

# Queer in Plain Sight: Using Everyday Social Studies to Engage in LGBTQ2IA+ Histories

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*This art-forward lesson explores well known historical figures who often have their sexuality left out of the narrative, and lesser-known LGBTQ2IA+ historical figures who deserve to be mentioned alongside them.*

Eleanor Roosevelt. Langston Hughes. Alexander the Great. Frida Kahlo. Hatshepsut. Walt Whitman. These famous names are notable historical figures commonly taught in social studies curriculums across the country, often without much controversy. Because they are seen as “elemental” to many World and U.S. histories, they mostly remain in standardized curriculum while recent censorship of content concerning race, gender, and sexuality has alternately removed other historical figures from classrooms. These figures’ hefty name-dropping status and well-known impact on history links them together. But all of the names above have another thing in common: All are thought to have identities on the LGBTQ2IA+ spectrum (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Two-Spirit, Intersex, Asexual and other identities outside cisgender and heteronormative identities).

But what about Pauli Murray, Bayard Rustin, the Sacred Band of Thebes, Amelio Robles Ávila, Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum, or We’wha? They are all transformational history makers with identities on the LGBTQ2IA+ spectrum, and they are contemporaries of or connected to the figures above in various ways. Yet they are not nearly as ensconced in mainstream (white, Western, male, cisgender) historical canons, nor as represented in K–5 public school curriculums.<sup>1</sup> This article contains a lesson encouraging young people to ask and answer why this is the case, uncovering multimodal forms of artistic “seeing” and expression of both others and themselves in the process. The lesson is a cross-disciplinary social studies activity for general education teachers, or a collaboration with art educators who can provide visual inquiry tools/supplies.<sup>2</sup> Using arts-based methods to promote “see-

ing” historical identities in multiple ways is key. Unlike race and gender, which are sometimes more easily identifiable, queerness as a social identity can often be invisible and/or invisibilized and thus is easily left out when talking about historical figures. Thus, historical inquiry that uses multiple mediums of expression to emphasize the various layers and ways to see one’s identity (acknowledging how people are shaped by gender and sexuality *and* by race, class, religion, and much more) is a valuable way to have students examine the many intersectional parts of a historical figure’s life, especially their LGBTQ2IA+-ness.

True, there has arguably never been a tougher time to teach histories relating to sexuality in K–5 classrooms. And yet there has arguably never been a more critical, crucial time to do so—because for students and all of us, seeing means believing, connecting, and including. To combat attacks on LGBTQ2IA+ ways of being and knowing, young people must see parts of themselves reflected in the history they learn and must learn histories of people who *do not* live, love, and interact with the world quite like them. Teaching LGBTQ2IA+ history is more than a curricular add-on. When taught from a place that centers joy over trauma, it is a necessary and powerful pedagogical tool that can bolster students’ wellbeing, health, and acceptance of themselves and others.<sup>3</sup>

This lesson models how arts-based inquiry can expose K–5 students to frequently taught historical figures whose queerness is rarely mentioned. In turn, those so-called big historical names in social studies standards can open doors to their lesser-known and uncommonly included LGBTQ2IA+ historical contemporaries, expanding how students see queer history as a part of everyday social studies and introducing necessary, multifaceted discussions about what parts of people’s lives get silenced in historical narratives. As with Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latine, disability, and so many genres of history, queer history *is* history, point

blank. It is U.S. history, it is World history, and historical figures with identities that overlap in these legacies deserve to be known in all their fullness. More than that, students deserve to learn them.

## A Note on Presentism

Complexities with presentism undoubtedly arise when contemporary language, such as representations behind the LGBTQ2IA+ acronym, is used to describe practices and identities of people in the past. This applies to figures in this lesson. Yet rethinking presentism “requires us to think more explicitly, self-reflexively, and critically about how past and present are related to the goals and purposes of history education.”<sup>4</sup> Thinking about complicated issues of the past, such as gender and sexuality in today’s classrooms with young people, can actually deepen conversations about the language used to write history and what happens when we reach back from the current day to recollect and make sense of concepts that have survived from the past. In other words, using today’s language about sexuality and identity is not an exact match to language used in the historical eras

inhabited by those featured in this lesson, but that tension in itself offers up a commentary about history-making over time. More specifically, students might consider what has changed in respect to terminology but perhaps not meaning, and what responsibilities we have in the current day to use history toward better futures, even as we interpret the past imperfectly.

