



Teaching LGBTQ History

a project of Our Family Coalition

The AIDS Epidemic (4 of 4): NAMES Project Quilt

A Platform of Memoriam, Activism, and Leadership

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Subject: History

Topic: Integrated

Grade Level: High School: 11th Grade

Overview

This is Part 4 of the 4-part AIDS Epidemic lesson plan. It can also be used as a standalone.

In this lesson plan, students learn about the history of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, discussing its purpose and impact. Students then create paper “quilt panels” for either themselves or loved ones to better understand how the NAMES Project is used to represent and honor people. Afterwards, students collectively reflect on the grieving process. They may engage in an extension activity, where they assemble their panels into a community quilt.

Time: 1 hour; optional

Lesson Objectives:

- Be reminded of the immense impact of the U.S. AIDS Crisis that began in the 1980s.
- Learn the history of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt.
- Understand how the Quilt is used to represent and mourn those who died from AIDS, as well as fight for understanding and resources for people living with AIDS.

Essential Questions:

1. What is the purpose and message of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt?
2. How does the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt support those who were affected by the AIDS epidemic, particularly the LGBTQ+ community?

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

HSS 11.11: Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

HISTORY FRAMEWORK: CH 16 P 427: [Reagan] supported a stronger government that would outlaw abortion and appealed to social conservatives seeking to promote heterosexual marriage, to oppose ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, to support faith-based cultural advocacy, to champion individual accomplishment, and to oppose many safety-net programs. He also vowed to expand the military and the Cold War. These three areas led to the resurgence of the Republican Party under Reagan as he restructured the scope of the federal government.

HISTORY FRAMEWORK: CH 16 P 431: In what ways have issues such as education; civil rights for people of color, immigrants, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Americans, and disabled Americans; economic policy; recognition of economic, social and cultural rights; the environment; and the status of women remained unchanged over time? In what ways have they changed?

The growth of the LGBT rights movement, for example, led to the pioneering role of gay politicians such as Elaine Noble, who was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1974, and Harvey Milk, elected in 1977 to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

Vocabulary:

- Memoriam: in memory of; as a memorial to.
- Activism: the policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change.
- AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome): a disease that severely weakens the body's immune system; most significantly impacted LGBTQ people.

Teacher Background:

- [NAMES Project Fact Sheet](#)

Materials:

- An internet-connected computer
- A projector
- Coloring utensils
- Paper (1 per student)
- Optional:
 - Assortment of colored paper
 - Scissors
 - Glue
 - Other available craft supplies

Instruction:

- Video (6 mins)
 - Briefly introduce video, establishing that the AIDS Epidemic began in the 1980s and predominantly affected gay men and transgender individuals.

- Watch [BBC World News Witness History -- The AIDS Memorial Quilt](#)
- Discussion (10 mins)
 - What kind of work and organization is required for such a large community art piece? What considerations would you have to make for arranging the NAMES Project? (ex. creating, maintaining, transporting, etc.)
 - What are the intended purposes of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt? How does it serve these purposes, and does it do so effectively? (ex. activism, memoriam, healing, community, anger, grief, expression, etc.)
 - During this time period, gay men and transgender people were openly discriminated against, both socially and through legal means. One of the primary purposes of the NAMES Project was to humanize these populations and emphasize the impact of the AIDS epidemic on this community. How does it serve this purpose, and does it do so effectively?

- Activity (35 mins)
 - Give each student a piece of paper and coloring utensils (and other craft supplies if applicable)
 - Ask students to create a panel either for themselves as they'd be remembered by someone close to them, or in honor of someone they've lost. They may choose whichever option they are comfortable with.
 - The activity is very personal, but students are welcome to brainstorm with or be comforted by their peers. Throughout the activity, students may experience vulnerability and/or grief.
 - Ask students guiding questions for the activity:
 - If the panel is for themselves
 - How would you want to be remembered?
 - What tools could you use to convey this? (ex. color, images, text, etc.)
 - How would your closest relative or best friend personalize a panel to honor and represent you?
 - Is there anything you would want depicted that isn't well-known about you?
 - What name would be written on your panel? What name best represents how a loved one would honor you? (ex. full name, first name, nickname, relationship to you, etc.)
 - If the panel is for a loved one
 - What are some of your favorite moments with your loved one? What made them special to you?
 - What was important to them? (favorite activities, values, career, interests, etc.)

- How can you represent these characteristics and memories? (ex. color, images, texts, etc.)
 - Are people’s stories about them the same or different from how you remember this person? Would you like to represent them as they are remembered by others, you specifically, or both?
 - What name would best represent who this person is to you? (ex. their full name, first name, nickname, relation to you, etc.)
- Reflection & Cool-down (10 mins)
 - How do we honor those who have passed?
 - How has this activity been similar or different to practices honoring those who are lost in your community?
 - How did it feel to engage in this activity with your peers? Was there anything unique about doing this together?
 - Though it can be sad to lose loved ones, there is still reason to celebrate and honor their lives. They may be gone, but they are not forgotten.
- Extension activity (20-30 minutes)
 - This activity may be done the day of or at a later time. Additional reflection and cool-down are recommended.
 - Instruct students to work collaboratively in arranging the panels they created into a quilt. It may be one collective quilt, or compiled of multiple smaller “blocks.”
 - Throughout this activity, ask students the following questions:
 - Who would you or your loved one like to be remembered with? Are there people or communities that are particularly important to you/them?
 - What communities do you/they align with? (ex. cultural/ethnic identity, regional upbringing, queer identity, etc.)
 - What looks visually appealing together? (ex. colors, formats, characteristics, etc.)
 - Have you thought critically about your choices? Do you risk modeling segregationist practices?
 - How does arranging these panels together honor the people represented? How do other communities honor people who have died from injustices?

Relevant Resources:

1. *AIDS Memorial Quilt*, National AIDS Memorial, 2020, www.aidsmemorial.org/quilt.
2. “The AIDS Memorial Quilt.” *Witness History*, BBC World News, 28 March 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hX0Ju8lhoXQ&feature=emb_logo.

3. Shaffer, Elias. "Fact Sheet: The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt." *Our Family Coalition*, 2020,

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1-vAghtrMYhP6l8wawCmokNIg_ZsUzR_T2uIKix0adNQ/edit?usp=sharing.

Author(s) Information:

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