

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard



Supporting LGBT Students:

A Resource for Educators Created

by Lesléa Newman, GLSEN, the

Matthew Shepard Foundation

& Candlewick Press

GLSEN[®]

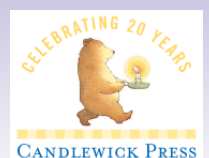




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WHY MATTHEW'S STORY STILL MATTERS: A Message from Author Lesléa Newman



Why is it important to keep telling the story of Matthew Shepard, a college student from Wyoming who was kidnapped, robbed, beaten, and killed in 1998 simply because he was gay? I would like nothing better than to stop telling his story. I would like nothing better than to live in a world where

his story was no longer relevant. A world in which gay bashings no longer happened. A world in which everyone could walk this earth free of fear regardless of sexual orientation and gender expression (not to mention race, religion, body size, ability/disability, etc.) But that is not yet the world in which we live. Our world is still a dangerous place. In our world, too often the word “gay” is used to mean “stupid” (as in “That’s so gay.”) In our world, too often the word “fag” is hurled at someone with hatred. And in our world, too often that word is followed by a punch or a kick or a shove down the stairs. Or worse. When will this hatred end?

When someone is reduced to a slur, he or she becomes, in the eyes of a tormentor, less than human. He or she becomes, in a tormentor’s eyes, someone of no consequence, someone who doesn’t matter, someone—or something—easy to destroy.

And this is why we must keep telling Matthew Shepard’s story. Matt was not a “fag.” Matt was a person. He was a son, a brother, a boyfriend, a classmate, a friend. In the Jewish tradition, which is my tradition, it is said, “Whoever saves a life, saves a whole world.” I believe that the opposite is also true. Whoever destroys a life, destroys a whole world. We will never know all the great things Matthew Shepard would have done had he not been murdered (ironically, he wanted to work for international social justice). We will never know how he would have looked once his braces were removed. We will never know what he would have done upon graduating from the University of Wyoming. We will never know if, later in life, he would have married and raised children. We will never know all the joy and love he would have continued to bring to his family and friends and to those he had yet to meet. When his life was cut short, a whole world was destroyed.

In my tradition there is a concept known as “tikkun olam” which means “repairing the world.” Every person is assigned this task at birth even though it is assumed that our broken world will never be fully repaired. Still, each one of us must contribute to “tikkun olam” in some way. It is also assumed that no individual can do this alone. And that is why I am so excited to be working with the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN), the Matthew Shepard Foundation, and Candlewick Press. Together we can do so much. Together we can reach high school educators and administrators, political activists, LGBT youth, librarians, parents, and readers of teen literature, all of whom can work together to carry on Matthew Shepard’s legacy to make the world a safer place

In my lifetime, so much has changed. The high school I attended (and where I was teased for being a “lezzie”) now has a Gay Straight Alliance which welcomed me with open arms 40 years after I graduated (to read about this very emotional visit, see my essay “You CAN Go Home Again” <http://www.ekristinanderson.com/?p=6917>). I am happily and legally married to the woman of my dreams, something I never dreamed would be possible. I make my living as an out lesbian writer, whose books are read and taught in public schools all around the country. I find all of this nothing short of miraculous.

And yet, so much hasn’t changed. Kids and teens still get teased, beat up, tormented, and even murdered for being gay or for being perceived as being gay. There are many states that still define marriage as being “between one man and one woman.” There are still many people—writers, teachers, celebrities, athletes—who are afraid they will lose their jobs if they come out of the closet.

Help us make the world a safer place. Read Matt’s story and teach it to your classes. Make your school a safe place for LGBT students. Get involved in your school’s Gay Straight Alliance, and if your school doesn’t have one, help your students start one. Make your curriculum LGBT-inclusive. Be the person at your school who disrupts inappropriate behavior. So many students have told me that when someone at their school is called “a fag” the adults around them do nothing. Do something. You could save a life, and in doing so, save a whole world.

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Lesléa Newman, GLSEN, the Matthew Shepard Foundation and Candlewick Press have collaborated to develop this resource for high school educators interested in:

- Commemorating and learning from the life of Matthew Shepard
- Teaching themes of empathy and social justice
- Implementing LGBT-Inclusive curriculum while meeting reading and writing standards
- Supporting LGBT students

Using Lesléa Newman's award-winning book of poetry, *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*, as a foundation educators can foster meaningful dialogue with students while meeting English/Language Arts and Social Studies standards.

In the following pages you will find information, lesson plans, student handouts and more.

Explore the resource and the issues.

Teach the content and themes.

Be creative and consider links to your existing curriculum.