It is also important to explore with students that language describing sexuality, including gender-affirming pronouns, has changed over time and across cultures—for instance, Hatshepsut (1507–1458 B.C.) wore a king’s headdress but would not have called herself “androgynous,” as the word was not used until the 1600s.<sup>5</sup> In this context, it also must be noted that many historical figures, including those in this lesson like Eleanor Roosevelt, were perhaps not “out,” or did not have their sexuality formally recorded by historians due to destroyed evidence and private lives, whether chosen or forced. These outcomes might have been byproducts of the fear and distrust felt while living in societies that denied human rights and punished non-heteronormative behavior.<sup>6</sup> But again, this itself is a historical nuance to discuss with

Figure 1 Example K–5 Social Standards for Content Connection

### Texas<sup>1</sup>

**Grade 1, 12.B.** “The student understands characteristics of good citizenship as exemplified by historical figures...such as Benjamin Franklin and **Eleanor Roosevelt**.”

**Grade 4, 15.D.** “...the student is expected to identify the importance of historical figures and important individuals who modeled active participation in the democratic process such as Sam Houston, **Barbara Jordan**, Lorenzo de Zavala, Ann Richards, Henry B. González, Wallace Jefferson, and other local individuals.”

### Washington, D.C.<sup>2</sup>

**Kindergarten, K.2.** “Identify different kinds of families and caregivers within a community (e.g., single-parent, blended, grandparent-headed, conditionally separated, foster, **LGBTQ+**, multiracial), and explain the importance of demonstrating respect for all people.”

**Kindergarten, K.15.** “Explain important contributions individuals with **different gender**, racial, religious and ethnic identities and ability statuses have made to the community.”

**Grade 2, 2.15.** “Compare and describe basic features of government of early civilizations...the pharaohs of Egypt...(e.g., identify patrilineal and matrilineal practices; **Hatshepsut** was a female pharaoh of Egypt).”

**Grade 5, 5.17.** “Compare the different artistic, cultural, political, and spiritual traditions of current-day Indigenous peoples and how those practices and ways of life persevered and still thrive today, including **Two-Spirit** identities.”

### Colorado<sup>3</sup>

**Grade 1, Standard 1, b.** “Discuss common and unique characteristics of different cultures, including African American, Latino, Asian American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, Indigenous Peoples, **LGBTQ**, and religious minorities, using multiple sources of information.”

**Grade 3, Standard 1, c.** “Describe the history, interaction, and contribution of various peoples and cultures, including African American, Latino, Asian American, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous Peoples, **LGBTQ**, and religious minorities that have lived in or migrated to a community or region and how that migration has influenced change and development.”

### Notes

1. Texas Social Studies TEKS, Texas Administrative Code § 113
2. Washington, DC K–12 Social Studies Standards, 2023.
3. Colorado Academic Standards: Social Studies, 2022.

students and can be a location from which to examine the lives of LGBTQ2IA+ historical figures with greater depth and understanding.

## The Lesson

### Notes to Educators before the Lesson

There are no explicit grade-level recommendations because K–5 social studies content vastly varies by grade level and state—for instance, 5<sup>th</sup> grade for some states means U.S. nation-building (Ohio), while for others it is Aztec and Inca civilizations plus Medieval Europe and Africa (Louisiana). Time periods and historical figures mentioned in this article cut across most major curriculum blocks for each K–5 grade, so the lesson can be modified according to grade level and used in multiple ways throughout social studies years.

