

# THE STONEWALL RIOTS

June 28, 1968

## Lesson Plan



### THE RIOT THAT STARTED A REVOLUTION

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, law enforcement officials kept track of suspected homosexuals and the places that catered to them. Police regularly raided bars, seizing alcohol, and shutting down establishments. It was not uncommon for the people arrested during these raids to be exposed in newspapers, fired from their jobs, jailed, or confined to mental institutions. On June 27, 1969, about 200 patrons packed New York City's Stonewall Inn. In the early morning hours of June 28th the police attempted a large-scale raid on the Mafia-owned gay club. No one – not the police or the people they were targeting – knew what was about to happen. While the police waited for patrol wagons to cart away the arrested suspects and seized alcohol, the bar's patrons began to resist. Men refused to show their IDs, and those in drag refused to accompany female officers to a bathroom to have their gender confirmed. The mood gradually turned from somber resignation to camp humor to angry shouts. When a lesbian arrested inside the bar was brutalized while being placed in a police car, rage exploded among the several hundred people who had gathered in an uncharacteristic mob on the street. As the crowd erupted, the arresting officers – who were outnumbered more than 50 to 1 – barricaded themselves inside the bar. Within hours over 1000 people arrived and five more days of rioting engulfed the streets surrounding the club. Though the events of that immortal night were neither the first protest actions nor the first clashes between the police and LGBT people in the U.S., the unique confluence of rage and circumstances at the Stonewall Inn are considered the flashpoint that launched the modern LGBT Civil Rights Movement. Each year the world's LGBT communities unite to celebrate June as Pride Month, with hundreds of parades to commemorate the day when the most marginal elements of the LGBT community – homeless street youth and transgender persons – sparked an uprising that rejected decades of non-confrontation, fear, and oppression to declare their outrage in one unmistakable voice that resonates to this day.



#### Level 1: Contributions Approach

1. Activate prior experience: What do you know about the Stonewall Riots in New York City in June 1969?
2. Read the information on the plaque and connect this to newspaper articles at this link:  
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/eresources/exhibitions/sw25/case1.html>
3. Group Discussion: In analyzing these resources, discuss the reason(s) why the riots occurred.
4. Extend knowledge: Compare and contrast the images of LGBTQ life and beliefs after reviewing this source:  
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tag/stonewall-riots>

#### Level 2: Additive Approach

1. Build your knowledge of LGBTQ Life in the 1950s-60s, which led to the Stonewall Riots. Review:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_LGBT\\_actions\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States\\_prior\\_to\\_the\\_Stonewall\\_riots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_LGBT_actions_in_the_United_States_prior_to_the_Stonewall_riots)
2. Prior to 1969, several organized protests and skirmishes with police had taken place elsewhere in the United States. Compare these events and discuss whether an "evolution" was taking place within the LGBTQ community that led up to the Stonewall Riots. Citing examples, how were these actions different or similar?
3. Group Activity:  
**Group A** view this link to scenes from Stonewall at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/stonewall/player/>. **Group B** view this link at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4O0KaMEvBDo>
4. Discuss the timeline, common themes, and impact that this event had on individuals. Write a newspaper editorial, or essay about the significance of the Stonewall Riots for the emerging LGBTQ Movement and the impact on society at large.

#### Level 3: Transformational Approach

1. Describe the challenges that the LGBTQ Movement has had in history and compare these to the Black Civil Rights Movement. Citing examples, in what ways are they similar or different?
2. View this link:  
<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/civilrightstimeline1.html>. Analyze if there are any other connections that you can make between the Black Civil Rights Movement and the pre-Stonewall LGBTQ Rights Movement.
3. After reviewing other historical milestones of Legacy Project at [http://www.legacyprojectchicago.org/Historic\\_Milestones.html](http://www.legacyprojectchicago.org/Historic_Milestones.html), describe other occurrences that have had an impact on LGBTQ History. Explain how the Stonewall Riots fit into the overall arc of this still-evolving history.
4. How has the LGBTQ Movement been transformed from the early 1950s to today? What challenges have been met? Which remain?

#### Level 4: Social Action Approach

1. Describe any contemporary occurrence or social action that is similar to the Stonewall Riots. Explain the similarities in how these are organized and perceived by the general public.
2. The Stonewall Riots were the catalyst for today's LGBTQ "Pride Parades." View the slides at:  
[http://www.gaycities.com/outthere/32954/photos-45-years-of-gay-pride-in-45-amazing-images/?utm\\_source=queerty&utm\\_medium=sidebar&utm\\_content=45yearsphotos&utm\\_campaign=outthere](http://www.gaycities.com/outthere/32954/photos-45-years-of-gay-pride-in-45-amazing-images/?utm_source=queerty&utm_medium=sidebar&utm_content=45yearsphotos&utm_campaign=outthere). How have Pride Parades changed in the several decades since 1969? What are some of the political and social themes featured in the parade today?
3. It is over 50 years since the Stonewall Riots. Using your own resource links (e.g. Queerty -<http://www.queerty.com>), Pink News - [www.pinknews.com](http://www.pinknews.com), etc.) illustrate what you perceive are the most pressing issues facing the LGBTQ Movement today.