

OUT in school

**Talking about sexual orientation and challenging
homophobia across the Key Stage 4 curriculum**



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There are lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students, staff, parents and governors in most, if not all, secondary schools. Many school communities are developing the confidence to acknowledge their LGB members and encourage the kind of open discussion about sexual orientation that is necessary to ensure that LGB students will be as confident and successful as their heterosexual peers. We have put together the *Out In School* resource pack to make it easier for you to do this within school lessons and assemblies.

Why is it important to discuss same-sex relationships in school?

For young people, the 'ordinariness' of heterosexual relationships is constantly affirmed. This is particularly true in school where they encounter them every day in History, English, Drama and Geography lessons. If other forms of difference, such as ethnicity, gender and ability, are discussed while same-sex relationships are not, this can undermine efforts to challenge homophobia. It can also make it harder for LGB students to feel confident about expressing their sexuality.

The New Secondary Curriculum specifically mentions discussion of same sex relationships, as well as the promotion of equality of opportunity for all and the importance of diversity. You can read more about this later on page 6.

Any other reasons?

Homophobic bullying is now endemic in many secondary schools. It affects numerous young people, not just those who identify as LGB. Many of these will fail to achieve their educational potential.

Young people who are homophobically bullied are less likely to do well at school and this has implications for their future life chances. They are more likely to truant, to leave school at 16, to harm themselves or to attempt suicide.

Ask your class how often they hear words like 'gay' used as an insult or put-down. Young people can be helped to understand the impact of generalised homophobic language if the issue is discussed alongside racism, sexism and other types of discrimination.

How can this resource pack help me to do this?

Out In School provides teachers and other school staff with ideas they can use to talk about sexual orientation and same-sex relationships in the classroom. We do not intend this to be a programme or scheme of work (although some of the ideas are presented in the form of lesson ideas). Instead, we want to provide suggestions about how you can promote discussions about the lives of LGB people alongside other work which promotes inclusion and challenges inequalities.

It also includes details of relevant legislation and sources of guidance and support, should you need them.

So it's just ideas for PSHE lessons?

No, it's much broader than that.

In the past, discussion of LGB relationships within the curriculum – if it happened at all – was frequently confined to Sex and Relationships Education. This served to perpetuate the mistaken impression that same-sex relationships are primarily about sexual activity, although few of us see heterosexual relationships in these limited terms.

We hope that the ideas in this resource will show that, while LGB people experience the same kind of challenges as those in many other communities, they also have many of the same aspirations in terms of relationships, careers and parenthood.

What subjects does it cover?

You will find ideas for incorporating discussion of same-sex relationships into everything from Geography to modern foreign languages. They link to existing parts of the Key Stage 4 curriculum; particularly in PSHE, Citizenship, Religious Education and English.

We hope the additional materials will also give teachers ideas about how they can include LGB people within wider discussions of relationships and marriage, diversity, religion, language, literature, the importance of challenging prejudice and being respectful of others.

How should we use these resources?

You can adapt and change the material to suit your own needs or select particular elements that appeal to you. You might find the plenary or extension sections of the lesson ideas could suggest whole new lessons.

Most importantly, the majority of the ideas have been written by practising teachers and all have been used in classrooms by a range of practitioners.

Who is really going to benefit from this?

Since January 2001 the age of consent has been equal at 16 for lesbians, gay men and heterosexuals.¹ Since December 2005, same-sex couples who have registered a civil partnership have had many of same rights as married couples.² However, despite these advances, many LGB members of school communities are afraid to be open about their sexual orientation – a right which their heterosexual colleagues take for granted.

Talking about the lives of LGB people in the same way as we do members of other communities will help LGB staff, governors, students and parents to be open about their sexual orientation without fear of discrimination.

It's a sensitive subject: why make the effort?

Schools confidently promote diversity and challenge prejudice and discrimination towards other groups by:

- celebrating the ethnic diversity of their communities
- promoting the achievements of women
- challenging preconceptions about the opportunities available to disabled people.

Out In School should help teachers to develop the same confidence when talking about LGB relationships.

By acknowledging that LGB people are present in all communities, we help to challenge the foundations of prejudice. By acknowledging same-sex relationships, we affirm that discussing sexual orientation – just as we discuss ethnicity, faith or gender – is acceptable and contributes to our understanding of the world.

1 http://www.stonewall.org.uk/information_bank/criminal_law/66.asp

2 <http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/civilpartnership/cpbooklet2005.pdf>

Legislation, guidance and support

Here is a brief summary of the legislation and guidance that supports schools and teachers in discussing same-sex relationships and sexual orientation in the classroom. (You can find further information on each organisation's website).

Legislation

Every Child Matters ³

This requires that young people "feel safe from bullying and discrimination" and "choose not to bully or discriminate".
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Ofsted ⁴

Ofsted self-evaluation forms schools have to report how they ensure that learners feel safe and are protected from homophobic incidents. www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Education and Inspections Act, 2006

This Act places a duty on governing bodies to promote well-being and community cohesion. Governors and head teachers must ensure that policies designed to promote good behaviour and discipline are implemented at school. This includes a duty to prevent and respond to bullying, including homophobic bullying.

The Duty to Promote Community Cohesion (2007) ⁵

This states that "discrimination and prejudice can be experienced by other groups – including the disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities and different age and gender groups. Schools should therefore design their programmes to recognise where other strands of the equalities agenda – including gender, sexual orientation, disability and age – are interconnected with the aspiration to promote community cohesion..."

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 ⁶

This bans discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment. Research by the Teacher Support Network shows that over two thirds of LGB and transgender school and college staff have been harassed by their students and nearly half of them by colleagues. www.opsi.gov.uk

The Equality Act, 2006 ⁷

This Act outlaws discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods and services. This means, for example, that a pupil could not be refused entry to a school on the grounds that they were, or were thought to be, LGB or because they had LGB relatives. www.opsi.gov.uk

The Gender Equality Duty ⁸

This part of the Equality Act requires schools to promote equality for both genders. The Equal Opportunities Commission guidance for schools highlights the link between gender stereotyping and homophobic bullying, pointing out that children who are seen by their peers to break gender norms are frequently subject to homophobic bullying. www.equalityhumanrights.com

In particular, young people who do not conform to 'traditional' male or female stereotypes will often be homophobically bullied. By challenging this kind of discrimination, schools are also helping to promote gender equality and break down gender stereotypes. This, in turn, can help to challenge entrenched attitudes which discourage boys from working hard in school and mean that that young women are still more likely to find themselves in low-paid, low-status jobs.

Guidance

DCSF Sex and relationship education guidance (2000) ⁹

This describes how "it is up to schools to make sure that the needs of all pupils are met in their programmes...whatever their developing sexuality" and that "teachers should be able to deal honestly and sensitively with sexual orientation".

www.dcsf.gov.uk/sreguidance

Safe to Learn (Department for Children, Schools and Families) ¹⁰

Safe to Learn is comprehensive guidance for schools on how to challenge homophobic bullying. It offers practical strategies and details of a range of resources and support available to schools. It also contains specific briefings for governors, heads and school staff and details of much of the relevant legislation. www.teachernet.gov.uk

Stand up for us (Department for Education and Skills/Department of Health, 2004) ¹¹

Stand up for us complements Safe to Learn and offers National Healthy Schools Programme guidance on developing a whole school approach to addressing homophobia. www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk

Safe to Learn and *Stand up for us* stress the importance of: commitment from managers and governors; an inclusive school ethos and curriculum; providing appropriate professional development for staff; the provision of LGB inclusive curriculum and resources; and involving and supporting young people and their parents.