Moreover, many of those K–5 social studies curriculum blocks attend to local communities and history. Thus, I encourage you to find regional examples to add to this lesson’s list of figures. Connections to local history are just one way to tether this lesson to your state’s existing social studies standards (see Figure 1). For instance, if I were teaching in Texas, I would add the celebrated former United States Representative Barbara Jordan as a local example of someone remembered for accomplishments. Jordan was the first Black woman elected to Congress from the South, and yet her identity as a lesbian was quieted and obscured by records, such as her biography on the House of Representative’s website that notes she “never married,” leaving out her decades-long companion and occasional speechwriter Nancy Earl.<sup>7</sup> In this example, the “portrait” of Jordan I would use would be the famous bronze statue at University of Texas at Austin, where she stands proudly facing off, hands on hips under towering live oaks, a former plantation home across the street.<sup>8</sup> Per the lesson theme, Jordan’s fame in Texas would then be a curricular chance to bring in another pioneer in the state’s politics such as Texas’s first openly transgender mayor Jess Herbst (New Hope, Texas). For more extensive lists and biographies of LGBTQ2IA+ figures, see *The Trevor Project’s LGBTQ History: Moments and Figures* and Michael Bronski’s *A Queer History of the United States for Young People*.<sup>9</sup>

Also, the social studies curriculum blocks per grade level spend significant time—often in K–2—on family life, another opportunity to connect the lesson to state standards (Figure 1). It is imperative here, and always, to present LGBTQ2IA+ history as everyday: full of challenges but joy, hardship but resilience, and at times, social stigmatization but also allyship, community, and solidarity. When presenting same-sex families in this context, and historical figures in most contexts, protect yourself if needed with content ties to standards, and when possible, strength in numbers with other teachers, perhaps across disciplines (see sidebar for further considerations).<sup>10</sup> But remember, it is not controversial to talk about LGBTQ2IA+ histories any more than it is to talk

about heterosexual histories, and students need to see that sentiment modeled at a young age. By teaching this material, you are not only letting LGBTQ2IA+-identifying students know they belong in the curriculum, have value, and have always existed, but you are modeling that being gay is as normal in history as it is in life. There is nothing controversial about teaching people who have led transformational, world-changing lives that also happen to be queer lives. That is just called teaching history.

### Before you start...

These lesson recommendations are all suggestions. You know your students best and how much time they will want to walk through a gallery wall, how they will react to histories that include oppression and injustice, and more. Before this lesson, think about how you have previously covered queer history in this classroom space, who your students are, and how they are treated in the school culture. Consider the following:

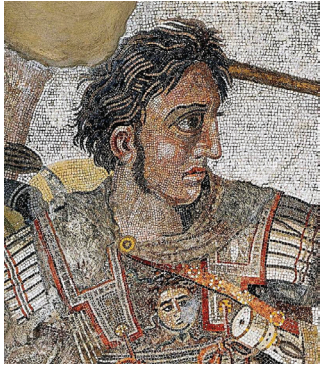
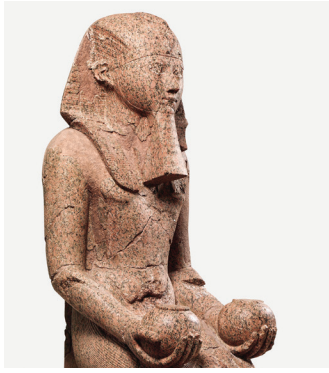
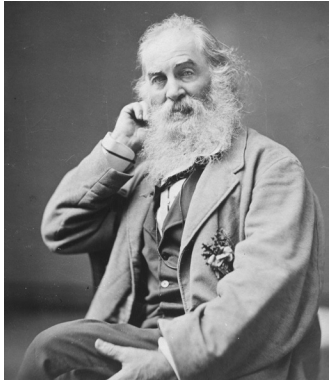
- Will this topic be brand new to some?
- Is there a student who is perhaps coming to terms with their own sexuality who will be doubly impacted by this?
- Have there been issues of gendered bullying in the past?
- Do you think it makes sense to give your administrator a heads up that this lesson is about to take place?
- Do your students have enough experience in media literacy and internet searches of historical figures to carry out the lesson well?

