

TREVOR

STUDY GUIDE

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TREVOR! THE MUSICAL

Based on the story that inspired the Academy Award-winning film, the charity and the national movement, TREVOR the musical is a coming-of-age story about identity, emerging sexuality and the struggles of growing up in a world that may not be ready for you. This world-premiere musical is directed by Marc Bruni, who helmed the Tony Award-winning production of Beautiful: The Carole King Musical on Broadway.

The Trevor Project was created as a result of the Academy Award-winning film that also inspired the musical. The Trevor Project is the nation's only accredited crisis intervention and suicide prevention organization focused on saving young LGBT lives. www.TheTrevorProject.com

STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is a resource to explore the context of TREVOR, make connections to the work of art, and explore activities that deepen the learning. We hope you find this a helpful and useful resource for your classroom.



Pictured: Eli Tokash and Declan Desmond. Photo by Michael Brosilow

TREVOR

A coming-of-age musical about the struggles of growing up in a world that may not be ready for you.

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SYNOPSIS

Opening on an ordinary Monday in 1981, *Trevor* begins by painting a picture of a world where every day is just the same. Trevor himself is an extraordinary thirteen-year-old who feels trapped in this mundane world, where the people in his life do not understand his need to be seen and appreciated. His parents are obsessed with watching the news and his teachers are only interested in making rules that restrict Trevor's creativity. His best friends, Cathy and Walter, are becoming more interested in the opposite sexes, which confuses Trevor. With Diana Ross as his inspiration and guiding light, Trevor wants more than anything to perform his choreography at the school talent show, because then he will get to be seen.

When his act is rejected, however, Trevor has to get creative, and strikes up an unlikely friendship with Pinky Farraday, who promises that Trevor can choreograph the football team's dance number. Navigating his new role as a choreographer and his friendships with Walter and Cathy proves tricky for Trevor, as his interests take him farther away from his old friends, and bring him closer to Pinky. At the same time, a nasty rumor starts circulating around school: Trevor walks like a girl.

As the rumors escalate and Trevor's confusing feelings for Pinky grow stronger, Trevor tries even more desperately to fit in and prove the rumors wrong, Trevor finds himself traveling down a rough path of self-discovery, coming into conflict with his classmates, parents, and teachers at every turn. Through his experience with lies, bullying, exposure, loss of innocence, and unexpected guidance, Trevor has to re-evaluate who he is and what he wants. *Trevor* is a brave new musical about choosing to live an extraordinary life in the face of doubt and prejudice, and an invitation for audiences to celebrate the courageous act of being true to oneself.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Friends



Eli Tokash

TREVOR

Ambitious, perceptive, and flooded with personality, Trevor has big dreams and feels like he is the only one who notices the monotony of the day-to-day life of everyone around him. He wants to break out of it and become a star.



Matthew Uzarraga

WALTER

Trevor's childhood best friend who has recently discovered an interest in girls with hair that smells like strawberries—in particular, his friend Cathy. Walter has the mind of a scientist, but he is easily hurt. He fears rejection from his peers.



Tori Whaples

CATHY

Cathy is Trevor's other best friend. Clever, mouthy, and a little awkward, Cathy stands up and argues when she hears others being cruel—unless her own feelings are at stake. Cathy wants more than anything to be normal, and to have someone appreciate her.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Classmates



PINKY

Athletic, handsome, and unexpectedly kind, Pinky is the opposite of what his name would suggest. Originally open-minded and dependable, Pinky is deeply influenced by peer pressure, and cares a little too much about his reputation.

Declan Desmond



FRANNIE

Mary's minion, formerly a friend of Trevor's from the wrong side of town, Frannie has a core of kindness underneath a cool-girl façade. She is conflicted in pretty much everything, including the actions of her friends, and her crush on Pinky.

Maya Lou Hlava



MARY

Middle-school royalty. Everybody wants to be like Mary, even though she is too invested in staying at the top of the middle-school food chain. Her rumor-spreading is one of the main sources of Trevor's struggle. Mary has a crush on Jason, and is determined to do anything to win his affections.