Further information and support

Further information, including links to other teaching resources, support organisations and services for young people, can be found in *Safe To Learn* and *Stand up for us* and from these organisations:

Education for All ¹²

Stonewall's Education for All campaign aims to ensure that all young LGB people can fulfil their potential and that the UK's schools and education systems can deal appropriately with homophobia and homophobic bullying.

www.stonewall.org.uk

Schools Out ¹³

Schools Out campaigns on LGBT issues as they affect education and those in education. It aims to research, debate and stimulate curriculum development on LGBT issues. www.schools-out.org.uk

Terrence Higgins Trust ¹⁴

Terrence Higgins Trust is the leading HIV and AIDS charity in the UK, and the largest in Europe. As well as its main website, it has a website aimed specifically at young gay men.¹⁵ www.tht.org.uk www.ygm.org.uk

3 www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/

4 <https://forms.ofsted.gov.uk/blankpdf.aspx>

5 <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-00598-2007.pdf>

6 www.opsi.gov.uk/SI/si2003/20031661.htm

7 www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/20060003.htm

8 www.equalityhumanrights.com/Documents%20hidden%20from%20search%20index/EOC/DOC/Useful%20stuff/InformationandAdvice_Education_Organisations_Booklets_schoolsEngland.doc

9 www.dfes.gov.uk/sreguidance/

10 www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/homophobicbullying/

11 www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk/cat.php?catid=1101&docid=7707

12 www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/

13 www.schools-out.org.uk/

14 www.tht.org.uk/

15 www.ygm.org.uk/home/

Sexual orientation and the new secondary curriculum

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority recently published the New Secondary Curriculum.¹⁶ This gives teachers a range of opportunities to raise discussion of same-sex relationships and tackle homophobia in lessons.

The statement of values underpinning the National Curriculum states that:

- "Education should reflect the enduring values that contribute to personal development and **equality of opportunity for all**, a healthy and just democracy, a productive economy, and sustainable development."

It highlights four areas of particular importance including:

- "**the diversity in our society**, where truth, freedom, justice, human rights, the rule of law and collective effort are valued for the common good. We value families, **including families of different kinds**, as sources of love and support for all their members, and as the basis of a society in which people care for others. We also value the contributions made to our society by a diverse range of people, cultures and heritages."

One of the key cross-curriculum dimensions is identity and cultural diversity, and this states that:

- "Schools have a duty to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and effective learning opportunities for all learners. Every learner, whatever their race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, belief or social, cultural and linguistic background, should have opportunities to experience success in learning at the highest possible standard."

The key concepts and processes, and the range and content of many of the Key Stage 4 programmes of study, present clear opportunities for addressing sexual orientation and homophobia within the curriculum. The PSHE education programme of study is clear that, when discussing relationships and family life:

- "this should include a wide range of relationships, such as boy/girl, same sex, and people of different race, culture, ability, disability and age. Students should address the role and benefits of marriage and civil partnerships in stable relationships and family life."

¹⁶ <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/>

Assembly

Wendy Anderson, Progress Leader Year 8



Theme

Challenging homophobia

Teacher's notes

Wendy's presentation incorporates images from the *Stonewall Education for All* campaign.
http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education_for_all/

Wendy's assembly was linked to the annual International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) on 17 May.

You could do something similar as part of LGBT History Month¹⁷ (February) or ask young people to contribute to a series of themed assemblies on racism, sexism, homophobia or the discrimination faced by disabled people.

Resources

PDF presentation: Wendy's assembly (on accompanying CD)

Introduction

As a media arts college we tend to be expected to do all singing and dancing presentations but it can be done with PowerPoint and a CD player to play songs as the images are being shown.

Activities

Sounds

We used Mad World – Alex Parks' version, of course – and Labi Siffre's Something Inside So Strong.

I like to use images and powerful words. If I'd had technology that talked to each other, I had planned to insert recordings of students saying the words on PowerPoint.

If you can, get students from school to read bits of the assembly: for example, "What can you do to prevent homophobia?" You could place them round the hall to make it interesting.

Images

Pictures of Gay Pride are easy to find, more so than protests. To put them on a big screen make sure you select 'large images' from a Google search and click on the picture itself, don't just save from the icon on Google search results.

Get hold of rainbow stuff and posters to decorate the hall. It's harder to ignore then, especially when it generates discussion with young people that forces homophobic adults to comment.

Our assembly incorporates images from Stonewall's Education for All campaign

Supporting information

Get some noticeboard space and put up support group phone numbers, posters and so on, and campaign for homophobia to be included in the anti-bullying policy.

Other assembly ideas

Put together your own assembly looking at significant contemporary LGB figures such as:

Stephen K Amos (a stand-up comedian whose documentary on homophobia in the black British community and Jamaica, *Batty Man*, was broadcast by Channel 4 in 2003)

Waheed Alli, the first openly gay life peer.

There are other examples elsewhere in this resource pack. You can also look at the LGBT History Month website (www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk) for information about inspirational figures, past and present.

¹⁷ www.lgbthistorymonth.org.uk/



Theme

Respect

Learning objectives

- To acknowledge the existence of diversity within our community.
- To explore why respect is necessary within our community.

This lesson will also help students to create a working agreement that can be reinforced at the start of any subsequent lessons covering sensitive issues.

Teacher's notes

This lesson can be used as an introduction to dealing with a range of controversial issues in PSHE education.

At the beginning of each lesson you may want to elect students who will have responsibility for seeing that the agreement is adhered to.

You might want to include a comment like "we all grow and change" and that it is OK to change our beliefs and opinions.

Resources

- Sheets of flipchart paper
- Markers

Introduction

Introduce the lesson to the students by saying that they are going to be talking about respect – something that all members of the school community deserve.

Acknowledge that some people are not always shown this respect. This may happen for a number of reasons; often because of things over which they have no control, like their gender, their ethnicity or their sexual orientation.

Activities

1 Ask the students to reflect on the question “What does respect mean to me?”

Break them into small groups and ask each to agree on a response. **Ask each group to feed back.** It might be helpful to give each group sheets of flipchart paper and markers to record their ideas.

2 Ask the students to discuss within their groups whether what would be considered ‘disrespectful’ might change depending on where they are and who they are with:

- Would some things be acceptable at home but not when out with their friends?
- Or vice versa?

Might they behave differently or express different opinions if they were with a group of people of their own gender or ethnicity from the way they would behave in a more mixed group?

Ask each group to feed back.

3 Do we sometimes show disrespect in different ways to different groups of people?

For example, disrespect due to:

- Gender
- Culture
- Age
- Ability

Ask each group to discuss one of the above and feed back examples.

If the young people don't mention it themselves, make sure you include examples of the way some people disrespect LGB people; for example by using homophobic language or by expressing derogatory or stereotypical views about LGB people and their lives (see *Challenging Myths and Stereotypes about LGB people* on page 34). Make the comparisons between this kind of disrespect and the way that people might disrespect other groups. This might include sexist language applied to either gender or the repetition of racist stereotypes. Alternatively, you can return to this particular issue in future lessons, remembering to remind the class of the similarities between the disrespect shown to LGB people and that shown to other groups.

Plenary

Remind the class about what was said at the beginning of the lesson about everyone's right to respect. Ask them why this is important.

Ask them why it is important to be able to accept points of view which are different to their own and what the implications are for all of us if we don't do this.

Ask the class to devise a working agreement that could be applied in future lessons and discussions to ensure that they always respect each others' views and opinions. Record this on a sheet of flipchart paper for future use.

Optional extension activities

As homework, or as the basis for another lesson, ask the class to:

- consider what the benefits are of living in a society which celebrates difference and protects the rights of minorities
- think of examples of how the law protects minorities in this country
- think about whether some rights might conflict with each other, such as the right to free speech, the right to practice your religion of choice and the right not to be discriminated against because of your gender or sexual orientation... How can these conflicts be resolved?

Religious Education, PSHE

David Watkins, Key Stage 3 SEN Teacher

Sue Latham, Coordinator for English and Drama

Theme

Marriage and relationships: Part 1

Learning objectives

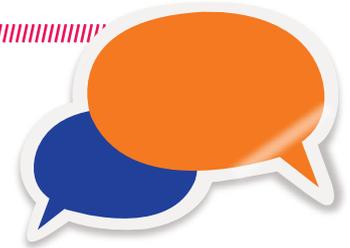
- Students will identify the reasons for long-lasting relationships.
- They will discuss whether these reasons are exclusive to the tradition of marriage.
- They will think about other partnerships that take place within the context of loving relationships.

Resources

- PDF presentation: *Marriage and religion*
- PDF presentation: *'Till Death Do Us Part?*
- Worksheet 1: *What is marriage for? (two sheets)*
- Worksheet 2: *What do **you** think about marriage?*
- Scissors
- Glue

Introduction

Show the PDF presentation *Marriage and religion*.



Activities

1 Hand out the two sheets that make up Worksheet 1: *What is marriage for?*

Ask students to arrange the most important reasons for getting married on a pyramid using the worksheet. They should cut out and stick the reason boxes onto the empty pyramid.

Ask students to feed back on what they felt was the most important reason for getting married from their worksheet.

You might want to give them the option to add other ideas of their own, such as "You get all your washing and cooking done by your wife", "Your wife/husband takes care of you financially" or "You get emotional support from your husband/wife".

2 Show the presentation *Till Death Do Us Part*.

Ask students to guess how long they think each of the people were married.

Engender discussion around why they think the relationships lasted a certain amount of time. Are they surprised by the answers?

3 Ask students to think about someone they know who has had a successful relationship.

- Were/are they married?
- For how long?

Ask them to discuss in pairs why this relationship worked.

Optional extension activities

Class discussion

Remind students what they thought were the most important reasons for getting married. Ask them if this reason can be transferred across all the different types of unions, such as:

- interracial marriages
- civil partnerships between same-sex couples
- marriages that cross the generation gap
- arranged marriages.

Then ask students:

- What is fundamental to all lasting relationships?
- Does somebody have to get married to stay in a committed relationship?
- What are the problems with legally committing to someone?

Remind students that marrying for love is quite a modern concept and still does not apply universally across all cultures and social groups. What about royal marriages, for example?

Homework

Distribute the worksheet *What do you think about marriage?*

What is marriage for?

Sheet 1

What do *you* think are the most important reasons for getting married?

Cut out the statements below.

You promise
to be sexually
faithful

You show
your obedience
to God

You get legal
rights such as
company benefits
and hospital
visitors' rights

You might
make your
parents happy

You get a legal
certificate

You get to go
on honeymoon

You get to be
the star of the
show for a day

You get a big
wedding cake

You wear
rings to show
everyone that
you're committed

You make
sure children
have parents
who are committed
to each other

What do you think about marriage?

What's your opinion on marriage?

Have a look at the opinions shown below then write your own thoughts on marriage in the space provided.



A large, light purple speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. The interior of the bubble is filled with horizontal white lines, providing a space for the student to write their own opinion on marriage.

Religious Education, PSHE

David Watkins, Key Stage 3 SEN Teacher

Sue Latham, Coordinator for English and Drama

Theme

Marriage and relationships: Part 2

Learning objectives

- Students will investigate the different types of marriages and unions.
- They will discuss attitudes to the convention of marriage.
- Students will discuss civil partnerships and understand some of the discrimination that same-sex couples have faced.

Resources

- PDF presentation: *Will they be happy?*
- PDF presentation: *Consider this*
- Worksheet: *I Do, I Do, I Don't*

Introduction

Show students the PDF presentation *Will they be happy?* and discuss.

Ask the students why they think each couple will or will not be happy.

- What they are basing this decision on?
- Are there certain types of people that are just incompatible?
- Do all successful relationships involve couples who are similar or different to each other?



Activities

1 Use the worksheet: I Do, I Do, I Don't

Ask students to choose two quotes about marriage and present to the class in pairs, highlight following points:

- What is the person trying to say?
- Is the person for or against marriage? Or is their quote ambiguous?
- Do you agree with them?

2 Gay 'marriage'

Read this quote:

"The right to marry whoever one wishes is an elementary human right compared to which 'the right to attend an integrated school, the right to sit where one pleases on a bus, the right to go into any hotel or recreation area or place of amusement, regardless of one's skin or color or race' are minor indeed. Even political rights, like the right to vote, and nearly all other rights enumerated in the Constitution, are secondary to the inalienable human rights to 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence; and to this category the right to home and marriage unquestionably belongs." *Dissent, Winter 1959*

- What do students think about this?

3 Ask students to imagine that they live in a world where homosexuality is the norm and heterosexuals are the minority.

(See the cross curricular lesson ideas on *Challenging "heteronormativity"* on page 30).

Show the presentation *Consider this*.

Encourage students to reflect on questions posed in the presentation in this upside-down world.

Optional extension activities

Points to consider and discuss:

Systems of legal union

Since December 2005, gays, lesbians and bisexuals have had the same right of legal union as opposite-sex couples in the UK.

- So why are there two systems: marriage and civil partnerships?

Religion and same-sex unions

Some believe that the word 'marriage' should only be used in the context of religion and that the idea of unions and civil partnerships is something that should come under the umbrella of state-sanctioned partnerships.

- Where does that leave same-sex Hindu, Sikh, Jewish, Muslim or Christian couples who want to marry according to the principles of their faith?

Pressure to get married

Use the opportunity to ask whether some people feel pressured to get married.

- Why is this and where does this pressure come from?
- Is it different for women and men?
- What are the implications of remaining 'single' in a society which actively promotes marriage?
- How are these pressures experienced by people from a range of backgrounds and cultures?

I do, I do, I don't

1. What do you think about these quotes?

Discuss with a partner.

Marriage is the alliance of two people, one of whom never remembers birthdays and the other who never forgets them.

Ogden Nash, American poet

The difficulty with marriage is that we fall in love with a personality, but must live with a character.

Peter De Vries, American novelist

I think that gay marriage should be between a man and a woman.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, actor, politician

Marriage is like a phone call in the night: first the ring, and then you wake up.

Evelyn Hendrickson

Marriage is our last, best chance to grow up.

Joseph Bart

Marriage is a career which brings about more benefits than many others.

Simone de Beauvoir, French author and philosopher

Having once embarked on your marital voyage, it is impossible not to be aware that you make no way and that the sea is not within sight - that, in fact, you are exploring an enclosed basin.

George Eliot

2. Choose two quotes.

- What is the person trying to say?
- Is the person for or against marriage? Or is their quote ambiguous?
- Do you agree with them?
- Present back to class in pairs.

Religious Education

Mark Jennett, Editor *Out in School*

Caroline Healy, Citizenship and RE teacher



Theme

Further ideas

Activities

Behaviour arising from religious and/or philosophical beliefs

As part of the study of human rights, freedom of expression and so on, ask students to undertake case studies of countries where homosexuality is illegal or LGB people are regularly persecuted; for example, India, Zimbabwe, Iran or Russia.

Ask students to research LGB religious people

Examples might include Reverend Jeffrey John, Karl Clemens (gay, Roman Catholic priest), Reverends Gene Robinson or Bonnie Perry or Rabbi Lionel Blue.

- How do these individuals reconcile their sexual orientation with their religious beliefs?

But it says in the Bible...

Use the Brick Testament¹⁸ to encourage discussion around what the Bible says about religious tolerance, slavery and other issues and compare these with its teaching on homosexuality.

- Does contemporary society still accept everything in the Bible?
- If we no longer follow some religious teachings, why is it appropriate to follow others?
- Is it possible to be a 'good Christian' and yet not take literally everything we read in the Bible?

¹⁸ www.thebricktestament.com/the_law/index.html

Modern Foreign Languages

Sarah Johnson, Local Authority Emotional Health and Learning Mentor Adviser

Theme

Further ideas and resources

References

Films:

- *La Cage aux Folles* (French)
- *Le Fate Ignoranti* (Italian)
- *Ma Vie* (French Canadian)
- *Water Lilies* (French)
- *Drole de Felix* (French).

Activities

Talking about families

Include an example in your worksheets of a family with same-sex parents or where one of the teenage children has a same-sex partner.

Problem pages

Give students a range of 'problems' to respond to. One of these could be about an LGB teenager who is uncomfortable about his or her sexual orientation. S/he may be worried about the consequences of coming out or be experiencing bullying.

- What advice would they offer?

Letters from pen friends

You could ask students to respond to a letter from a LGB pen friend who is coming to visit and wants to know about the local gay scene.

Social issues

Ask students to research civil partnerships in France ('Pacte civil de solidarité') or the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Spain and be prepared to discuss what they have discovered in the target language. Many other countries have introduced similar provisions in recent years.



Optional extension activities

Encourage students to discuss the portrayals of LGB characters or relationships in films such as *La Cage aux Folles* (French), *Le Fate Ignoranti* (Italian) or the films of Almodovar.

- Are these images stereotypical?
- Can they identify differences in the way these characters are presented from the way similar ones are shown in British or American movies?

Discuss films like:

- *Ma Vie* (a year in the life of a teenage boy)
- *Water Lilies* (the story of three young women dealing with opposite and same-sex crushes)
- *Drole de Felix* (a road movie about a young gay man who travels from Normandy to Marseilles in search of his father).



Theme

Ideas and resources

References

Books:

- Clift, S., M. Luongo and C. Callister, Eds. (2002). *Gay tourism: culture, identity and sex*. London and New York, Continuum.
- Flint, C and D. Flint (2001). *Urbanisation: changing environments*. (2d ed). London: Collins Educational.
- Kramer, J. L. (1995). Bachelor farmers and spinsters: gay and lesbian identities and communities in rural North Dakota. *Mapping desire: geographies of sexualities*. D. Bell and G. Valentine. London and New York, Routledge: 200-213.

Activities

Urban geographies: city case studies

A rare curriculum example of teaching about homosexuality is published in *Urbanisation: Changing Environments* (Flint and Flint, 2001 pp93-94). Under the section on patterns of inequality, Paris and Brighton have been selected for Key Stage 4 students to interrogate the multiple relationships between urban areas and their LGB populations.

In particular, the following topics can be introduced:

- social and political changes and their impact on the city
- gentrification and the 'pink pound'
- location of services for LGB people
- specific social spaces (such as gay villages).

Students can research a range of 'gay capitals' and other cities from across the globe in order to begin questioning the politics of:

- ghettoisation versus integration of identity groups
- cluster mapping and the ways in which it can mislead

- visible and invisible identities in relation to income
- multiple identities and how the boundaries of sexuality, race, ethnicity, gender, disability and class intersect.

Migration geographies: rural-urban migration

Many cities, such as Amsterdam and Manchester, and parts of cities, for example London's Soho, San Francisco's Castro and Tokyo's Shinjyuku-ni-chome districts, attract the in-migration of substantial numbers of LGB people. Geography teachers can examine migration patterns of LGB populations to stimulate explorations of:

- the push and pull factors of migration
- why city living appears to hold particular attraction for certain groups within the general population
- the politics of inclusion/exclusion and how these affect individuals and groups in terms of education, employment, leisure, amenities and housing.

Conversely, teachers and students can unsettle dominant notions of cities as gay magnets by examining LGB populations in rural areas such as North Dakota (see Kramer, 1995 – more details in Resources, above).

Tourism

As an expression of temporary migration, tourism offers a space for geography teachers to interrogate LGB holidaymaking (see Clift et al., 2002 – more details in Resources). For example, the Spanish resort of Sitges, Olivia cruises, Dinah Shore Week, Fire Island in New York State or Sydney can be used to examine:

- the relationship between holiday places and lesbian and gay identity construction
- economic activity and the 'pink pound'
- interdependencies between different parts of the world.

English

Tony Fenwick, Teacher for Hertfordshire's Education Support Team
for Medical Absence, Co-chair Schools OUT and LGBT History Month

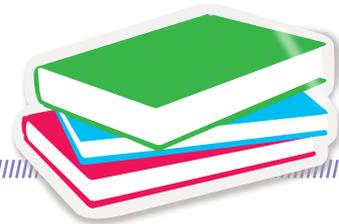
Theme

Coronation Street

Learning objectives

Get students to:

- give individual responses to a written text (AT 1 and 2)
- develop inference and deduction (AT 2)
- understand more complex sentences (AT 3)
- look at humour in writing (AT 1 and 2)
- examine stereotypes (AT 1 and 2)
- link stereotypes with prejudice (AT 1)



Teacher's notes

This lesson suggestion is aimed at Key Stage 4 students from Level 5 upwards.

It can be adapted to suit the needs of students and the dynamics of the class.

The work on stereotypes has cross-curricular links with PSHE, Citizenship, History and Media.

Resources

- Worksheet: *Sean and Sonny have a close encounter in Corrie*
- Teacher's annotated version of worksheet

Introduction

Explain to the students that this is a lesson based around soap operas. The key points to get across are that soaps have plots and sub-plots and that these are based around themes that are often issues in society.

Activities

1 In pairs, or as a whole class activity, students can list the themes/issues in the soaps they watch at the moment.

2 Explain that many TV listings guides and newspaper articles give the plot away and that we are going to look at an article from a paper that tells viewers what is going to happen during an instalment of *Coronation Street*.

Hand out the text example or demonstrate it on the electronic whiteboard or overhead projector.

As a whole class literacy activity, carry out a close reading of the text with guided questions to individuals about the language and punctuation. See the annotated example for ideas.

Ask questions such as:

- What connective links the two clauses in the first sentence?
- What other connectives might be used?

Look at paragraph 4.

- Is it okay to use 'and' at the beginning of a sentence?

Ask students about the tone of the article. Look for the uses of colloquial language, mixture of short and long sentences, evidence of satire and so on. Try to elicit responses from the students as far as possible.

How is Kelly portrayed?

Focus on the word 'stereotype' and ask what it means.

- Is Kelly a stereotype?

