

# LGBTQ HISTORY TIMELINE



## OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students learn about important leaders and events throughout LGBTQ American history. They hear stories about Francis Bacon, a noted gay man who coined the term “masculine love”(1623), brilliant trans women of color, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, who led the revolution at Stonewall (1969), and when Audre Lorde, a critically acclaimed novelist, poet, and fierce civil rights activist is named as the state poet of New York (1991). Students are each given a History Card with an important event from LGBTQ history and are asked to guess their place in chronological order. This activity allows for the sharing of these often untold stories and also facilitates a much needed discussion about the erasure of LGBTQ history in what is considered American history, and the value of critical thinking in history classes. After examining the LGBTQ visibility (or invisibility) in their current history curriculum or textbooks, students proactively create newspaper articles to highlight the stories of LGBTQ leaders and bring them into the classroom.



## OBJECTIVES

Students will discuss important leaders and events in LGBTQ American history.

Students will examine current historical events being taught in their classes or written into their textbooks.

Students will access the visibility of LGBTQ people in American history.

Students will design a newspaper article to highlight a moment in LGBTQ American history.



## THINGS TO PREP & TOOLS NEEDED

BTQ History Timeline Handout, LGBTQ History Cards (cut out), lined paper, pencils, history textbook, syllabus, or books on American history.



## TIME

60 minutes.

## PREPARATION

1. Tell the group, “Today we’ll be learning about some major events and people in LGBTQ history in the United States. We’re about to do an activity. As we do this activity, think about what events and which people are usually being told in history. Whose perspectives are we hearing, and whose perspectives are being left out?”
  - (20 minutes) LGBTQ Timeline Activity: Give each student an LGBTQ History Card. Tell them to walk around, talk to each other, and begin to form a timeline from what event happened earliest to what event is the most recent. Designate one side of the room as earliest and one side as most

- recent. You may have to make two lines or a semi-circle, depending on the size of the room.
- Tell students that they have 10 minutes to find their event's place in LGBTQ history. When the time is up, students should just make a guess and choose a spot in the timeline. If they are having difficulty, encourage them to consider why they find this activity challenging.
  - After everyone is in a line, have each person read the event starting from the earliest to the most recent. After each person reads their card, ask them to guess what year the event happened. Use the LGBTQ History Timeline Handout to make adjustments or corrections as the students share. Have students shift their positions as they share so that by the end, the events are in chronological order.
  - To conclude the activity, remind students that when we hear about history, we often don't hear about the history of marginalized people and communities, or learn about the sexuality and/or gender identity of certain historical figures, such as Bayard Rustin.
  - (5 minutes) After the activity, ask students to return to their seats and facilitate a discussion with the group:
    - *What did you learn from this activity?*
    - *Why do you think this timeline difficult to build?*
2. (15 minutes) Pass out the LGBTQ History Timeline Handout to students for their reference. Give them a few minutes to look over the resource, and read some of the other events in LGBTQ history that weren't represented in the activity.
- Ask students to look through their own history textbooks or other available American history resources. In groups, have students look through these resources, searching for any mention of LGBTQ people and events.
  - Have students designate a recorder of the group to list examples of LGBTQ history that they find.
3. (10 minutes) In their groups, ask students to discuss their findings: How many examples were you able to find? Were you surprised by this? What identities do the people hold who were mentioned most in your resource?
- Ask groups to share with the class some of their findings and answers.
  - Ask the class: What other communities of people in the United States have had their history erased? What impact do you think this has on people who hold these identities? What impact do you think this has on people who don't hold these identities?
  - Why should it be important to show everyone's history when we learn about American history?
4. (10 minutes) Tell the class, "LGBTQ people should be represented in American history. Let's fill that gap by creating our own newspaper of historical LGBTQ events. Choose an event from the timeline and turn it into a newspaper article for that day in history. Put the event into your own words, and try to tell the story that has been erased. Newspaper articles are written to make people interested in the event, so think about a way to make sure your audience wants to learn more about your event when they're finished."

- Students who know of other LGBTQ history moments that aren't included in the timeline should be encouraged to write about those instead.
- You can go to [www.glsen.org/lgbtqhistory](http://www.glsen.org/lgbtqhistory) to see an interactive LGBTQ history timeline!
- Students can use the remainder of class to decide which historical figure or event they want to write about. They can begin their article in class, and complete it for homework, next class, or as an independent project.

## **FOLLOW UP/EXTENSIONS**

1. Student newspaper articles can be displayed in the hallway to teach other members in the school community about some important events in LGBTQ history.
2. Students can turn the newspaper articles into a blog about LGBTQ history to share with other classes.
3. Create an LGBTQ history timeline in your classroom, and have students write moments in history that stand out to them. Keep the timeline going and encourage students to add events that occur throughout the year.
4. Have students create a “visibility checklist,” where they preview their textbooks or other class materials to see who is being represented and whose story is being told

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIFFERENTIATION**

Students who need more of a challenge can be given a more obscure event in LGBTQ history during the opening activity. These students can be given lengthier or more challenging resources during the group activity. They can be challenged to take on one of the extensions as an independent project.

## **TAGS**

LGBTQ history

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS ACTIVITY? TELL US HOW IT WENT AND WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER!  
EMAIL US AT [STUDENTS@GLSEN.ORG](mailto:STUDENTS@GLSEN.ORG) OR [EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG](mailto:EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG).