

Olivia Lee

Professor Warner

English 112B

25 November 2012

LGBTQ Literature

The purpose of education is to provide students with skills that will help them succeed in life, so teachers have a responsibility to educate students to think critically about the problems in the world. Many teachers recognize the need for an education that strives to reflect the diversity in U.S. society. For this reason, literature classes have opened up to include the works of African American, Asian American, Chicano, and Jewish authors, yet the LGBTQ community is still highly underrepresented in school curriculums. The lack of LGBTQ studies in education have contributed to incorrect beliefs and myths of the LGBTQ community. My unit of study focusing on LGBTQ literature will educate the students about LGBTQ issues as seen from the LGBTQ perspective. By analyzing LGBTQ literature, students can better identify misconceptions surrounding LGBTQ topics and learn to approach them with critical thinking skills instead.

My unit of study will be focus mostly on *The Laramie Project*, a play by Moisés Kaufman. This play draws on a real event—the murder of a gay man named Matthew Shephard—which took place in Laramie, Wyoming and the interviews of the people who live in that city during the time of the murder. *The Laramie Project* will offer students multiple perspectives of the event—from the reactions of the heterosexual community to the LGBTQ citizens in Laramie. To complement the play, the unit of study will include poems, short stories, and novels that have LGBTQ themes. The time period of these literatures will vary from late 19th century to contemporary American Literature. By offering a wide range of LGBTQ literature, I

hope to broaden students' own perspectives, so they can better evaluate LGBTQ issues in U.S. society.

LAUNCHING THE UNIT

I will be introducing the unit with two poems—we will watch “Maybe I Need You” by Andrea Gibson on YouTube and read “Shadow” by Richard Nugent, an African American poet during the Harlem Renaissance. I will not let the students know the authors' sexual orientation when they first analyze the poem. During the class discussion, I want them to identify the themes presented in the poem and talk informally about what the poem might mean.

After their initial analysis, I will reveal that the two authors of the poem are homosexual—that Gibson is a well-known lesbian poet who often writes love poems dedicated to her female lovers; that Nugent is an openly gay poet and has claimed that “Shadow” is a poem about the stigmatization of being homosexual. We will then have a discussion on whether or not the new information changes the meaning/themes of the poems. I will encourage the students to reanalyze the poems to provide reasons for their opinions.

The purpose of this exercise is to expose the myth that many LGBTQ works are pornographic and inappropriate for school; students should also be able to make the connection that there are a wide range of LGBTQ themes that has nothing to do with sexual acts—that the LGBTQ experience is more than just what goes on in the bedroom. I also want students to explore how the sexuality of a writer may or may not change the analysis of their literature; students should not shy away from researching an author's sexual orientation as it plays a major role in how the author develops his/her writing.

INTRODUCTION TO LGBTQ LITERATURE

I will have to give a brief lecture identifying LGBTQ literature—not only as writing that is by a LGBTQ author or has a main character who is LGBTQ—it is writing that has themes that demonstrate the LGBTQ experience. I will also discuss the importance of learning LGBTQ literature by putting it in a multicultural context—it as important as studying literature from different ethnic groups, social classes, and religious backgrounds. The main objective is for them to be able to find LGBTQ themes that are common throughout many of the works.

Assignment:

Write a half-page response on your past experiences with any LGBTQ literature, songs, movies, etc. If yes, what are they and what were they about. If no, then write about what you think LGBTQ literature will be about—its themes, plots, etc.

CANONICAL CENTER PIECE: *The Laramie Project* by Moisés Kaufman

Because this is a play introducing many people's perspectives on a real event, I will ask the students to find and read news article that covers the murder of Matthew Shepard before we begin reading. I will also spend a couple of classes doing a readers' theater by assigning each students a role to read aloud. I hope that the readers' theater will show them that the play is not difficult to read and follow; the purpose is to encourage the students to read the play on their own. Whatever we do not finish reading in class, I will assign appropriate amount of pages as homework each day until the students finish the play.

Assignment:

Identify one reoccurring theme in the play. Type up one quote/passage that demonstrates the theme. For each quote, there should be a one-paragraph explanation on why you chose the quote as the best quote from the pages to support the theme. You should follow one theme throughout the entire play.