Ask the students to look at the article again and note down any examples of stereotyping. Look particularly at paragraphs 2, 7 and 8.

3 Focus on the word 'prejudice' and what it means. Examine what prejudices people might carry about what constitutes a 'lads' night out', a gay man or a bisexual.

Look again at the stereotyping.

- Does it confirm or challenge the prejudices?

Plenary

Remind the students that we have:

- discussed soaps, plots and sub-plots
- looked at the themes and issues that they deal with
- done some work on connectives
- examined what techniques are used by the writer to create a humorous, ironic tone
- shown how stereotypes can be a part of that humour.

Point out that prejudice can feed on and, in turn, be fed by those stereotypes.

Ask students to write down one thing they know now that they didn't know at the beginning. Elicit some of the responses.

Optional extension activities

Pick a theme in a soap you watch or that someone in your family watches regularly.

- What is the theme and how is it dealt with?

Pick a particular minority group and gather examples of its representation in the media.

- Grade them in terms of fairness, lack of prejudice and so on.

SONNY SIDE UP

Sean and Sonny have a close encounter in Corrie

By Tony Stewart

With the exception of irrepressibly smiley Kylie, Sean must be the most unlucky-lucky-lucky person when it comes to romance – even if that could be all about to change. Since moving into the Street on the tail end of this soap's first gay affair between Todd Grimshaw and nurse Karl three years ago, Sean has never found true love.

Although he has always proudly worn his sexuality like a badge of honour, his attempts at courting have often been hilariously inept. Being the only gay in Weatherfield does have its drawbacks. Having been raised on a diet of Betty's heterosexual hotpots and manly pints of Newton And Ridley's best bitter, macho hunks like Jason and Jamie have spurned his advances.

Sean's misfortunes also extended to Kelly saucily believing her voluptuous feminine wiles could turn him, while vet Tim secretly had an affair with another fella.

Even after recently going on holiday to Spain's famous gay resort of Sitges, sad Sean still came home alone. And seeing his ex-lover, bisexual Sonny, going out with Michelle only compounds his frustration.

So it's no surprise that he should jump at the chance of a 'lads' night out' on Friday with Scouser Lloyd, Londoner Jamie and local boy Steve.

'A black man, a gay, a cockney and a... er... Steve,' Lloyd declares. 'That's not freaks – that's a recipe for world peace.' Not with the events that unfold it isn't.



Image courtesy of ITV Granada

A chance meeting brings sean and his ex sonny together for a passionate kiss

For while the others are ogling the wall-to-wall girls in a flash city bar, Sean experiences a close encounter of the sexual kind when he bumps into Sonny.

'What angel wings 'ave brought you here?' Sean pouts.

Chat-up lines like that may explain why he is still single, but it doesn't prevent him slipping outside with Sonny for a kiss.

Unfortunately, it's witnessed by Steve and although he's pleased for Sean, he's even more delighted when he realises that the other man is Sonny.

If Steve tells Michelle, Sean might just wish he'd stuck to pulling pints rather than the barmaid's boyfriend. Uh-oh.

Two complex opening sentences; using connectives 'with' and 'since' to join clauses

Shouldn't this be sexual orientation?

Another complex sentence, joined with the connective 'although'.

Reference to Little Britain - but ironic perhaps; Weatherfield is an imaginary part of Manchester - hardly a village.

Alliteration: is the hotpot heterosexual? Or Betty? Or the whole culture around the street?

Again, why are pints described as 'manly'?

Contrast of 'macho hunks' with Sean's persona: is heterosexism macho? Note, also, alliteration.

Another complex sentence.

A quote used for comic effect; but it implies that in a multi-cultural society it is unusual for different groups to socialise together.

SONNY SIDE UP

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If Steve tells Michelle, Sean might just wish he'd stuck to pulling pints rather than the barmaid's boyfriend. Uh-oh.

'Close encounter of the...' is a pun that has become a cliché.

Accent reflected by phonetic transcript of direct speech

Pouting is historically associated with women; a reference to Sean's effeminacy which compounds the contrast earlier between Sean and 'macho' Jamie and Jason.

Writer comments on cheesiness of the script.

'Slipping' emphasises secrecy.

Tautology; 'even more' is unnecessary. In fact, it reads better without.

Final sentence is not a sentence; very informal

Colloquial language for comic effect.

Short and syntactically dubious sentence with an "I know something that you don't" tone to it.

We shouldn't start sentences with 'and' but it can work if the 'and' means 'furthermore'.



The previous paragraphs have summed up Sean's romantic history. 'So it's no surprise...' moves us on by preparing us for a summary of what is going to happen next. However, it is a false hypothesis; there is no logical reason why Sean's frustration should make him want to go out with these people.

English

Mark Jennett, Editor *Out in School*

Wendy Anderson, Progress Leader, Year 8

Leon Manandhar, Advanced Skills Teacher in English

Theme

Further ideas

References

Web:

Wikipedia and other sites such as www.afterellen.com and www.afterelton.com are useful for finding lists of, and information about, LGBT authors, films, characters and so on.

Activities

Set texts

Twelfth Night, *As You Like It* and *The Merchant of Venice* all feature female characters who disguise themselves as men.

- What are their reasons for doing this?

Viola becomes involved in a potential lesbian relationship when Olivia falls in love with 'Cesario'. At one point Rosalind is pretending to be a man who is in turn pretending to be a woman.

- What can the decisions these women make tell us about their place in society and why people might try to hide their true gender or sexual orientation?



LGB writers

Christopher Marlowe, Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Jackie Kay, Jeanette Winterson, Truman Capote, Carol Ann Duffy, U.A Fanthorpe, Christopher Isherwood, Walt Whitman, James Baldwin, Colm Tóibín, Patricia Highsmith, Daphne du Maurier, Manuel Puig...

- How has their work been informed by their sexuality and society's reaction to it?
- What wider lessons can we learn from this about how a writer's personal experience might influence their work in ways that are not immediately apparent?

Many of Tennessee Williams' plays do not contain many explicitly LGB characters.

- However, has his sexual orientation had an impact on his depiction of 'straight' people?
- Is there such a thing as a LGB (or black or female) sensibility in literature?

LGB characters

"The guy ain't right...he has blond hair...he looks like a chorus girl...he sings...he cooks. If ya close the paper real fast, you could blow him over!" is how Eddie Carbone describes his wife's immigrant cousin Rodolpho in Arthur Miller's *A View From the Bridge*. Yet it is Eddie who attempts to 'prove' that Rodolpho is gay by kissing him.

Although none of the characters is acknowledged to be LGB, the play's treatment of homosexuality (and that kiss) were so shocking in 1955 that it was originally banned by the Lord Chamberlain.

- What do plays like this – along with others containing explicit LGB characters like *The Children's Hour*, *A Taste of Honey* or *The Killing Of Sister George* – tell us about human sexuality and society's reaction to LGB people?
- How do more recent examples show what has (or hasn't) changed? (For example *Queer As Folk*, *My Night With Reg*, *The L Word*, *Desert Hearts*, *The Crying Game*, *Sugar Rush*, *The History Boys* or *Brokeback Mountain*)

Drama (with many cross-curricular links)

Tony Fenwick, Teacher for Hertfordshire’s Education Support Team for Medical Absence, Co-chair Schools OUT and LGBT History Month



Theme

Cycle of oppression

Learning objectives

To enable students to gain an overview of the world's population (cross-curricular links with Citizenship, RE, PSHE, Geography, Economics)

Teacher’s notes

The focus of the lesson is equal opportunities and avoiding oppression.