Eloise Lushina



JASON

The kind of jock who gets by on mean jokes and monosyllabic words, Jason is the self-appointed Trevor police. He uses his criticism of others to hide his own insecurities.

Reilly Oh

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Adults



Salisha Thomas

DIANA ROSS

A powerful figment of Trevor's imagination, and a guiding light. As a symbol and a presence in Trevor's life, Diana Ross helps him on his journey of self-discovery. She is both a strong and ethereal being.



Jhardon DiShon Milton

JACK

A young man who can empathize with Trevor and meets him when he needs a friend to show him the way forward.



Sophie Grimm

MOM

The kind of helicopter parent who enters a room without knocking. She worries about Trevor and wants to have him under her constant supervision.

TEACHERS (Mr. Gregory, Mrs. Kerr)

The teachers want nothing more than for all their students to behave normally. They squash anything unique in their pursuit of this goal, and make Trevor's life miserable as a result.



Jarrod Zimmerman

DAD

Terrible at confrontation, Dad is Mom's reluctant aid in the quest to make Trevor normal. He worries too, but is easily distracted.

FATHER JOE

A priest who tries, fails, and tries again, wanting more than anything to help Trevor understand that everything will be okay.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Ensemble

MIDDLE SCHOOL ENSEMBLE

Trevor's classmates, the members of the ensemble both enact Trevor's fantasies and judge his behavior. They have the power to make him, or to ruin him.



Ariana Bujrks



Nathaniel Braga



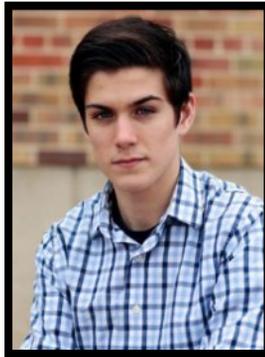
Timothy Eidman



Isabel Kaegi



Carly Meyer



Justin O'Brien



Jerome Riley, Jr.



Graydon Peter Yosowitz
Trevor
(select performances)

LEADING DIVERSITY DISCUSSIONS

Educators have the essential task of modeling allyship and helping students understand the importance of LGBT equality. To help teachers engage all students in complex discussions about identity, gender, and sexuality, we have a few suggestions:

Ground Rules

Create ground rules for students to use during discussion. Examples might be, “speak from the ‘I’ perspective,” or, “respect confidentiality.” This will help students handle any difficult feelings that get brought up by the subject material, and keep the space safe for LGBT students.

Language

Using the correct language to refer to gender and sexuality is part of modeling ally behavior. Learn the attached key terms, and use these terms with your students to normalize them.

Be An Ally

Beyond this lesson, help your students understand that your classroom is always a safe space by discouraging hate speech, promoting student allyship, focusing on identity, and teaching material with LGBT figures in your curriculum!

Empowerment

It is impossible to become the perfect ally overnight. Allyship is a lifelong practice, even for educators. Nobody knows your students better than you do, which makes you the best person to lead these discussions. You can raise awareness and keep your students safe simply by putting on your ally hat and diving right in!

LEADING DIVERSITY DISCUSSIONS

Gender Identity vs Sexual Orientation

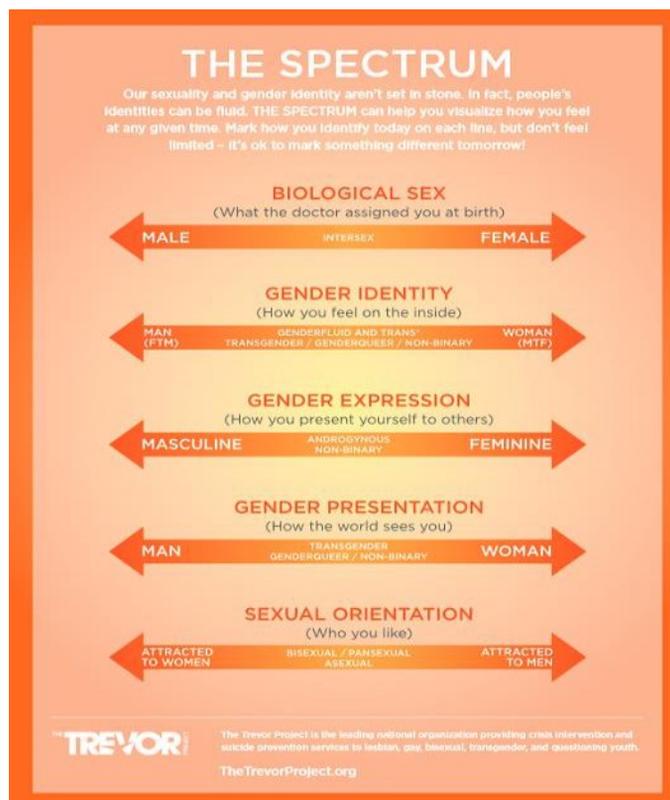
It is important to understand that Gender Identity is different from Sexual Orientation.