OTHER LGBTQ LITERATURE

- 1) “Once I pass’d Through A Populous City” by Walt Whitman (read in class)

According to Rictor Norton, a writer of gay literary and cultural history, “the discovery of the original hand-written manuscript [of ‘Once I pass’d Through A Populous City’] in 1925 shows that [Whitman] changed "he" to "she" before publishing the poem” (135).

I will compare and contrast the two versions of the poem and engage the students in a discussion on how the poem and even the process of writing it demonstrate the LGBTQ experience. We will also discuss how the changes affect the poem.

- 2) “Blessed Assurance” by Langston Hughes (read as homework)

This short story is about how a father is frustrated at his son for being effeminate and queer-like.

We will discuss how the text reveals gender roles. And I will also encourage the students to decide whether this short story is gay bashing or whether the author wants us to read this ironically—I will ask them to support their stance with the text. After the first discussion, I will let the students know that there are debates as to whether or not Langston Hughes is a closeted gay. With this new information, I want them to reanalyze the text for another round of discussion.

- 3) “Andrew” by Andrea Gibson (watch in class)

This is another spoken word poem by Andrea Gibson. In this poem, she challenges the traditional categories of gender identities as well as gender roles.

I will ask the class to get into groups and analyze “Blessed Assurance” along with “Andrew.” I want them to focus on the theme of how both texts challenges gender roles. I will ask each group to make a two-column chart—one side will be a list of short quotes from the short story/poem

that are examples of what is not traditionally done (example: “Barbies suck”); on the opposite side, I want them to come up with examples of what is traditionally done (example: Girls usually buy and play with Barbies and dolls).

Assignment:

Choose any one of these texts we have talked about. Find one way that this text can connect with *The Laramie Project*. Do what characters are similar? Do they have the same themes? What LGBTQ issues do both texts bring up? Free write for about $\frac{3}{4}$ page answering one of these questions—use quotes or paraphrase in order to support your own ideas; do not worry about organization; just stay on topic.

EXPANDING THE UNIT (extra credit)

October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard by Leslea Newman

Love Rules (Hamilton High Series) by Marilyn Reynolds

Out of the Pocket by Bill Kronigsburg

“A Brief Moment in the Life of Angus Bethune” AND “In the Time I Get” by Chris Crutcher

Assignment:

Choose any one (two if choosing short stories by Crutcher) of these texts to read on your own. Make an advertisement for it (video commercial, poster, ads, etc.), or type a 1-2 page review analyzing the literature and give textual evidence why the book did not succeed in presenting a LGBTQ theme.

CONCLUDING THE UNIT

I want each student to find a news article from within the last ten years that cover LGBTQ issues. The news article must not be an article about Mathew Shepard. They will need to give a 5

minute presentation on their article and relate it to any one of the texts we have discussed in class. This final assignment will help them connect what we study in class to what goes on in the real world.

Works Cited

- Crutcher, Chris. *Athletic Shorts, Six Short Stories*. New York: Greenwillow Books/Harper Collins, 1989. Print.
- Gibson, Andrea. *Andrea Gibson*. N.p., n. d. Web. Web. 20 Nov. 2012.
<<http://andrewgibby.tumblr.com/>>.
- Kaufman, Moïssès, and Project Tectonic Theater . *The Laramie Project*. New York : Vintage, 2001. Print.
- Konigsberg, B. *Out of the pocket*. New York, NY: Dutton Childrens Books, 2009. Print.
- Newman, Lesléa. *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick , 2012. Print.
- Norton, Rictor. *My Dear Boy: Gay Love Letters Through the Centuries*. 1st ed. San Francisco: Leyland Publications, 1997. Print.
- Reynolds, Marilyn. *Love Rules (Hamilton High series)*. Buena Park, CA: Morning Glory Press, 2001. Print.
- Wirth, Tom. "Richard Bruce Nugent--Harlem Butterfly." *Richard Bruce Nugent*. N.p.. Web. 27 Nov 2012. <<http://www.brucenugent.com/About Frameset.htm>>.