This can be assessed as a drama-focused activity (assessment 3) as GCSE Speaking and Listening coursework.

Resources

Worksheet: *100 people*

References

Web:

www.life-cycles-destiny.com/for/100people.htm

Introduction

Explain to students that the focus of the lesson is equal opportunities and avoiding oppression.

Show the students or ask them to find the web page www.life-cycles-destiny.com/for/100people.htm

You may wish to point out that the figures are unsubstantiated.

Can the class track down accurate figures? (See extension activities)

Activities

1. Explain to the group that there are 6 billion people living on the planet. According to the information on this web page, if that number were represented by a mere 100, the composition of the world would be:

57 Asians

21 Europeans

14 from the Western Hemisphere, both North and South

8 Africans

52 would be female

48 would be male

70 would be non-white

30 would be white

70 would be non-Christian

30 would be Christian

89 would be heterosexual

11 would be homosexual

Six people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth and all six would be from the United States.

80 would live in sub-standard housing

70 would be unable to read

50 would suffer from malnutrition

1 would be near death

1 would be near birth

1 would have a college education (yes, only 1)

1 would own a computer

- Ask how many figures are over 50%. Point out that these are the only majorities.

- Are they surprised by any of the groups who appear to be in the minority?

- What do these statistics tell us about the unequal distribution of wealth?

It may be necessary to spend some time discussing this and the importance of campaigns such as Make Poverty History.

2. Remind students that the focus of the lesson is equal opportunities and avoiding oppression.

Divide the class into groups of about four people. Each group is the imaginary government of an imaginary island where 100 people have been washed ashore from a shipwreck.

They are to ignore the figures concerning the distribution of wealth and assume that what wealth there is will be distributed equally among the 100. Ask them to focus on the statistics shown in **bold**. These figures represent the exact makeup of the new population of the island.

Each 'government' has to make up eight laws to prevent discrimination and ensure the human rights and equality of opportunity for all the inhabitants of the island. They must include the following terms in some or all of their laws:

- race
- ethnicity
- religion
- work.
- sexual orientation
- gender
- health
- education
- housing

Each group will need a scribe and someone to report back to the class.

Monitor the groups as they work on the task and remind them of the time. In terms of assessment the process is more important than the outcome.

Each group needs to feed back the laws that they have made.

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Plenary

Ask students to reflect on what they have learned. They might do this as a short written activity.

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Optional extension activities

1 Look at the suggestion on page 31 about the limitations of online research.

- Where might the statistics on this website come from?
- Are they open to dispute?

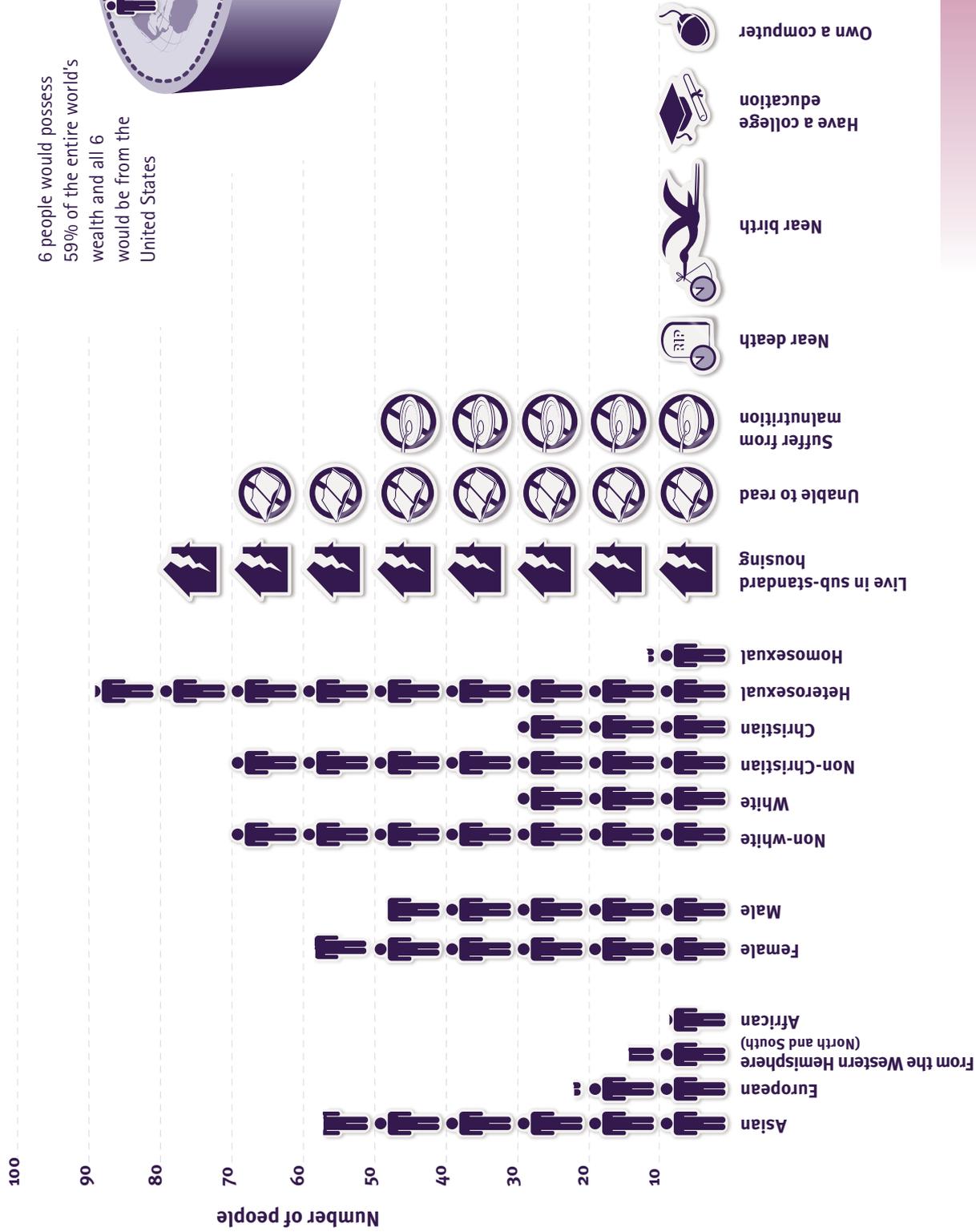
2 The figure for the numbers of LGB people would appear to be high based on some estimates. However, even taking the lowest figures into consideration, this still suggests there are far more LGB people in the world than college graduates and computer owners.

- What does this tell us about what constitutes a 'minority'?

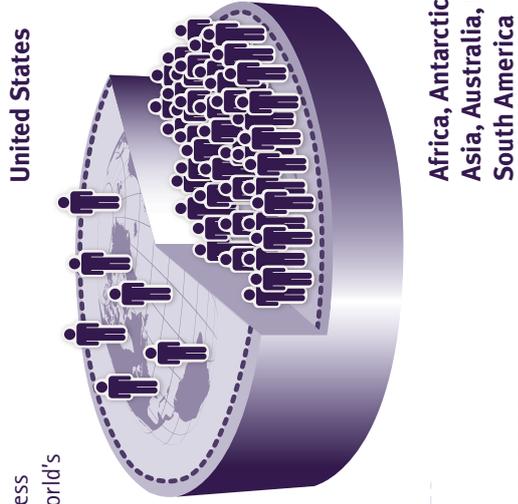
3 It might be useful to explore the power and use of language here.