Asking questions like this ahead of time will help you think through how you will introduce then handle the lesson, and how you will scaffold content knowledge ahead of time. For help with scaffolding, consider Learning for Justice’s resources on how to cover gender and sexual identity ([www.learningforjustice.org/topics/gender-sexual-identity](http://www.learningforjustice.org/topics/gender-sexual-identity)) and think about applying J. A. Banks’s “four-tiered approach” to teaching LGBTQ2IA+ issues. See J. A. Banks, “Approaches to Multicultural Education Reform,” in J. A. Banks and C. A. McGee (eds.), *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Hoboken: Wiley, 2010), 233–258.

### Lesson Overview

Both in the words of historians after the fact and in primary source documents that survive in collections and archives, Alexander the Great, Hatshepsut, Walt Whitman, Eleanor Roosevelt, Langston Hughes, and Frida Kahlo may have identified themselves on the LGBTQ2IA+ spectrum, as understood today. Alexander the Great had a romantic and

Table 1

"Well-Known" LGBTQ2IA+ Historical Figures	"Lesser-Known" LGBTQ2IA+ Historical Figures
 <p><b>Alexander the Great (365–323 B.C.)</b> Medium: tile mosaic</p> <p>Adapted art medium/supplies for classroom: pieces of broken tile, if available, and craft glue, or torn pieces of different colored construction paper, glue stick and paper plates to assemble on</p> <p>Image: Alexander Mosaic, House of the Faun, Pompeii, Wikimedia Commons</p>	<p>Another fighting force to be reckoned with in ancient World History:</p> <p><b>Sacred Band of Thebes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formed between 379 and 378 B.C.</li> <li>• an elite corps of 300 Theban soldiers comprised of 150 pairs of male lovers believed to have been so powerful because men would fight more valiantly to save their lover than a stranger</li> <li>• ended Spartan military domination</li> <li>• destroyed by Philip II of Macedon, Alexander’s father, in 338 B.C.</li> </ul> <p>See James Flynn, “Lovers and Soliders,” <i>Humanities</i> (2021), <a href="http://www.neh.gov/article/lovers-and-soldiers">www.neh.gov/article/lovers-and-soldiers</a>.</p>
 <p><b>Hatshepsut (1507–1458 B.C.)</b> Medium: granite</p> <p>Adapted art medium/supplies for classroom: modeling clay</p> <p>Image: Large Kneeling Statue of Hatshepsut (Rogers Fund, 1929) The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Public Domain</p>	<p>Other famous Egyptians known for disrupting normative gender norms:</p> <p><b>Khnumhotep &amp; Niankhkhnum (2613–2181 B.C.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from the 5th dynasty of Egypt during the Old Kingdom</li> <li>• recognized as the first same-sex couple in recorded history</li> <li>• were Overseers of the Manicurists of the Palace of the King</li> <li>• are the only men shown embracing and holding hands in their tomb in the necropolis at Saqqara, Egypt, and are in places with each other where wives would normally be shown while their wives are all but erased</li> <li>• in one portrayal, surrounded by family, their noses touch, the most intimate pose allowed by formal Egyptian art</li> </ul> <p>See “Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum,” <i>Making Queer History</i>, December 20, 2016, <a href="http://www.makingqueerhistory.com/articles/2016/12/20/khnumhotep-and-niankhkhnum-and-occams-razor">www.makingqueerhistory.com/articles/2016/12/20/khnumhotep-and-niankhkhnum-and-occams-razor</a>.</p>
 <p><b>Walt Whitman (1819–1892)</b> Medium: photography</p> <p>Adapted art medium/supplies for classroom: polaroid camera or any laptop or tablet with a front-facing camera</p> <p>Image: Photograph by Mathew B. Brady, c. 1867, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Feinberg, CC0</p>	<p>Another deeply spiritual artist, creator, and cultural zeitgeist for their people:</p> <p><b>We’wha (1849–1896)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a lhamana (Zuni Two Spirited) person from the area known today as New Mexico, who was born male bodied and took on social and ceremonial roles generally performed by women in the community</li> <li>• served as a spiritual leader and cultural ambassador for the Zuni, even visiting the White House in 1886</li> <li>• a weaver and artist who was hired by friend Matilda Coxé Stevenson to make pottery that would exhibit at D.C.’s National Museum.</li> <li>• arrested by the U.S. government when they surrounded the Zuni, held for a month in jail without trial, and walked home 40 miles in New Mexico’s winter once freed</li> </ul> <p>See Mariana Brandman, “We’wha,” <i>National Women’s History Museum</i>, <a href="http://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/wewha">www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/wewha</a>.</p>



**Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962)** Medium: oil paint

Adapted art medium/supplies for classroom: any kind of paints available (oil and canvas preferred)

Image: Portrait of Eleanor Roosevelt by Douglas Chandor, 1949 White House Historical Association. Reprinted with permission

Another brilliant political mind who also championed rights for women and racial equality:

**Pauli Murray (1910–1985)**

- civil rights leader and activist who fought racism and sexism
- served in a Civilian Conservation Corp program as a young adult that was set up and visited by Eleanor Roosevelt and became a friend to Roosevelt through her life's end via 1940s activist correspondence
- was rejected from University of North Carolina due to her race, Harvard Law School due to her gender (despite a support letter from FDR), and attended Howard Law School as the only woman in her class, experiencing sexism and racism she dubbed "Jane Crow"
- served on the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, a co-founder of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and a co-founder of CORE along with Rustin (see below)
- worked with MLK, A. Philip Randolph, and other civil right leaders, but critiqued their male-dominated leadership in the civil rights movement

See "Who is the Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray?" Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice, [www.paulimurraycenter.com/who-is-pauli](http://www.paulimurraycenter.com/who-is-pauli).



**Langston Hughes (1902–1967)** Medium: pastels

Adapted art medium/supplies for classroom: pastels, if available, or pencil and crayon combinations

Image: *Langston Hughes*, by Winold Reiss, ca. 1925, pastel on illustration board, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; gift of W. Tjark Reiss, in memory of his father, Winold Reiss, ©Estate of Winold Reiss. Reprinted with permission

Another African American activist for Black rights:

**Bayard Rustin (1912–1987)**

- a founding member of CORE (Congress on Racial Equality)
- helped to organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Freedom Rides, and multiple Marches on Washington
- advisor and strategist to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party, and others, but often behind the scenes due to prejudice of his sexuality
- given Medal of Freedom posthumously by President Barack Obama, accepted by lifelong partner Walter Naegle

See Zachary Clary, "The Real History Behind Netflix's 'Rustin' Movie," *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2, 2023, [www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-real-history-behind-netflixs-rustin-movie-180983158/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/the-real-history-behind-netflixs-rustin-movie-180983158/) and the Netflix feature film *Rustin*.



**Frida Kahlo (1907–1954)** Medium: oil paint

Adapted art medium/supplies for classroom: any kind of paints available (oil and canvas preferred)

Image: *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, by Frida Kahlo, 1940, oil on canvas, (c) The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/ Art Resource, NY, Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. Reprinted with permission

Another activist and gender non-conformist influenced and active in the Mexican Revolution:

**Amelio Robles Ávila (1889–1984)**

- one of the first trans soldiers in Mexican history
- Zapatista who fought in Mexican Revolution and later became a colonel
- assigned female at birth, lived openly as a man from age 24 until death at age 95
- officially recognized as a veteran and received the Revolutionary Merit award (Medalla al mérito revolucionario)

See Boyd Cothran, Joan Judge, and Adrian Shubert (eds.), *Women Warriors and National Heroes: Global Histories* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