POEMS

“Maybe I Need You” by Andrea Gibson

The winter I told you I think icicles are magic,
 you stole an enormous icicle from a neighbors shingle
 and gave it to me as a gift
 I kept it in my freezer for seven months
 until the day I hurt my foot
 and needed something to reduce the swelling
 Love isn't always magic
 sometimes it's just melting
 or it's black and blue
 where it hurts the most

Last night I saw your ghost
 pedalling a bicycle with a basket
 towards a moon as full as my heavy head
 and I wanted nothing more than to be sitting in that basket
 like ET with my glowing heart glowing right through my chest
 and my glowing finger pointing in the direction of our home

Two years ago I said I never want to write our break up poem;
 you built me a time capsule full of big league chew
 and promised to never burst my bubble
 I loved you from our first date at the batting cages
 when I missed 23 balls in a row
 and you looked at me
 like I was a home run in the ninth inning of the world series
 Now every time I hear the word, 'love', I think going, going...

The first week you were gone,
 I kept seeing your hand wave goodbye
 like a windshield wiper in a flooding car
 in the last real moment I believed the hurricane would let me out alive

Yesterday I carved your name into the surface of an ice cube
 then held it against my chest 'til it melted into my aching pores
 Today I cried so hard the neighbors knocked on my door
 and asked if I wanted to borrow some sugar
 I told them I left my sweet tooth in your belly button

Love isn't always magic
 but if I offered my life to the magician
 if I told her to cut me in half
 So tonight I could come to you whole

and ask for you back
 would you listen
 for this dark alley love song

For the winter we heated our home from the steam off our own bodies?
 I wrote you too many poems in a language I did not yet know how to speak
 But I know now it doesn't matter how well I say grace
 if I am sitting at a table where I am offering no bread to eat
 So this is my wheat field;
 you can have every acre, Love

This is my garden song
 This is my fist fight
 with that bitter frost
 Tonight I begged another stage light to become that back alley street lamp that we danced
 beneath
 the night your warm mouth fell on my timid cheek
 as I sang, maybe I need you
 off key
 but in tune

Maybe I need you the way that big moon needs that open sea
 Maybe I didn't even know was here 'til I saw you holding me
 Give me one room to come home to
 give me the palm of your hand
 Every strand of my hair is a kite string
 and I have been blue in the face with your sky
 crying a flood over Iowa so you mother can wake to Venice

Lover, I smashed my glass slipper to build a stained glass window for every wall inside my chest
 Now my heart is a pressed flower and a tattered Bible
 It is the one verse you can trust

So I'm putting all of my words in your collection plate
 I am setting the table with bread and grace
 My knees are bent
 like the corner of a page
 I am saving your place

“Shadow” by Richard Nugent

Silhouette
 On the face of the moon
 Am I.
 A dark shadow in the light.

A silhouette am I
 On the face of the moon
 Lacking color
 Or vivid brightness
 But defined all the clearer
 Because
 I am dark,
 Black on the face of the moon.
 A shadow am I
 Growing in the light,
 Not understood as is the day,
 But more easily seen
 Because
 I am a shadow in the light.

“Once I pass’d Through A Populous City” by Walt Whitman

Censored Version	Original Manuscript
<p>Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain for future use with its shows, architecture, customs, traditions, Yet now of all that city I remember only a [wo]man I casually met there who detain'd me for love of me, Day by day and night by night we were together--all else has long been forgotten by me, I remember I say only that [wo]man who passionately clung to me, Again we wander, we love, we separate again, Again [s]he holds me by the hand, I must not go, I see him [her] close beside me with silent lips sad and tremulous.</p>	<p>Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain for future use with its shows, architecture, customs, traditions, Yet now of all that city I remember only a man I casually met there who detain'd me for love of me, Day by day and night by night we were together--all else has long been forgotten by me, I remember I say only that man who passionately clung to me, Again we wander, we love, we separate again, Again he holds me by the hand, I must not go, I see him close beside me with silent lips sad and tremulous.</p>

