Representing Trans Identities

Media images influence how transgender students are treated in schools and society. In the following activities, you will analyze transgender representation in television and movies and then create a transgender character who accurately reflects the realities of gender identity and gender expression in today's society.

Transgender refers to "people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth" (GLADD Media Reference Guide: Transgender, para. 5).

The number of transgender people in the U.S. has grown to 1.6 million -- 43% of whom are young adults or teenagers, according to C.D.C. health surveys conducted between 2017 and 2020 (UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, June 2022).

Nearly 2% of high school students in the U.S. identify as transgender, and more than one-third of them attempt suicide (The Washington Post, January 24, 2019). Discrimination based on gender identity is prohibited in schools, yet many LGBTQ+ students face bullying, harassment, and feel unsafe in classrooms and corridors (Education in a Pandemic, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2021).

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If you were (or are) a part of a minority group or stigmatized community, would you want a more realistic representation of your group in the media that could victimize your group or an idealistic representation that could present a new reality for your group?

Do media producers have a responsibility to make sure that their portrayals of marginalized groups are accurate?

Activity 1: Analyze Transgender Representation in TV and Movies

- Explore the following resources:
  - [Television Shows and Movies with Transgender Representation](#).
  - [Victims or Villains: Examining Ten Years of Transgender Images on Television](#).
  - [2020 GLAAD Studio Responsibility Index](#).
- Then, select a producer, writer, and/or director of a TV show or movie from one of the previous resources and **write a PRAISE letter or social media post to them** if they positively portrayed transgender characters in their show or film or **write a PROTEST letter** if they negatively portrayed transgender characters.

> ### Designing for Learning: Student-Created Activity Example
>
> [Analyze Transgender Representation in TV or Movies](#) by Mitchell Regan

Activity 2: Create a Transgender Character for TV or Movies

- Create a transgender main character for a movie or TV show.
- Consider the following prompts:
  - What kinds of challenges would your transgender character face - related and unrelated to their gender identity?
  - How does the [conflict between the majority attitudes and individual goals](#) influence transgender individuals' daily lives?
  - How can you create characters that are more realistic and complex?
  - What misconceptions and stereotypes would you include or leave out? Why?
- Then, **write a script for a new TV episode or movie sequel** featuring the transgender character as they navigate the issue of their individual rights/liberty conflicting with majority attitudes and perspectives.

> ### Designing for Learning: Student-Created Activity Example
>
> [Create a Transgender Character for TV or Movies](#) by Mitchell Regan

Additional Resources

- [Transgender Representation in the Media](#)
- [With a Critical Eye: Transgender Representation in the Media](#)
- [The Misrepresentation Of Transgender People In Media And Why It Needs To Change](#)

Connecting to the Building Democracy for All eBook

[Building Democracy for All: What are Transgender Students' Rights at School?](#)

Connecting to the Standards

- [Massachusetts Civics & Government Standards](#)
  - Analyze issues involving liberty in conflict with equality or authority, individual rights in conflict with the common good, or majority rule in conflict with minority rights. (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for History and Social Studies) [8.T4.10]
- [ISTE Standards](#)
  - Knowledge Constructor
    - 3a: Students plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits.
    - 3b: Students evaluate the accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance of information, media, data or other resources.
  - Creative Communicator
    - 6a: Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.
    - 6b: Students create original works or responsibly repurpose or remix digital resources into new creations.
    - 6d: Students publish or present content that customizes the message and medium for the intended audiences.
- [DLCS Standards](#)
  - Interpersonal and Societal Impact (CAS.c)
  - Collaboration and Communication (DTC.b)
  - Research (DTC.c)
- [English Language Arts > History/Social Studies Common Core Standards](#)
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6
  - CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

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