note: It is recommended that you double-check all links as some may shift since they are not hosted by Making Gay History directly. If you come across any broken links, please let us know at hello@makinggayhistory.org.

- Listen to ***Making Gay History, Season 11, Episode 1: Craig Rodwell***.
bit.ly/mgh-rodwell

Note: As the teacher, you know your students and teaching situation best. It is always advised to listen to the full podcast episode individually before playing it for or assigning it to your students, just as you would review any text for classroom use. The *Making Gay History* podcast is produced for an adult audience and some language may be inappropriate for your students.

- Review the [lesson slide deck](#).
- Review the video [“Craig Rodwell: The Co-Creator of Pride”](#) (Making Gay History; 6 min.). The video is embedded on Slide 2 of the slide deck; if you have trouble playing it, the [backup link for the video](#) is included in the speaker notes.
Note: The video is captioned; if you prefer to show a version without captions, you can find it [here](#) (and hyperlinked in the Slide 2 speaker notes).
- Print copies of [handout 1](#) (“Five W’s and H Questions”) for you and your students.

- Print copies of the [episode transcript](#) for you and your students.
- Print copies of [handout 2](#) (“CER Graphic Organizer”) for you and your students.

Background

Craig Rodwell was a gay rights pioneer in both the pre-Stonewall homophile movement and the 1970s post-Stonewall gay liberation era. During the 1960s, Rodwell participated in several of the earliest LGBTQ+ rights demonstrations on record. In 1967, he opened the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, one of the first gay bookstores in the world. It quickly became a hub for gay rights organizing in New York City. In 1970, on the first anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, he co-organized the inaugural Christopher Street Liberation Day March—the blueprint for the Pride marches and celebrations now attended by millions of people around the world each year.

Lesson Plan

1. Play the 6-minute video, [“Craig Rodwell: The Co-Creator of Pride,”](#) embedded on Slide 2 (“Building Background”) of the [slide deck](#) (*WIDA listening domain*).
2. After the video has been viewed, distribute [handout 1](#) (“Five W's and H Questions”) and ask students to complete the graphic organizer (*WIDA writing domain*).
 - a. Allow students to work in pairs or small groups as a scaffold for those who do not have the English language proficiency level to complete the task individually.
 - b. Once the students have finished, allow them to compare answers.
 - c. Note that there are multiple correct answers to these questions. For example, in response to “When did this person address their true self?” the sample answer provided on Slide 3 is 1969—the year when Rodwell was inspired to co-create what would become the New York City Pride March in order to commemorate the Stonewall uprising and harness the explosive energy it had released. However, students might also argue for earlier dates referenced in the video, e.g., 1959, the year Rodwell first moved to New York City; 1965, the year he came up with the idea for the Annual Reminder protests in Philadelphia; or 1967, the year he opened the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, which served as a proudly visible LGBTQ+ community center. Similarly, there are multiple correct answers in response to “How did this person exhibit their true self?” (e.g., by organizing and protesting for LGBTQ+ rights, by founding the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, by co-organizing the first Pride celebration) and “Why did this person exhibit their true self?” (e.g., he was inspired to fight for LGBTQ+ rights after being unjustly arrested because of his sexual orientation).
 - d. Lead a discussion about the students’ answers, showing the sample answers on Slide 3 if helpful.

3. Play the [Making Gay History podcast episode](#) hyperlinked on Slide 4 (17 min. without credits), and have students read/reference the [episode transcript](#) while listening (*WIDA listening domain*).
4. Show the images on Slides 5-8 to present the essential question to students. Ask, “After listening to the interview, consider Craig Rodwell’s situation based on what he himself said. Did he find or create his true self?” Listen to students’ oral responses to gauge whether they understand the question (*WIDA speaking domain*).
5. Allow students time to find evidence in the transcript to support their answer to the essential question. Students can highlight and/or underline specifics within the transcript that support their claim (*WIDA listening and reading domains*).
6. Have students complete [handout 2](#) (“CER Graphic Organizer”) using direct quotes and/or evidence from the transcript (*WIDA writing domain*). Grade the CER graphic organizers utilizing the [WIDA Writing Scoring Scale](#).

Extension Activities

- Oral debate:
Once all CER graphic organizers are completed, pair up students with opposing claims to conduct a five-minute oral debate. Students may have their copy of the episode transcript at hand for reference (*WIDA speaking domain*). You can score the debate using the [WIDA Speaking Scoring Scale](#).
- Deeper exploration of the essential question: Do we find or create our true selves?
Have students do independent research on, or present them with additional examples of, individuals facing their own identities in order to deepen student understanding of how identity evolves.

About the Author: Dr. Alexander Tai

Dr. Alexander Tai is a high school multilingual learner specialist/educator in Columbia, Missouri. He has been a K-12 multilingual learner specialist/educator for 11 years, with international English teaching experience in Taiwan. Dr. Tai hopes teachers who implement this lesson in their own classrooms will appreciate the graphic organizers as furnishing multiple scaffolds for students’ academic success.