

FAMOUS LGBT AMERICANS

Lesson plan for intermediate English students

1. **Vocabulary.** Ask your students if they know the following terms and explain them if necessary.

LGBTQ – An inclusive acronym describing people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning their gender identity or designation.

Gender – Typically, gender is the state of being male or female, though some people identify as non-gendered or both genders.

Gender Identity – A person's sense on the inside of their gender – male, female, both, or neither

Sexual Orientation – A person's sexual preference or identity as heterosexual, bisexual, or homosexual

Heterosexual – Two people of different genders who love each other; male and female

Homosexual – Two people of the same gender who love each other; male and male or female and female

Gay – A man who loves other men

Lesbian – A woman who loves other women

Bisexual – A person who loves members of both sexes

Transgender – A person whose gender identity (how they feel inside) is different from their body's gender

Coming Out – To openly declare your LGBTQ identity for the first time

2. **Split the group into 5 or 6 pairs, depending on the number of students. Give each pair a cutting with one of the bios attached on the next page.**
3. **Groupwork – 10-15 minutes. Each pair reads their bio carefully, working on their own. Use dictionary if necessary. You can access photographs here <https://www.woojr.com/lgbt-trailblazers-pride-month-curriculum-kids/>**

Each pair performs a role-play interview: Interviewer + famous LGBT person. The interviews should be performed in front of the group. Hello, what is your profession? Response based on bio. When were you born? Response based on bio. What is your opinion about... What is your greatest achievement? Once they cover the key elements, let them improvise, adding information about favorite foods, pets, vacation plans.

4. **Each pair performs in front of the group. Make sure there is a round of applause after each interview.**
5. **Homework: you can print out a great quiz for your students here: <https://www.woojr.com/lgbt-trailblazers-pride-month-curriculum-kids/pride-quiz/>**

Tammy Baldwin is the first openly gay politician elected to the U.S. Senate, in 2012. Baldwin, an attorney, was also the first woman elected to congress in her home state of Wisconsin. “All of us who are openly gay are living and writing the history of our movement,” says Baldwin. “We are no more – and no less – heroic than the suffragists and abolitionists of the 19th century . . . We are ordinary people, living our lives, and trying, as civil-rights activist Dorothy Cotton said, to ‘fix what ain’t right’ in our society.”

Audre Lorde was a librarian before becoming a poet, when her 1968 work “The Black Unicorn” was published and received high praise. Lorde described herself as “black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet,” and wove these themes into her work as a poet and essayist. She also expressed anger about social injustice in her poetry, which was not a socially acceptable form of creative expression for women or people of color at the time.

Gilbert Baker called himself “the gay Betsy Ross,” because he designed what became known as the gay pride flag, a rainbow with six colors. Growing up in Kansas and feeling like an outcast because he was gay, Baker moved to San Francisco in 1972 after being stationed there as an army medic. When asked to make a flag for a pride parade in 1978, Baker and volunteers hand-dyed different colored fabric in garbage cans and stitched together the first rainbow flag. At the parade, Baker said, people’s faces lit up when they saw the flags. “It needed no explanation,” he said. “People knew immediately that it was our flag.” Baker never trademarked the flag; he felt it was his gift to the world. In the years since the 1978 march, the rainbow flag has become an international symbol for inclusion, peace, and love.

Christine Jorgensen made international headlines for her public life as a transgender woman. Born George Jorgensen in New York in 1926, Jorgensen went to Europe to have gender affirmation surgery in 1950. However, when she returned to the U.S., she quickly learned that society did not understand or accept transgender people, and Jorgensen was often a source of public ridicule. She was also denied a marriage license in 1959 because her birth certificate listed her as male. Despite these challenges, Christine Jorgensen’s openness about her transition from male to female gave hope to other people who felt they were also transgender.

Ellen DeGeneres was the first lead actor to play an openly gay character in a television sitcom. She started her career as stand-up comedian, and in 1997, the comedy show Ellen made headlines due to her character coming out. She’s enjoyed a successful movie career—including starring as the voice of Dory from Finding Nemo and Finding Dory—authored several books, and hosted major awards shows, but Degeneres is best known today for her popular daytime talk show, Ellen.

Harvey Milk was born in New York in 1930, and was one of the first openly gay elected officials in the United States. A former school teacher and U.S. Navy veteran, Milk moved to California and opened a camera shop on Castro Street in San Francisco in 1972. After becoming a politically active member of the gay community there, Milk was elected to a San Francisco city board in 1977. Sadly, he was assassinated a year later by a man who felt Milk’s presence on the board was a threat to his personal values.