possibly sexual relationship with his partner Hephaestion but was heterowashed with bisexual erasure (portrayed as heterosexual by erasing bisexuality) since ancient times, until recent historical research revealed more complex truths.<sup>11</sup> Hatshepsut, once Queen Regent, later crowned herself King of Upper and Lower Egypt and was often depicted with an androgynous if not masculine body and features such as a royal beard, a *shendyt*-kilt, and nemes headdress.<sup>12</sup> Walt Whitman had romances with many men, including streetcar driver Peter Doyle.<sup>13</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt had “a lengthy and intimate relationship with journalist Lorena Hickok,” as well as other lesbian-identifying women who are now recognized as her life-partners.<sup>14</sup> Frida Kahlo had supposed affairs with Georgia O’Keefe and Josephine Baker and painted her love for women in pieces such as 1938’s *What the Water Gave Me*.<sup>15</sup> And Langston Hughes is said to have preferred men romantically but was even perhaps asexual by today’s standards.<sup>16</sup> Again, claiming that any of these figures fit snugly into 2024 categories of what it means to be LGBTQ2IA+ is impossible and beside the point. The ethos of this exercise instead lies in exploring multiple expressions of sexuality and gender that existed in historical figures throughout time with students, so they can question and notice how expansive queer history and gayness itself has been and can be. The directions below provide an overview for how to do this in a longer unit, or via a three-day, 40 minutes per day, 120 minute total lesson plan (40 minutes per section). For step-by-step descriptions, see Table 1. As mentioned, depending on your circumstances, you might tie this to greater social studies themes of oneself and the world concerning families, communities and greater civilizations, or to particular curriculum in your standards concerning ancient societies, local history, or U.S./World history.

### Section 1: How We See Historical Figures We Maybe Already Know

Have images of the “portraits” of the initial group of six, more well-known historical figures printed and assembled in a gallery wall around the classroom. Each visual image of the figure will have their name underneath so students can research them online after looking at their likeness. Have a set of basic inquiry questions, overall directions, and the following questions visible for students:

- Do you recognize the historical figure shown? If so, where do you know them from/where have you seen them before?
- How has the artist captured their image? Do you notice differences between the ways they are pictured and the materials artists used to do so?
- What do you notice about the historical figures when it comes to their identity in the world?

As students walk in or as the lesson begins, they will participate in a gallery wall walk that includes portraits and

likenesses of well-known historical figures that have perhaps not had their gayness celebrated or openly cited in history canons (see Table 1). Ask them to take in each image for a minute at a time (6 minutes total), suggesting they interact with others and think through if they recognize the historical figures, and if so, from where. Encourage them to touch the image and look at it from different angles (i.e., from the side, sitting or lying on the floor, etc.) and remind them that no detail they visually notice is insignificant or too small. After this gallery walk, students will share their observations of the images as a class, noting details and differences in the depictions and how the artist captured each likeness (10 minutes).

Students will then split into groups of six and each get assigned one of the gallery “stops” or historical figures. After group internet or book research on their assigned figure (10 minutes), one group at a time will share what made these figures so famous.<sup>17</sup> The teacher will then share that while other parts of these historical figures are talked about, something that did not come up as much that is important to know is that these figures are understood to be LGBTQ2IA+. The class will then engage in a discussion using the guiding questions below about why students think this part of the figures’ identity is often left out or sometimes not shared as openly as their race, gender, or accomplishments (14 minutes).

- Why do you think some parts of people are celebrated, while other parts are given less attention, forgotten, or worse, erased by others? Why do you think only parts of people’s life stories are told, yet others are left out?
- When it comes to these figures, why do you think you knew most of them from other parts of their identity and their other life achievements, instead of anything about how they built their family, who they loved, or their sexuality?
- Do you think people still leave out or don’t celebrate certain parts of what makes people who they are today when it comes to how we remember them and tell their stories? If yes or no, why and how do you think so?<sup>18</sup>

### Section 2: How We See Ourselves

Students will split into the same groups (6 total) to create their own depiction of *themselves* using the same art medium they saw in the portraits of their assigned historical figure (modeling clay, laptops with a front-facing camera, paints, torn construction paper, etc.; see Table 1) (30 minutes). Before they begin, have these guiding questions up and ask students:

- How would you like to be remembered and seen in history by people who come later?
- Are there any parts of your identity and who you are that get overlooked in certain places? Are there parts of your identity and who you are that speak louder for you and/or take up more space than other parts do?
- How do you feel about people seeing the parts of you that are hard to hide, and maybe not seeing the parts

that are harder to notice?

- Are there any parts of you that you can't see with your eyes, but that are a big part of who you are that you want people to know and will include here in your portrait?

