



## After Stonewall: 50 Years of Fighting for Equality

By FFT Fellow Tony Cacioppo, teacher at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in New York City

### Day 1

**Aim:** I can describe the everyday lives and experiences of LGBTQ Americans in the years leading up to the Stonewall Riots. Texts: Excerpts from [Carol](#) by Patricia Highsmith and [Becoming a Man](#) by Paul Monette.

#### **Activities**

We will read the above-mentioned excerpts as a means of establishing the intense difficulty of living in the United States as an LGBTQ person in the decades prior to the Stonewall Riots. Students will discuss their own knowledge of this time and compare what they know with what Highsmith and Monette convey.

### Day 2

**Aim:** I can explain the treatment of LGBTQ people in New York City in the late 1960s and their relationship to both the mob and the police.

**Texts:** [Clip of writer Fran Lebowitz](#) talking about homosexuality in New York and primary sources from the Digital Public Library of America that describe how the mob owned most gay bars in New York and the police raided them regularly.

**Activities:** Using the descriptions provided, each student will write a mock journal entry from the perspective of a queer person living in the United States at the time.

### Day 3

**Aim:** I can describe what happened on the nights of the Stonewall Riots.

**Texts:** Clips from the PBS [documentary Stonewall Uprising](#).

**Activities:** We will watch news footage of the riots and discuss how the event compares to how we imagined it and how it is similar to and different from other protests we've seen.

### Day 4

**Aim:** I can compare the actual events of the Stonewall Riots with what was reported in the press at the time and how it has been depicted since.

**Texts:** Stories from The New York Times in 1969, clips of interviews with Stonewall leaders, scenes from the 2015 movie [Stonewall](#).

**Activities:** Students will explain how the representations of the riots—both at the time and since—are similar to and (in many ways) different from what actually happened that night. For example, the first person to throw an object at the police was [Marsha P. Johnson](#), a trans woman of color; however, in the Hollywood movie from 2015, she is replaced by young white man. We will discuss the possible reasons for this rewriting of history and the impacts that it has.

### **Day 5**

**Aim:** I can debate the pros and cons of the Stonewall Riots.

**Activities:** Each student will be assigned a role to play—a protester, a police officer, a reporter, a concerned citizen, etc.—and the class will engage in a debate about whether the riots were justified and what their impact has been.

### **Day 6**

**Aim:** How can visiting the Stonewall Inn/Stonewall National Monument help to enhance my understanding of the historical significance of the Stonewall Riots?

**Activities:** We will visit the [Stonewall Inn and National Monument](#) and walk around the area to gain a firsthand understanding of the neighborhood and its significance.

### **Day 7**

**Aim:** What can we learn from speaking to someone who was present at the Stonewall Riots?

**Activities:** A person who participated in the riots will visit our class and share their experiences and perspective.

### **Day 8**

**Aim:** How did our study of the Stonewall Riots enhance my understanding of LGBTQ Americans' place in history and current status?

**Activities:** Students will engage in a whole-class discussion of what they are taking away from this unit, with a particular focus on the ways in which life for LGBTQ Americans has changed and remained the same since 1969.

### **Unit Assessment**

My assessment of their learning will be an in-class writing assignment in which they develop and support an argument about the historical significance of the Stonewall Riots and their impacts today.