“Andrew” by Andrea Gibson

When I was a kid I would sometimes secretly call myself Andrew
 Would tug at the crotch of my pants the way only pubescent boys do
 Ran around pounding on my bare chest like Tarzan
 It's not that I thought I'd grow up to be a man
 I just never thought I'd grow up to be a woman either
 From what I could tell neither of those categories fit me
 But believe me I knew from a very young age never to say
 Hey Dad, this Adam or Eve thing isn't really working for me
 I mean what about all the kinds of people in-between?
 In the third grade Lynette Lions asked me where all my Barbies were
 I lied and told her I got in trouble so my mom took 'em away
 I didn't dare say Barbie sucks Lynette!
 And for that matter Timmy, so does G.I. Joe

I want to grow into something none of us has ever seen before
And gender is just one of the ways we're boxed and labeled
Before we're ever able to speak who we dream we are
Who believe we'll become
Like drum beats forever changing their rhythm
I am living today as someone I had not yet become yesterday
And tonight I will borrow only pieces of who I was today
To carry with me tomorrow
No, I'm not gay
No, I'm not straight
I'm sure as hell not bisexual, damn it!
I am whatever I am when I am it
Loving whoever you are when the stars shine
And whoever you'll be when the sun rises
Yes, I like girls
Yes, I like boys
Yes, I like boys who like boys
I like girls who wear toys and girls who don't
Girls who don't call themselves girls
Crew cuts or curls and that really bad hair phase in between
I like steam rising from the body of a one-night stand
I like holding hands for three months before kissing
I like wishing your body was Saturn, my body thousand rings wrapped around you
You wanted to be a Buddhist nun once
Last night you held my cervix between your fingers
I thank gods I don't believe in for your changing
Tell me we'll be naming our children "Beautiful" and nothing else
Tell Barbie she can go now
Tell GI Joe to put his gun down
And find a boyfriend or a girlfriend or a girl-boy-friend
Fuck it, y'all, GI Joe just needs a friend
I mean, he's plastic and not even the kind of plastic that bends
I want to bend in a thousand directions
Like the sun does, like love does, like time stopped
So the hands of the clock could hold each other
And we held each other
Like I held these words for too many years on the tip of my tongue
I am my mother's daughter
I am midnight sun
You can find me on the moon waxing and waning
My heart full of petals, every single one begging
"Love me, love me, love me
Whoever I am
Whoever I become
Love me, love me, love me



LGBTQ Literature



Launching the Unit

“Maybe I Need You”

Andrea Gibson



<http://flickrhivemind.net/>

“The winter I told you I think icicles are magic,
you stole an enormous icicle from a neighbors shingle
and gave it to me as a gift
I kept it in my freezer for seven months
until the day I hurt my foot
and needed something to reduce the swelling
Love isn’t always magic
sometimes it’s just melting
or it’s black and blue
where it hurts the most
Last night I saw your ghost
pedaling a bicycle with a basket
towards a moon as full as my heavy head
and I wanted nothing more than to be sitting in that basket
like ET with my glowing heart glowing right through my chest
and my glowing finger pointing in the direction of our home
...”

Silhouette
On the face of the moon
Am I.
A dark shadow in the light.
A silhouette am I
On the face of the moon
Lacking color
Or vivid brightness
But defined all the clearer
Because
I am dark,
Black on the face of the moon.
A shadow am I
Growing in the light,
Not understood as is the day,
But more easily seen
Because
I am a shadow in the light.



“Shadow”
Richard Nugent



Introduction:

importance of learning LGBTQ Lit

A vibrant rainbow flag with stripes of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple is shown waving against a bright blue sky. The sun is visible behind the flag, creating a lens flare effect. The flag is positioned diagonally across the frame.

CANONICAL WORK

The Laramie Project Moisés Kaufman

On November 14, 1998,

the members of the Tectonic Theatre Project traveled to Laramie, Wyoming,
and conducted over 200 interviews with the people of the town.

The play you are about to see is edited from those interviews.