With that explored and completed, they will add their own likenesses to the gallery wall next to the existing figures (for the group using modeling clay/mosaic pieces, use horizontal surfaces). If there is time after portrait creations, students can share how they chose to show themselves in the portrait, what they wanted people to see, and what they want history to remember about them (10 minutes).<sup>19</sup>

### Section 3: How We See Historical Figures We Maybe Didn't Know

Students in the same groups will now apply the same artistic medium to creating a depiction of a *new* historical figure that you share with them, someone linked to the original figure they were first assigned (see Table 1). After briefly researching the life and history of this new figure using the internet and pre-pulled books (7 minutes), they will create the figure's portrait using the assigned art medium matching the first figure's portrait (20 minutes). For instance, students who were assigned Frida Kahlo who painted self-portraits will depict Amelio Robles Ávila in paint; those assigned to Hatshepsut who made their likeness in clay and will use modeling clay to form/carve Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum, etc. Once this is completed, each group will share who their figure is, what they have in common with the first figure, why they think they have not been talked about as much as the first figure, and what they learned while they researched them and/or created their portrait (13 minutes, 2 minutes per group). After ending with why they think it is important to see this historical figure as much as the first, they will add the new portrait to the class gallery wall. The gallery will now, in six stations, feature the original depiction of the well-known historical figure, student self-portraits in their unique art mediums, and artistic depictions of the "new" LGBTQ2IA+ historical figures—the Sacred Band of Thebes, Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum, We'wha, Pauli Murray, Bayard Rustin, and Amelio Robles Ávila—that students created together.<sup>20</sup> Leave the gallery wall up for as long as possible to remind students that LGBTQ2IA+ historical figures should be seen, just like them, as full human beings by history and peers.<sup>21</sup>

### After the Lesson's End

As an educator, know that you are just getting started. Consider how this lesson won't be the stand-alone queer history representation for the year, or covered only when pride is celebrated. Reflect too on how such an activity has primed your students to understand concepts that relate to power, multiple identities, and representation such as intersectionality, and how you might go further into cat-

egories explicitly discussing race, gender, class, and more in ways this lesson did not. Also, the so-called well-known and lesser-known groups were based on who is represented in K–5 textbooks and standards, not whose cultural knowledge is already known to students. How will you tap into community cultural wealth<sup>22</sup> and have students bring their own racial/ethnic/gender heroes with identities that intersect with a spectrum of sexualities into lessons? Lastly, think about how you will continue to weave the content of both well-known and unsung LGBTQ2IA+ historical figures into your teaching and the supports required to do so (consider GLSEN and Facing History and Ourselves to start, and reach out to local queer community groups).<sup>23</sup> Doing this work is vital for both the wellbeing and culturally sustained learning of straight and LGBTQ2IA+ students alike, but it is impossible to do alone. In times when some of the most beautiful parts of who young people are are being condemned for political profit, cross-collaborative partnerships with local community groups, with fellow educators across subject matters, and with families and others who care to truly uphold inclusivity in curriculum are not just strength in numbers that can protect educators. It is an unwavering *you matter* to non-heteronormative students. It is a continuation of interdisciplinary conversations centering LGBTQ2IA+ identities and wisdom that never disappeared in similarly challenging times and will not now. It is a refusal to diminish any part of who children already are and are constantly becoming and a celebration of a history that is constantly becoming as well. ■

### Notes

1. Jen Earley and Corey R. Sell, "Using the Inquiry Design Model to Reveal Pauli Murray's Story: A Fierce Advocate," *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 36, no. 1 (2023): 15–20.
2. If you have less curricular freedom to do a whole lesson on gay historical figures and/or do not feel safe doing so in your area, consider splitting the activity into six mini-lessons each time a historical figure mentioned fits in with existing content (e.g., Eleanor Roosevelt and Pauli Murray would be introduced with U.S. History units, Alexander the Great and The Sacred Band of Thebes with ancient or global history, etc.).
3. Joanna Batt and Jaden Janak, "Finding Pride: Teaching Trans History in Secondary Social Studies," *Social Education* 86, no. 3 (2022): 170–175; Xiaoying Zhao and Christie Angleton, "Critical Identity Literacy with Young Learners: Exploring Gender and Race at the Intersection of Social Studies and Visual Arts," *Social Studies and the Young Learner* 35, no. 1 (2022): 19–25.
4. James Miles and Lindsay Gibson, "Rethinking Presentism in History Education," *Theory & Research in Social Education* 50, no. 4 (2022): 521.
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6. Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States for Young People*, adapted by Richie Chevat (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019).
7. Heterosexual partners and spouses are mentioned explicitly on other congresspeople's webpages. See "JORDAN, Barbara Charline," History, Art & Archives, United States House of Representatives, <https://history.house.gov/People/Detail/16031>; Jessie Kratz, "LGBTQ+ History Month: Barbara Jordan," National Archives: Pieces of History, June 10, 2021, <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2021/06/10/lgbtq-history-month-barbara-jordan/>.