Sexual orientation is about who you're attracted to and who you feel drawn to romantically, emotionally, and sexually.

Gender identity is about who you ARE — male, female, genderqueer, etc.

This means that being transgender (feeling like your assigned sex is very different from the gender you identify with) isn't the same thing as being gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Sexual orientation is about who you want to be with. Gender identity is about who you are.



GENDER IDENTITY

KEY TERMS

Gender- An idea created by society that assigns certain qualities or traits to sexes, based on cultural, behavioral, or emotional characteristics. For example, “girls like pink” is a trait that makes up our idea of the female gender.

Sex- The physical sex characteristics you are born with, such as chromosomes, hormones, and genitalia. While sex traits are often attributed to a specific gender, sex and gender are not the same thing.

Genderqueer- Describes a person whose gender identity is not male or female.

Binary system- A system with two opposites, and no in-between. A common misconception about gender is that it is a binary system (male and female), when it is really a spectrum.

Cisgender- People who identify with the sex they are assigned at birth. A cisgender person, for example, was assigned male at birth, and still identifies as male.

Gender Expression- How we express our gender on the outside.

Gender Identity- How we feel our gender is on the inside.

Gender Non-Conforming- Describes someone whose gender presentation is different from their perceived assigned gender.

Pronouns- Refers to the pronouns people use. Some people use “she” or “he,” whereas others prefer “they” or “ze.” It is common practice in many workplaces now to introduce yourself using your preferred gender pronouns.

Transgender (Trans*)- An umbrella term used to describe people whose gender identity does not fit the gender they were assigned at birth. Many identities can fall under this term, but not all people who could fit under the umbrella choose to identify as transgender. It is important to always be respectful of someone’s identity by using their chosen name and gender pronouns.

Transitioning- The process a transgender person may go through to make their gender expression, sex, or presentation fit their gender identity. This word means many different things to different people, and not every transition

Non-Binary- An umbrella term that describes identities that don’t fit the binary system of gender. Genderqueer, gender non-conforming, and intersex are all non-binary identities.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

KEY TERMS

Bisexual- A term that describes someone who is attracted to more than one gender identity.

Asexual- A term describing someone who does not experience sexual attraction, or has little or no desire for sex. Asexuality is a spectrum, and people who are asexual experience their asexuality differently.

Gay- A term that is used to describe people who are attracted to others of their same gender. This term is mostly used to describe men who are attracted to men, but can be used to describe anyone who is attracted to their same gender.

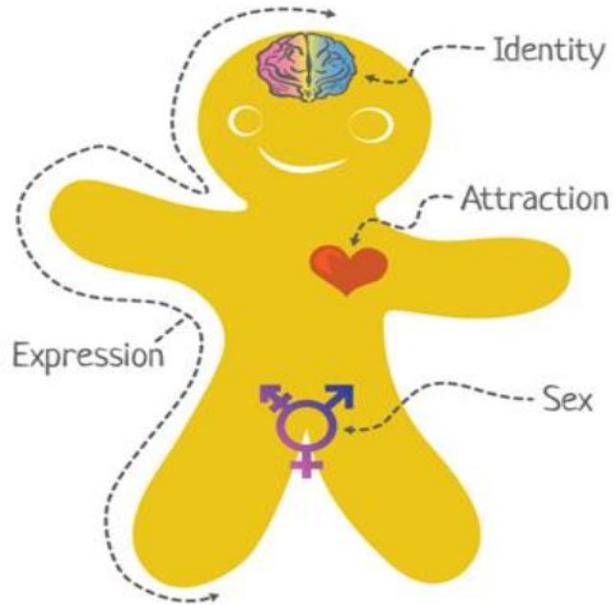
Lesbian- A woman who is attracted to other women.