- What is the makeup of the group of 70 'non-Christians' referred to?
- Is this the most useful language for an activity designed to challenge discrimination?
- Do terms like 'non-white' suggest that the exercise has been written from a liberal, white Christian perspective? Does this matter?
- Might it have been done deliberately to provoke debate – or indicate unconscious prejudice?
- How, in attempting to challenge stereotypes, can we sometimes reinforce them?

There are 6 billion people living on the planet. According to the information on this web page, www.life-cycles-destiny.com/for/100people.htm if that number were represented by a mere 100, the composition of the world would be as shown in the graphs below:



6 people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth and all 6 would be from the United States



Cross curriculum

These ideas could form the basis of lessons in Geography, Citizenship, Sociology, Science, ICT or Media Studies - or be used as the basis for drama exercises. Hopefully these suggestions, and the others in this resource, will also inspire you to devise more lessons of your own.

Challenging 'heteronormativity'

1 Ask students to imagine that they live in a world where homosexuality is the norm and heterosexuals are in the minority:

- There are very few visible straight relationships and the few straight characters on TV seem to be gross stereotypes of men and women.
- Heterosexual hate crime is on the increase: on the news you heard that a man and a woman had been attacked and beaten in the street for holding hands.
- In many countries in the world it is illegal to have a relationship with someone of the opposite sex.
- In some countries being heterosexual is punishable by death.

2 Encourage young people to think about the ways that heterosexual relationships are constantly affirmed as 'normal' in our society (in advertising, song lyrics and so on), while LGBT relationships are largely invisible.

3 Ask them to look for books in the school library which feature 'minority' characters.

- Can they find any books in the school library which feature LGBT characters?
- How many?
- Why might this group be under-represented?

Ask them to search Amazon and other sites for books featuring LGBT characters which they think could be added to the school library. *Gay's the Word* bookshop¹⁹ can supply details of books aimed at teenager readers that feature LGBT characters.)

4 Celebrities: In a world with Will Young, Matt Lucas and Jake Shears, why are so many LGBT celebrities still afraid to come out?

- Are there far more famous gay men than lesbians?
- Why might that be?
- Why are most LGBT celebrities also white and able-bodied?
- Why is so much attention given to the personal life of any remotely well known LGBT person?

5 Ask the class why, in a society in which LGBT people are widely perceived to have equality with straights, there are things that straight people take for granted that aren't available to LGBT people?

Can young LGBT people talk about their relationships openly or hold hands with their partners in public?

Develop the argument to consider whether this kind of homophobia affects the rest of us in any way:

- The way we express our feelings with our friends.
- The occupations we chose or the leisure activities we take part in.
- The way we dress.

Does this matter?

In what ways would we all benefit if homophobia were truly to disappear?

You could develop the argument further to think about how racism might negatively affect white people or to consider the impact of sexism on men.

¹⁹ www.gaystheword.co.uk

Science and society

Ask students to research the ongoing debate about whether there is a genetic component to being LGB:

- Why is the search apparently concentrated on looking for a 'gay gene' but not for a straight one?
- Does it matter if there is a genetic element to sexual orientation?
- How much of the debate is driven by a desire for knowledge and how much by other interests?

- What are the implications – positive and negative – for LGB people if a genetic connection is proven?
- What are the wider implications for all of us?
- If being LGB is, as some claim, genetically 'aberrant' why does it occur in all societies throughout history?
- Why has it not died out?
- Why are most parents of LGB children heterosexual?

In particular, consider how many of our characteristics – gender, ethnicity, intelligence, ability – are either completely dependent on our genetic make-up or are significantly influenced by it.

Online research

1 Ask students to research Alan Turing – 'father of the computer'.

- How much of what we take for granted today owes a debt to his work? Bear in mind his role in breaking the Enigma code as well as his contribution to the development of computers.

- Has Turing's sexual orientation affected the way history perceives him and his achievements?

Develop this exercise to consider the limitations of online research by focusing on the widely repeated but unsubstantiated claim that the Apple computers logo is a tribute to Turing and the manner of his death.

2 Other figures to research might include Bayard Rustin, the openly gay African-American civil rights organiser, or Billy Tipton, a jazz musician, who married five times and 'fathered' three children and was revealed at the time of her death in 1989 to be biologically female.

- What do their stories tell us about the links between different forms of discrimination and oppression and the limited opportunities available to minorities?

How many LGB people are there?

1 Estimates of the percentage of people who are LGB vary wildly.

- Why do we have no accurate figures?
- Would it be useful if we did?

2 Look at the new UK census form²⁰ Point out that it includes questions about ethnicity and gender but not about sexual orientation

- Why might that be?

You can point out that, although it mentions civil partnership, this only tells us about the (presumed) sexual orientation of people who are in one.

3 Remind students of recent legislation supporting LGB equality and ask:

- If we don't even know the percentage of LGB people in the population, how can we begin to assess the effectiveness of this legislation?

4 Ask the class why we seem more concerned about some 'minorities' than others.

- Does this send a message to service providers and the population as a whole?

The *Avert* website includes a lot of useful material including information about the number of LGB people in Britain and elsewhere²¹.

Comparing homophobia to racism and other forms of discrimination

This exercise is not just about LGB rights but all rights, so that students can apply their morals and beliefs to lots of different equality issues.

1 Most students are very much against racism. Teachers can use racism as a comparison to homophobia.

2 Use cards with statements such as:

"A black person should not marry a white person."

"Two men should be able to adopt a baby together."

"Muslims should only marry Muslims"

"A woman in a wheelchair should not be allowed to have a baby.. "

Students can work through these statements in groups and reflect on their own personal beliefs about what is 'proper' and what is not 'proper' in their own mind.

3 Consider comparing LGB rights with those of women.

'Gay' people in the media

1 Hand out the worksheet: 'Gay' teletubby probe by Polish government.

Find (or ask students to find) examples like the Teletubbies news story. The report is quite amusing, but what are the more serious implications?

- Is it possible for a Teletubby to be 'gay'?
- How does carrying a handbag make you gay?
- If there is a 'gay' Teletubby, how do we know it isn't Dipsy, Laa-Laa or Po?

- Why do some people feel they have to 'police' images that challenge stereotypical images of gender?

2 What do people mean when they talk about 'promoting' homosexuality?

- You might ask students to design a campaign 'promoting' homosexuality.
- Are there any advantages to being LGB?

3 Consider these headlines

Highest paid baseball star in America comes out...

Shop worker in line for £120,000 after suffering homophobic bullying...

Gay marchers to defy Moscow ban...

Ask students to investigate other stories like these.

- What do the ways in which different publications present these stories tell us about how LGB people are perceived?
- What do they tell us about the media itself?
- How do newspapers, special interest groups and bloggers, for example, present stories to serve their own agendas?

4 Look at a range of different stories.

- Do any stereotypes emerge?
- Is it harder to find stories about some LGB people than other groups, such as women, the elderly or the disabled?
- Why might this be?

20 www.statistics.gov.uk/census/pdfs/2007_test_H1_form.pdf

21 www.avert.org/hsexu1.htm

'GAY' TELETUBBY PROBE BY POLISH GOVERNMENT

By Amy Bourke

The Polish government is currently investigating the Teletubbies over claims of homosexuality.

The popular children's television show, and especially the character of Tinky Winky, has been accused of promoting gay propaganda by the conservative government.