8. Robert Faires, "The Barbara Jordan Statue at UT: A Welcome Return to a Champion of Justice," *The Austin Chronicle*, April 24, 2009, [www.austinchronicle.com/arts/2009-04-24/770404/](http://www.austinchronicle.com/arts/2009-04-24/770404/).
9. See The Trevor Project's *LGBTQ History: Moments and Figures*, [www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/LGBTQ-History.pdf](http://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/LGBTQ-History.pdf); Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States for Young People*.
10. Consider sharing the lesson with fellow teachers who teach other grades so they can replicate the lesson per content area as they cover it as well. This not only creates continuity and cross-disciplinary learning over multiple grades, but also, if needed, provides built-in solidarity for teachers who are concerned about doing this work on their own.
11. Trudy Ring, "Yes, There's Evidence that Alexander the Great Was Gay or Bi," *The Advocate*, February 19, 2024, [www.advocate.com/history/alexander-great-gay-bi-netflix](http://www.advocate.com/history/alexander-great-gay-bi-netflix).
12. Aude Semat and Mona Eltahawy. "Challenging Power through Gender Representation." The Met Museum, [www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/articles/2022/6/hatshepsut-gender-representation](http://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/articles/2022/6/hatshepsut-gender-representation); for ancient figures, like Alexander the Great and Hatshepsut, be sure to discuss with students how the cultural and societal norms of their time differ from our modern conceptions of gender, gender presentation, and sexuality.
13. Jim O'Grady, "How Walt Whitman Became a Gay Icon," WNYC, New York Public Radio, May 13, 2019, [www.wnyc.org/story/how-walt-whitman-became-gay-icon/](http://www.wnyc.org/story/how-walt-whitman-became-gay-icon/).
14. "LGBTQ Val-Kill," Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, National Park Service, [www.nps.gov/elro/learn/historyculture/lgbtqi.htm](http://www.nps.gov/elro/learn/historyculture/lgbtqi.htm). See also Susan Ferentinos, *Courage to Love: Gender and Sexuality in the Life of Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: National Park Service, 2023).
15. Charlotte Grimwade, "Frida Kahlo: Artist, Activist, Bi Icon," *Diva*, September 22, 2022, <https://diva-magazine.com/2022/09/22/frida-kahlo-bisexual/>.
16. "Langston Hughes," National Museum of African American History and Culture, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/langston-hughes>.
17. Consider having some autobiographies already pulled from the library or websites such as National Geographic Kids or the Library of Congress highlighted for students.
18. The C3 Framework focus indicator undergirding this section is D2.His.6.9–12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced. While these focus indicators are mainly written for grades 9–12, they are possible at the K–5 level.
19. The C3 Framework focus indicator undergirding this section is D2.His.7.9–12. Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.
20. Each station shares one common art medium across all three renditions (original historical figure, self-expression, and "new" historical figure), and each station has contrasting art mediums (paint, clay modeling, photography, etc.).
21. The C3 Framework focus indicator undergirding this section is D3.1.9–12. Gather relevant information from multiple sources representing a wide range of views while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.
22. Tara J. Yosso, "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8, no. 1 (2005): 69–91.
23. "LGBTQ Resources for Educators," Heinemann Blog, <https://blog.heinemann.com/lgbtq-resources-for-educators>.

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