Pansexual- Describes people who are attracted to multiple sexes or gender identities.

Sexual Orientation- Describes a person's attraction to other people, based on the genders of both.

THE GENDERBREAD PERSON

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for gender understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more. In fact, that's the idea.



Gender Identity

How you, in your head, define your gender; based on how much you align (or don't align) with what you understand to be the options for gender.

Woman-ness
 Man-ness

"she-speak"
 "genderqueer"

Gender Expression

The ways you present gender; through your actions, dress, and demeanor; and how those presentations are interpreted based on gender norms.

Feminine
 Masculine

"butch"
 "tomboy"
 "androgynous"
 "gender neutral"

Biological Sex

The physical sex characteristics you're born with and develop, including genitalia, body shape, voice pitch, body hair, hormones, chromosomes, etc.

Female-ness
 Male-ness

"testes"
 "ovary"

Sexually Attracted to

Nobody
 (Women/Females/Femininity)
 (Men/Males/Masculinity)

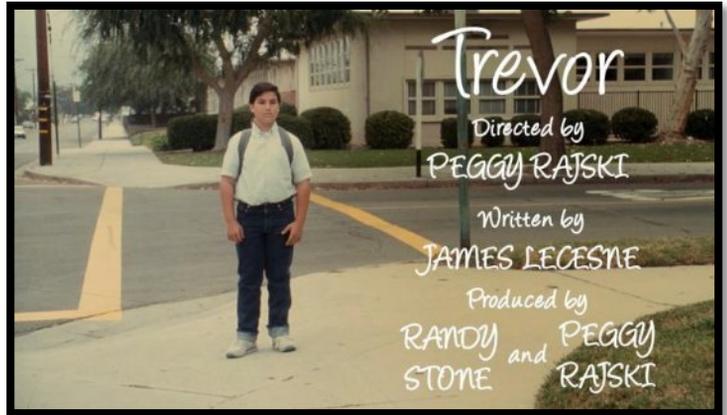
Romantically Attracted to

Nobody
 (Women/Females/Femininity)
 (Men/Males/Masculinity)

FROM SCREEN... TO MOVEMENT... TO THE STAGE

SCREEN

In 1994, producers Peggy Rajski and Randy Stone saw writer/performer James Lecesne bring to life Trevor, a character he created as part of his award-winning one-man show WORD OF MOUTH. Convinced Trevor's story would make a wonderful short film, Stone and Rajski invited Lecesne to adapt it into a screenplay.



Rajski directed the movie and TREVOR went on to win many prestigious awards including the Academy Award® for Best Live Action Short Film.

MOVEMENT

The Oscar-winning film eventually launched a national movement. When producer Randy Stone secured an airing on HBO with Ellen DeGeneres hosting, director/producer Peggy Rajski discovered there was no real place for young people like Trevor to turn when facing challenges similar to his. She quickly recruited mental health experts and figured out how to build the infrastructure necessary for a nationwide 24-hour crisis line, and writer James Lecesne secured the funds to start it. On the night their funny and moving coming-of-age story premiered on HBO in 1998, these visionary filmmakers launched the Trevor Lifeline, the first national crisis intervention and suicide prevention lifeline for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth.

AND FINALLY, STAGE!

TREVOR! THE MUSICAL was written by Dan Collins and Julianne Wick Davis, and the production at Writer's Theatre is directed by Marc Bruni. It is directly based on the short film. All the youth performers in the play, except Eli Tokash (Trevor), are from the Chicago area. Eli is from New York City, and has previously starred on Broadway in *Pippin* and *Finding Neverland*.

A TIMELINE OF PRIDE LGBT HISTORY

To understand the context of *Trevor*, it can be helpful to look at the play within the timeline of LGBT history in the United States during the 20th century. Since LGBT history isn't always taught in school, we have provided an abridged timeline of some key events!

BEFORE 1950

1924- The Society for Human Rights, the first Gay Rights organization, is founded in Chicago

Did you know?

In the 1920s, especially in big cities, homosexuality became much more widely accepted. Drag and gay culture became more prevalent in nightlife. In the 1930s, however, the Great Depression ushered in a new era of sexual conservatism that lasted through the end of World War II, and many gay people had to return to hiding their sexuality.

THE 1950s

1953- President Dwight Eisenhower signs an executive order prohibiting homosexuals from working for the federal government because they are “a security risk”

Did you know?

During the Cold War, the government fired hundreds of employees who were suspected of subversive, un-American, or Communist activity. Since homosexuality was seen as an unconventional “lifestyle” at the time, homosexuals were considered un-American and therefore untrustworthy.

A TIMELINE OF PRIDE LGBT HISTORY

THE 1960s

1961- Illinois becomes the first state to decriminalize homosexuality

1964- President Lyndon Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act into law, an act banning discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin. This act is still used today to defend LGBT people in discrimination cases.

June 28th, 1969- A police raid on The Stonewall Inn (a gay bar in New York City) sparks a massive riot that continues for three days. This event lives on in popular memory as the birth of the LGBT rights movement in the United States



The Stonewall Inn

Did you know?

The 1960s were a tumultuous time in American history marked by protests. Starting in the 1950s, the African-American Civil Rights movement introduced nonviolent resistance as a way of protesting segregation, discrimination, and racism. Although by the mid-60s nonviolent protest had been replaced by more militant protests, the Civil Rights movement, and other social movements at the time (the Women's Movement, Chicano Movement, Anti-Vietnam War movement, etc.) had paved the way for the beginning of the LGBT rights movement.

A TIMELINE OF PRIDE LGBT HISTORY

THE 1970s

June 28th, 1970- One year after the Stonewall riots, community members march in remembrance, and create the first ever pride parade. This is why, all over the country, pride parades happen during the month of June.

October 14th, 1979- First National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights draws 75,000-125,000 people.



Protesters at the March

Did you know?

During the 60s and 70s, marching on Washington became an important way to make a cause visible. These marches included the famous March on Washington in 1963 when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his “I have a dream” speech, and continued through the 60s and 70s with Anti-War marches, marches to protest apartheid in South Africa, and marches for the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment). The National March for Lesbian and Gay rights signaled the increasing visibility of LGBT people in American culture.

A TIMELINE OF PRIDE LGBT HISTORY

THE 1980s

1981- Doctors identify the first cases of what they start calling Gay Related Immune Deficiency (GRID). The name is soon changed to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome)

Did you know?

Because the first cases of AIDS were noticed in young, previously healthy gay men, people thought that the disease was specific to gay people. AIDS was called “gay cancer,” and some people believed that it was “nature’s revenge” on homosexuality. Because of these views, LGBT people lost their jobs, got evicted from their apartments, and turned away from hospitals. LGBT activists mobilized and got visibility to fight AIDS, and the LGBT movement became about making the world see gay people as human beings deserving of human rights, like the right to visit a dying loved one in the hospital. This would lead to the quest for same-sex marriage in the 2000s.



The AIDS Memorial Quilt, 1987

1985- President Ronald Reagan says the word “AIDS” for the first time in public.

1988- World Health Organization holds the first World Aids Day to raise awareness.

A TIMELINE OF PRIDE LGBT HISTORY

THE 1990s

1997- Ellen DeGeneres comes out as a lesbian on the cover of Time Magazine.

Did you know?

Ellen DeGeneres had a long career before coming out, and she became one of the first out celebrities in a post-AIDS world where being gay or lesbian was still stigmatized. Her presence as a gay celebrity normalized what it meant to be gay.

1998- Matthew Shepherd, an openly gay college student, is beaten to death and left to die in a field in Laramie, WY. His death inspires a series of important anti-hate crime laws.

1999- Right around the turn of the millennia, people start using “GLBT” or “LGBT” as the term for what was formerly called the Gay and Lesbian community.

Did you know?

The “B” and the “T” were added to recognize bisexuals and transgender people, and the term is still evolving to become more inclusive. It is still generally accepted in most LGBT spaces to use LGBT or LGBT+.

THE 2000s

2000- Vermont becomes the first state to recognize civil unions between same-sex couples

2003- The first legal same-sex marriage in the USA takes place in Massachusetts.

A TIMELINE OF PRIDE LGBT HISTORY

THE 2010s

2010- Don't Ask Don't Tell is repealed.

2012- In an interview with ABC, President Obama becomes the first American sitting president to publicly support same-sex marriage.

2015- Bruce Jenner comes out as transgender, and later changes her name to Caitlyn.

Did you know?

Like with Ellen DeGeneres, Caitlyn Jenner's coming-out as trans gave important visibility to a stigmatized group. People began to talk more about what it means to be transgender, and try to understand it, because of Caitlyn Jenner.

June 26th, 2015- The Supreme Court rules that states can no longer ban same-sex marriage, making it the law of the land.

Did you know?

The mainstream LGBT rights movement spent many years on marriage as a Civil Rights issue, but that does not mean that the fight for LGBT Civil Rights is over. Some contemporary civil rights issues facing LGBT communities include violence, suicide, health care, youth homelessness, and transgender discrimination.



#LoveWins

“I’M COMING OUT” COMING OUT IN THE ARTS

In 1997, Ellen DeGeneres’ coming-out on television changed the perception of LGBT people in pop-culture, and started a new era of openness and acceptance of LGBT artists. Since then, many LGBT artists (including singers, actors, comedians, and playwrights) have spoken openly about their sexuality and how being themselves contributes to their art.

George Takei

Gay actor, author, activist, and social media personality

“It’s not really coming out, which suggests opening a door and stepping through. It’s more like a long, long walk through what began as a narrow corridor that starts to widen.”



Laverne Cox

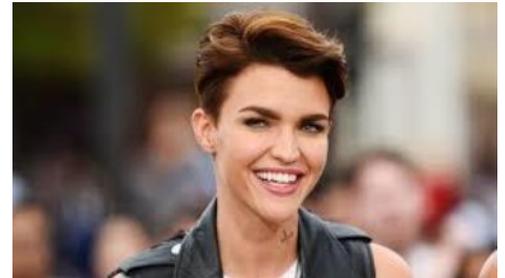
Transgender actor and activist

“Suddenly I had this creative outlet, I had something I loved, and something that I could aspire to. When I think about childhood and being happy, it was when I was dancing, being creative, performing, and being onstage.”

Ruby Rose

Genderfluid model, actor, DJ

“I was pretty determined to get into entertainment, because I was bullied so much. I always said, ‘You watch! One day I will do something, it will be great!’”



Lady Gaga

Bisexual Pop Star

“I found that all of the things about myself that I so desperately tried to suppress for so many years were the very things that all my art and music friends thought were so lovely about me, so I embraced them.”

Neil Patrick Harris

Gay Actor

“I am a very content gay man living my life to the fullest and feel most fortunate to be working with wonderful people in the business that I love.”



RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

There are organizations all over the country dedicated to helping students like you! Whether you are LGBT, questioning, an ally, or just someone who needs help from an adult, there is an organization you can contact for information.

National Organizations

The Trevor Project

Inspired by the same short film that inspired the musical, the Trevor Project is the nation's only accredited crisis intervention/ suicide prevention organization focused on LGBT youth. www.TheTrevorProject.org

GLSEN

An organization dedicated to creating safe schools for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations. www.glsen.org

It Gets Better

An online movement that provides messages of hope to LGBT youth, and helps them cultivate the tools to live better lives. www.itgetsbetter.org

Chicago-Based Organizations

Center on Halsted

The largest LGBT community center in the Midwest. Provides all kinds of services for LGBT youth—arts and culture, health, leadership, and education. www.centeronhalsted.org

Elyssa's Mission

Organization for youth suicide prevention. www.elyssasmision.org

Community Counseling Centers of Chicago

Affordable mental health counseling services for people of all ages. www.c4chicago.org

Broadway Youth Center

Drop-in center for LGBT youth, providing important social and health services. www.howardbrown.org/wp/byc

IDENTITY EXERCISE

i•den•ti•ty (Noun)

1.