Teletubbies featured four brightly coloured alien characters which are loved by young children.

According to Reuters, Ewa Sowinska, government-appointed children rights watchdog, said she would ask psychologists to advise if the Teletubbies' camp antics could affect children.

She said: "I noticed [Tinky Winky] has a lady's purse, but I didn't realize he's a boy.

"At first I thought the purse would be a burden for this Teletubby... Later I learned that this may have a homosexual undertone."

However, the Polish Parliamentary Speaker Ludwig Dorn said he had warned Sowinska against making any comments which would "turn her department into a laughing stock."

The Polish government has drawn criticism in recent years from the European Union for discrimination against gay people.

The Education Minister, Roman Giertych, has proposed laws similar to Section 28, which would involve sacking teachers who promote "homosexual lifestyle" and banning "homo-agitation" in schools.

The late controversial US preacher Jerry Falwell made similar comments to Sowinska in 1999, prompting a worldwide debate over the sexuality of Tinky Winky.

He claimed that Tinky Winky must be gay because he is purple and has a triangle on his head; both of which are symbols of gay pride.

Amy Bourke, Pink News, May 2007

Being LGB is against the Bible, the Qur'an...

Remind students that being LGB is not a choice. And while we cannot choose how we feel, we can choose how we act.

Point out that, whatever the young people concerned may think, no forms of discrimination are acceptable in this school; on the grounds of faith, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or anything else. You cannot pick and choose which forms of discrimination are acceptable and which are not.

To this day, many members of all faith groups still debate the meanings of their key texts. For example, the Bible tells us not to wear mixed fibres, practice crop rotation, eat shellfish or cross-breed animals of different species, but some Christians happily wear polycotton shirts and own mules without fear of eternal damnation. Many people of faith do not believe that they have to agree with every word of the bible or Qur'an in order to be a follower of their particular faith.

In any case, just because we disagree with people, does that give us the right to bully or exclude them or deny them the same rights as us, even if we believe our faith supports us in feeling them to be wrong?

Just as people have a right to practice their own beliefs without being harassed, LGB people have the right to love who they chose without being attacked for it by others who may disagree with them. Jesus said "love thy neighbour" and most people of faith believe that bullying is wrong, whatever the reason behind it.

It is also worth remembering that no less a figure than Archbishop Desmond Tutu said "Everyone is an insider, there are no outsiders – whatever their beliefs, whatever their colour, gender or sexuality". See page 18 for examples of LGB members of the clergy.

Gay men are paedophiles

Untrue. Gay men are no more likely to be paedophiles than any other members of the population.

Women become lesbians because they have had bad sexual experiences with men

There is no evidence to support this. If you have a bad experience with someone you may well end the relationship but this cannot make straight people LGB (or LGB people straight.)

Some people may be attracted to different genders during their lifetimes, but this is because they find those individuals attractive, not because they have been 'turned off' one gender by bad experiences.

HIV is gay men's fault

The vast majority of HIV transmissions worldwide are between heterosexual couples. Regardless of our sexual orientation, we can all protect ourselves by practising safer sex.

Being around LGB people can make you gay

Untrue. If being around people of one sexual orientation could make you like them, then wouldn't most LGB people be turned straight, since they have no choice but to spend a lot of time around straight people?

All/only gay men have anal sex

Not true. Many heterosexual couples have anal sex. And quite a few gay men do not.

What consenting couples do in bed is no one else's business anyway. Nobody should have to do something they don't want to do, but this doesn't give us the right to criticise others whose sex lives may differ from our own.

Lesbians having sex with each other makes me feel sick

Other people's sexuality is their own private business. If we don't like it then we don't need to think about it.

It is disrespectful to criticise someone else's sexual orientation just because it is different from our own. Just because you don't agree with someone – or think the same way as they do – that does not give you the right to exclude, bully or insult them.

LGB people should keep their sexual orientation private: we don't need to know their business

LGB people have the same right to be as open (or private) about their relationships as straight people. Saying that you are LGB or talking about your same-sex partner is not doing anything more than straight people take for granted; for example, when they talk about their wives and husbands.

People who fancy the same sex have something wrong with their minds

There is no evidence for this. LGB people are not mentally ill. Sexual orientation is just another form of difference like gender or ethnicity.

Like straight people, some LGB people may suffer mental health problems for all sorts of reasons. One reason might be the fact that they are often excluded or bullied by other members of society.

You can spot someone who fancies the same sex because they act and dress differently to normal people

Some people may conform to stereotypes, whether it is to do with sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity or any other form of identity. Indeed, some people may feel a sense of 'belonging' by sharing certain characteristics with their friends or peer group. However, not all gay men are effeminate and not all lesbians have short hair: some straight men can enjoy wearing flamboyant clothes and some straight women have short hair. You can't tell by looking if somebody is LGBT or straight.

It is normal to make babies through heterosexual sex

Many people, not just gay men and lesbians, become parents through other means, such as artificial insemination, fostering or adoption. Similarly, most straight people often have sex just because they enjoy it, with no intention of creating life. In both these areas – the varieties of ways we become parents and enjoying sex – LGBT and straight people are very similar.

Gay men are more promiscuous than other people. This is why so many of them get AIDS

Some people have more sexual partners than others. This is an individual choice and nothing to do with our sexual orientation. Indeed, many gay men are highly educated about HIV and very responsible about protecting themselves and their partners.

Whatever your sexual orientation, your risk of contracting HIV – or any sexually transmitted infection (STI) – will be increased if you have multiple partners.

People who say they are bisexual are just greedy

Bisexuality – like being lesbian, gay or straight – is not a choice. Some people just are attracted to both genders. Most of these people will happily enjoy long-term relationships with partners of their choice. Many people in relationships – regardless of their sexual orientation – may be attracted to other people, but this does not mean they will act on it.

People become gay or lesbian because they are too ugly to get partners of the opposite sex

There is no evidence to support this. And I'm sure we can all think of some very attractive gay men and lesbians!

Now that gays and lesbians can get married they should stop moaning about homophobia

Although gay men and lesbians can have civil partnerships in this country, this has not stopped many of them facing discrimination and prejudice. The fact that we have laws to protect LGBT people from discrimination – and the police treat homophobic crime as seriously as racist crime – should tell us that, unfortunately, LGBT people, like other minority groups, still have to deal with discrimination and prejudice.

Life is still difficult for many LGBT people: 40% of LGBT people who are bullied at school make at least one attempt to harm themselves.

If gays and lesbians have children they could make the child gay

There is no evidence for this. If children always took after the sexual orientation of their parents then there would be no LGBT children born to straight parents – and yet the vast majority of them are.

Only white people with money are gay, lesbian or bisexual

There are LGBT people in all ethnic groups and all walks of life. A quick search on the Internet will reveal many LGBT people who are neither white nor rich.

Edited and compiled by Mark Jennett

Mark Jennett is a trainer, consultant and writer specialising in diversity, sexual orientation and homophobia. He has provided training and support for local authorities as well as Stonewall, Terrence Higgins Trust, General Teaching Council, National Union of Teachers (NUT) and NASUWT, The Teachers' Union.

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Phillip now works as Sector Development Officer – Young Gay Men at the Terrence Higgins Trust in London. He has written young gay men's website **www.ygm.org.uk**, as well as the first set of national good practice guidelines in LGB youth work. His role at the Terrence Higgins Trust has enabled him to develop national training to youth/education workers on tackling homophobia and raising awareness of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Youth Issues.

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