Share this resource and your ideas with colleagues.



He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

THE PARTNERS



About GLSEN

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For information on GLSEN's research, educational resources, public policy advocacy, student organizing programs and educator training initiatives, visit www.glsen.org.



Lesléa Newman

is an author and gay rights activist who has written more than 60 books for readers of all ages. Her children's book, *Heather Has Two Mommies* was the first picture book to portray a family of two lesbian mothers and their child in a positive way. Lesléa is also the author of the teen novel-in-verse, *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* which explores the impact of Matthew Shepard's murder in a cycle of 68 poems told from various points of view including the truck he was kidnapped in, the fence to which he was tied, the stars that watched over him, and a deer that kept him company all through the night. *October Mourning* has won many literary awards including an American Library Association Stonewall Honor, and the Florida Council of Teachers of English Joan F. Kaywell Award. Lesléa has given her presentation, "He Continues to Make a Difference: The Story of Matthew Shepard" all over the country at high schools, colleges, libraries, and conferences, hoping to inspire students to carry on Matthew Shepard's legacy to erase hate and make the world a safer place for all. Visit Lesléa online at www.lesleakids.com.



About the Matthew Shepard Foundation

The Matthew Shepard Foundation was founded by Dennis and Judy Shepard in memory of their 21-year old son, Matthew, who was murdered in an anti-gay hate crime in Wyoming in October 1998. Created to honor Matthew in a manner that was appropriate to his dreams, beliefs, and aspirations, the Foundation seeks to "Replace Hate with Understanding, Compassion, & Acceptance" through its varied educational, outreach and advocacy programs and by continuing to tell Matthew's story. Visit the Foundation online at www.matthewshepard.org.



About Candlewick Press

Candlewick Press, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2012, is an independent, employee-owned publisher based in Somerville, Massachusetts. Candlewick publishes outstanding children's books for readers of all ages, including books by award-winning authors and illustrators such as M. T. Anderson, Kate DiCamillo, Jon Klassen, Laura Amy Schlitz, and David Ezra Stein; the widely acclaimed Judy Moody, Mercy Watson, and 'Ology series; and favorites such as *Guess How Much I Love You*, *Where's Waldo?*, and *Maisy*. Candlewick is part of the Walker Books Group, together with Walker Books UK in London and Walker Books Australia, based in Sydney and Auckland. Visit Candlewick online at www.candlewick.com.

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

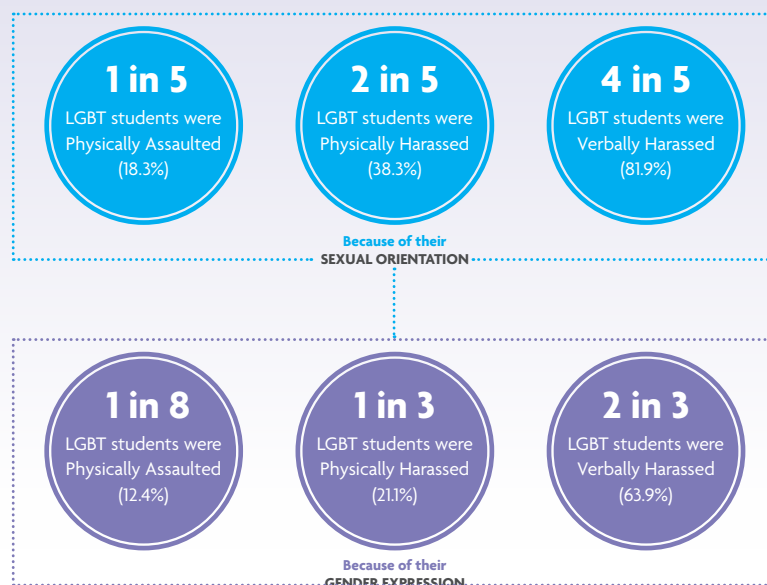
HOSTILE SCHOOLS: THE REALITY FOR MANY LGBT STUDENTS

For more than 20 years, GLSEN has worked to ensure safe schools for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