The Laramie Project Moisés Kaufman





OTHER TEXTS

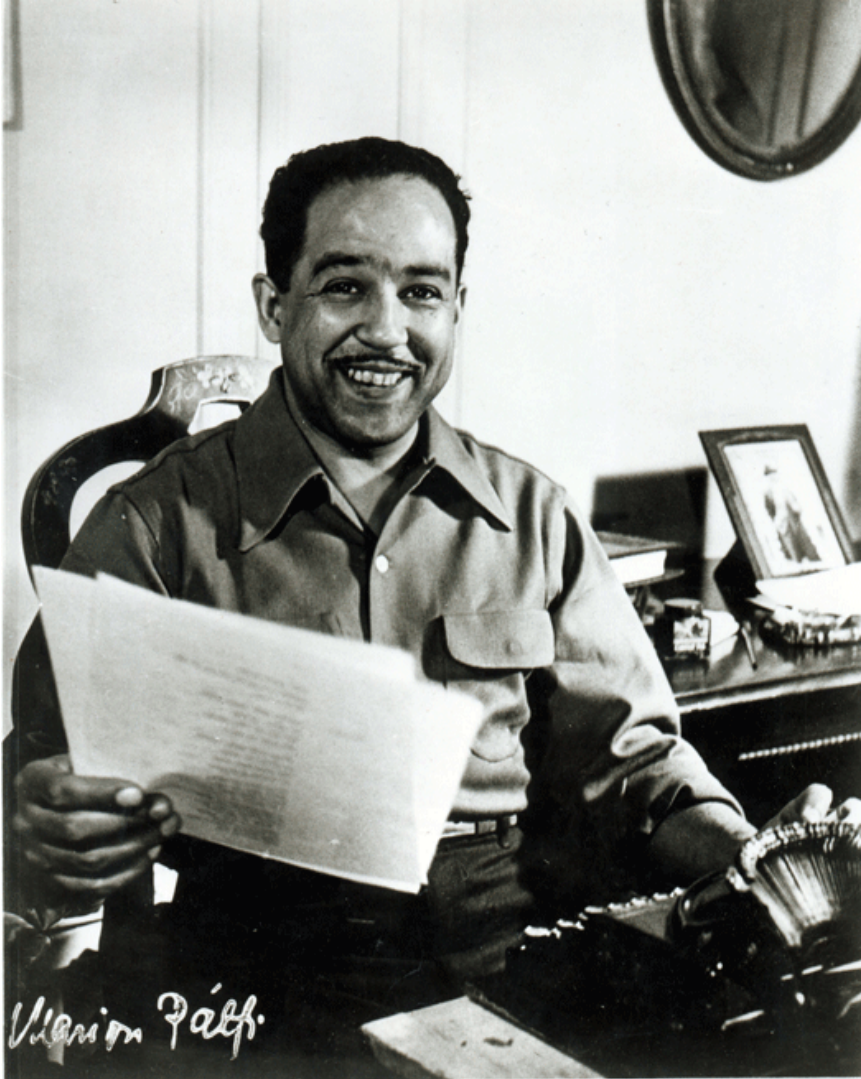
“Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain for future use with its shows, architecture, customs, traditions,
Yet now of all that city I remember only a [wo]man I casually met there who detain'd me for love of me...”

VS.

“Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain for future use with its shows, architecture, customs, traditions,
Yet now of all that city I remember only a man I casually met there who detain'd me for love of me...”

“Blessed Assurance”

Langston Hughes



“Unfortunately (and to John's distrust of God) it seemed his son was turning out to be a queer.”

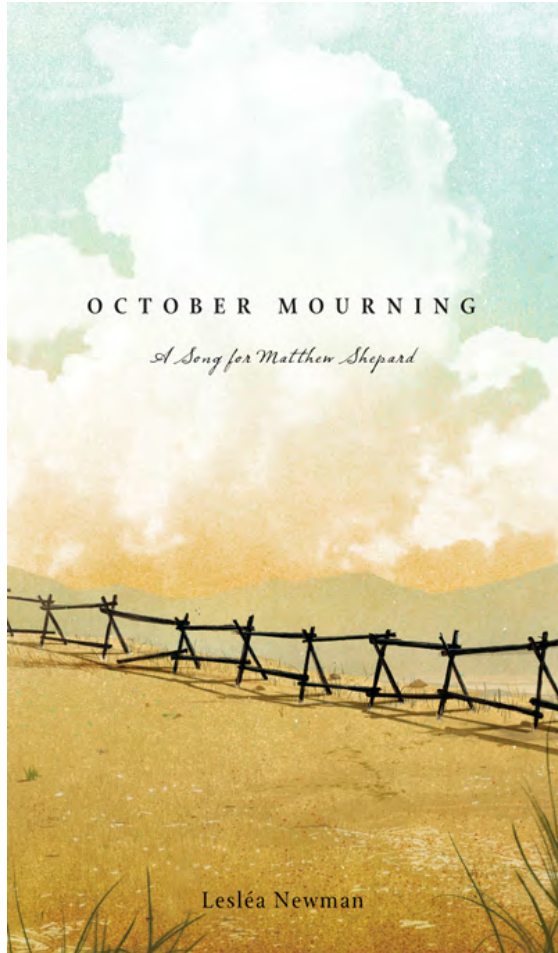
“Delmar, do you have to wear *white* Bermuda shorts to school? Most of the other boys wear Levi's or just plain pants don't they? And why wash them out yourself every night, all that ironing? I want you to be clean, son, but not *that* clean”