The fact of being who or what a person or thing is.

“He knows the identity of the victim”

Synonyms: name, ID; More

2.

A close similarity or affinity.

“the initiative created an identity between the city and the suburbs”

The dictionary tells us that identity is WHO or WHAT a person or thing is, but it can also mean how one prefers to be seen by the world.

What happens when the version of yourself that you believe in doesn't match how the world sees you?

For example:

Trevor sees himself as a star. A performer. A soon-to-be celebrity. Someone Diana Ross can be impressed with.

His classmates see him as strange. Weird. Off. Different.

Often when the identity we set for ourselves doesn't match how our peers perceive us is when confusion, anger, and frustration occur. How do you resolve this conflict? Do you change yourself? Do you continue to hope someone connects with you, the true you?

Trevor struggles to figure out if he should change who he is now so that the future version of himself is “normal;” that Trevor in ten years from now is not teased or made fun of. Should he? Or should he embrace the “weird” that makes him so unique and beautiful?

What happens when you start to look to the future? How does who you are now shape who you will become?

ACTIVATE

Ten Years from Now: Identity Activity

THINK!



Think about the future might hold for you in ten years.

- o Where will you be?
- o What kind of person will you become?
- o What will you be doing?

Create an “Identity” poem based on what you believe your future self to be using the template.

PAIR



Find a partner.

- o Decide who is Partner A and who is Partner B
 - o Partner A: read your “Identity” poem to Partner B.
 - o Partner B: Pick 2 favorite lines from the poem and write them down.
 - o Switch. Partner A should now listen and pick 2 favorite lines, as Partner B reads their “Identity” poem aloud.
-

On Your Feet



o Create a tableau for the two lines you choose with your partner. You could have one tableau that captures both lines of the poem, or you could have two different tableaus for each individual line.

o o A tableau is a theatrical technique in which actors freeze in poses to create a still picture representing a scene or a moment in a particular story.

My Identity: List Poem



ACTIVATE

Instructions:

Please complete the following sentences. Take time to think through what you want to say and like Trevor in **TREVOR: THE MUSICAL**, **use imagery** to make your points. For example, when Trevor describes Cathy's pajamas, he says, "she wears a flannel navy nightgown with long sleeves." Take time and use your imagination and details to describe yourself.

When I look in the mirror, I see _____

When I describe myself I say _____

If I could _____

If I was _____

I would _____

I know that _____

I think that _____

I wish that _____

If I could be a _____

I would be like a _____

I always _____

I never _____

I believe _____

I want to believe _____

I hope I am _____

I think I am _____

I will be _____



ACTIVATE

Vision Lines: Empathy Activity

Read:

These are some lines from **TREVOR! THE MUSICAL** that different characters use when they are feeling alone, sad, or misunderstood. Read them over, and choose one line that you feel like you connect with.

“What’s wrong with me? Why can’t I be anyone to you but who you always see?”

“Just act like a normal person already. It’s not that hard.”

“I didn’t really think about what would happen next. I just thought I’d be gone.”

“I spent every day doing all I could do to find a voice that wasn’t mine”

“I mean, geeze: why do you have to be so weird all the time? We’re not kids anymore, can’t you just start acting like a normal person?”

“I look at myself and I don’t see anything different...Still, before I go back to school tomorrow...something needs to change.”

*“Everybody’s tip-toeing around each word they say
Til every single word is only getting in the way
Nothing much to follow except something’s not ok
And something that I’m doing must be making me look weird”*

Create:

Using the line you picked as inspiration, draw and write a vision board using images, words, and pictures that expresses what this line means to you.

A vision board is a collection of visuals (like pictures and words) put together that convey a specific feeling, space, or state of mind when you look at them together. Sometimes a vision board can be a collage, or a word cloud.