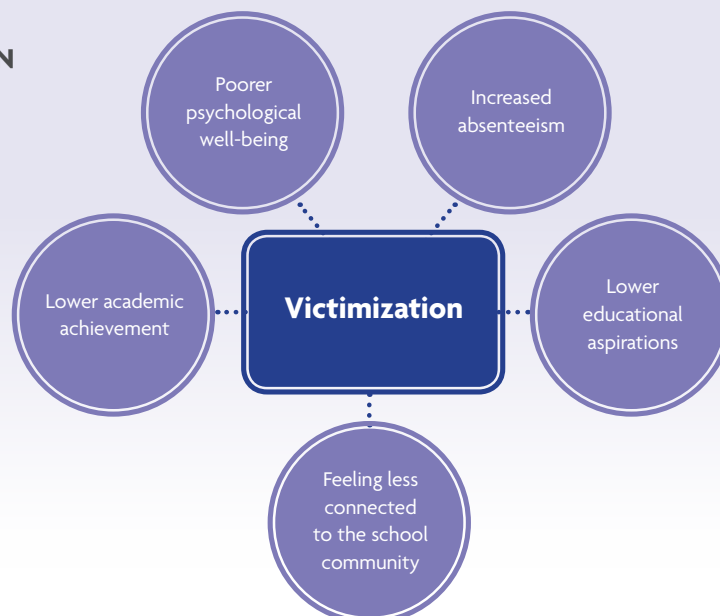
A key part of GLSEN's work continues to be the National School Climate Survey, documenting the school experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth: the prevalence of anti-LGBT language and victimization, the effect that these experiences have on LGBT students' academic achievement and well-being, and the availability and impact of in-school supports for LGBT youth.

Below are findings from GLSEN's 2011 survey. Notice not only the negative impacts of hostile school climates, but the benefits associated with Supportive Educators, Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), Comprehensive Policies and LGBT-Inclusive curriculum.

**FACT:
SCHOOL IS OFTEN A HOSTILE
PLACE FOR LGBT STUDENTS:
8 OUT OF 10 LGBT STUDENTS
ARE HARASSED AT SCHOOL
FOR WHO THEY ARE.**



**FACT:
HARASSMENT AND VICTIMIZATION
CAN NEGATIVELY IMPACT
STUDENTS' WELL-BEING AND
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.**



Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN. www.glsen.org/nscc

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FACT: YOU CAN IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCES OF LGBT STUDENTS IN YOUR SCHOOL!

Implement an inclusive curriculum, where LGBT students are validated by seeing themselves reflected in classroom lessons and assignments and all students learn to respect and accept people.

- DID YOU KNOW? Less than 20% of LGBT students reported having inclusive curriculum, textbooks and classroom assignments.

Ensure that your school and district have comprehensive and enumerated anti-bullying policies so all students have safe and affirming learning environments.

- DID YOU KNOW? Anti-bullying policies that specifically enumerate sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, along with other protected categories are most effective at improving the experiences of LGBT students.

Be a visible and supportive ally to LGBT students by listening, affirming, protecting and empowering them to live to their potential.

- DID YOU KNOW? Students need you and your colleagues. Those with greater numbers of supportive staff reported better school experiences and were absent less often because of feeling unsafe.

Support your school's Gay-Straight Alliance where students have safe spaces to find friend and allies and build leadership skills.

- DID YOU KNOW? GSAs are critical supports for LGBT students and can create a safer and more welcoming school environment. However, less than half of LGBT students report having a GSA or similar club at their school.

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CLASSROOM RESOURCES

GLSEN LGBT-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM GUIDE

Developing LGBT-Inclusive Classroom Resources

GLSEN®

BEST PRACTICE:

Inclusive and Affirming Curriculum for All Students

One way that educators can promote safer school environments is by developing lessons that avoid bias and that include positive representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, history, and events. For LGBT students, attending a school with inclusive curriculum is related to less-hostile school experiences and increased feelings of connectedness to the school community.ⁱ

Unfortunately, the vast majority of students do not receive an LGBT- inclusive curriculum.ⁱⁱ

REFLECTION:

How inclusive is my curriculum of LGBT people, history and events?

THEORY:

“Curriculum as Window & Mirror” Emily Style (1996)

Style introduced the idea of curriculum as a means to provide students with windows and mirrors. Curriculum can serve as a mirror when it reflects individuals and their experiences back to themselves. At the same time curriculum can serve as a window when it introduces and provides the opportunity to understand the experiences and perspectives of those who possess different identities. Curriculum should be balanced and include various windows and mirrors for each student.ⁱⁱⁱ

Applied to LGBT-inclusive curricular content, these mirrors and windows can help create a more positive environment and healthy self-concept for LGBT students while also raising the awareness of all students.

REFLECTION:

How can I ensure that my lessons provide “mirrors” and “windows” for all of my students?



LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum benefits ALL STUDENTS by:

- Exposing them to more inclusive and accurate accounts of history
- Helping them have better understandings of LGBT people and their historic contributions
- Encouraging them to question stereotypes about LGBT people
- Promoting acceptance



LGBT-Inclusive Curriculum benefits LGBT STUDENTS by:

- Validating their existence and experiences
- Reinforcing their value and self-worth
- Providing space for their voices

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CLASSROOM RESOURCES

GLSEN LGBT-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM GUIDE CONTINUED

PLANNING:

Lessons for LGBT Inclusion

Educators should spend time identifying the extent to which LGBT-related content is present in their current curriculum. Care should be taken to fill gaps while looking for opportunities to deepen student understanding of their world.