“In spite of its dedication, one might have thought that in performance the solo lead-- Ruth's part-- would be assigned to a woman. Perversely enough, the composer allotted it to Delmar.”

“Andrew”
Andrea Gibson

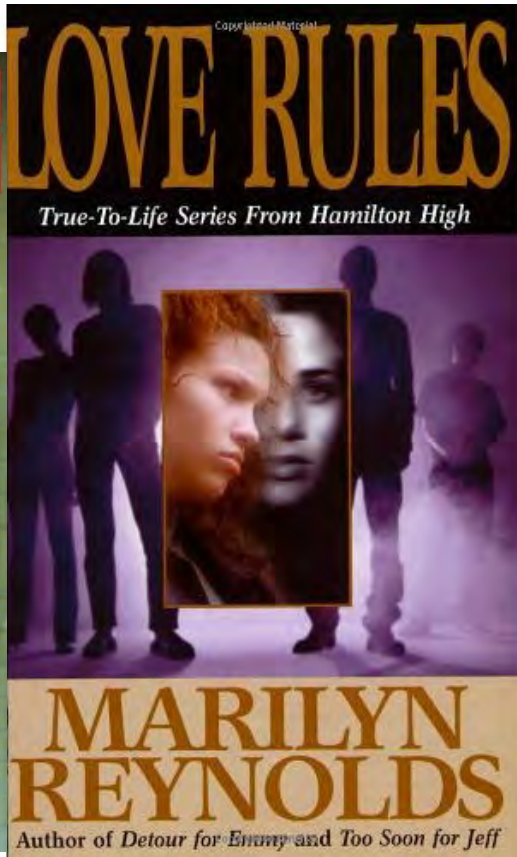
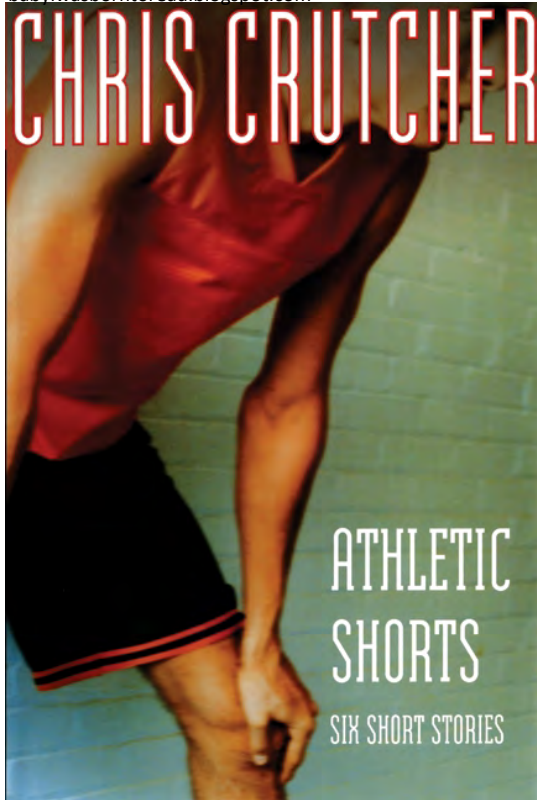


EXPANDING THE UNIT



<http://www.eriegaynews.com>

babyiwasborntoread.blogspot.com



Ebay.com

<http://bikisbeautifulpeople.blogspot.com/>