REFLECTION

What do I need to do to make the lessons I teach more LGBT-inclusive?

LGBT people, history, and events can be easily inserted into most content areas. A few examples might be:

- History: Include civil rights leader Bayard Rustin when teaching about the 1963 March on Washington
- Art and Science: Acknowledge the gay identity of Francis Bacon (creator of the Scientific Method) or Frieda Kahlo's bisexuality when studying their works

CONSIDERATION:

Ensuring Coherent Curriculum

At times, educators' efforts to be inclusive and supportive can lead to curricular "fragmentation," or "isolation." This occurs when topics are taught without context and/or are positioned in such a way that they fail to connect to the big ideas of the topic being studied, such as when LGBT themes are only introduced during LGBT History Month (October) or LGBT Pride Month (June). Additional fragmentation occurs when educators include only lesbians or gay men to the exclusion of bisexual and transgender people, or when lessons fail to represent ethnic, racial and other forms of diversity that exist among LGBT individuals.

REFLECTION

How can I control for bias in the lessons I teach, especially as it relates to LGBT issues?

REFLECTION

What other pedagogical practices do I need to consider to make my classroom a safe, respectful and inclusive learning space for all students?

COMMON CORE:

Connecting Curriculum to Standards^{iv}

Implementation of the Common Core State Standards is one way that many states and school districts are making efforts to ensure quality education for all students. The examples below demonstrate how an examination of the standards and themes can lead to locating opportunities for the natural inclusion of LGBT-related content in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, and Mathematics.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Writing Core Standard for Grades 6-12

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

SUGGESTED LGBT-INCLUSIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:

Assign students to read about the landmark *Loving v. Virginia* case that ended interracial marriage bans in the U.S. Have students write an essay comparing and contrasting past bans on interracial marriage with current restrictions on same-sex marriage.

Writing Core Standard for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects 9-12

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

SUGGESTED LGBT-INCLUSIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:

Assign students to answer the question, "In what ways do membership policies of national youth organizations vary and what impact might those policies have on individual youth?" In particular, students can research and report on the policies of the Boy Scouts of America and other youth leadership groups present in their community (e.g., Girl Scouts of the USA, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Camp Fire USA, etc.).

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CLASSROOM RESOURCES

GLSEN LGBT-INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM GUIDE CONTINUED

Common Core State Standards for Mathematics

High School — Statistics and Probability **Interpreting Categorical and Quantitative Data S-Id**

Summarize, represent, and interpret data on a single count or measurement variable. Summarize, represent, and interpret data on two categorical and quantitative variables.

SUGGESTED LGBT-INCLUSIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:

Assign students to analyze LGBT demographic trends as reflected in the 2010 Census Results. Assign small groups to create a chart or graph illustrating national or state-level trends on a specific topic (e.g., number of same-sex couples, number of same-sex couples raising children, number of adopted or foster children in LGBT-headed households, etc.).

Grade 7 — Statistics and Probability 7.SP

Use random sampling to draw inferences about a population.

Understand that statistics can be used to gain information about a population by examining a sample of the population; generalizations about a population from a sample are valid only if the sample is representative of that population.
Understand that random sampling tends to produce representative samples and support valid inferences.

SUGGESTED LGBT-INCLUSIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY:

Use GLSEN's 2011 National School Climate Survey in a mini-lecture to demonstrate population samples as they relate to the experiences of LGBT students.

RESOURCES: WWW.GLSEN.ORG

The following GLSEN resources (and accompanying lesson plans) may be helpful when designing new lessons or adding LGBT content to previously taught curriculum.



ThinkB4YouSpeak

Unheard Voices

An LGBT History Resource

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ⁱ Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2012). The 2011 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN.

ⁱⁱ ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ Style, E. (1996). Curriculum as window & mirror. *Social Science Record*, 33(2), 21-28.

^{iv} Authors: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers

Title: Common Core State Standards

Publisher: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington D.C. Copyright Date: 2010

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

***OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD* TEACHER GUIDE**

October Mourning is a rich text that can inspire various and thoughtful readings and responses.

This guide offers suggestions for teachers who are eager to fulfill Common Core Standards in a variety of ways.

TEACHER'S & DISCUSSION GUIDE

OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

Published by Candlewick Press • ISBN 978-0-7636-5807-6
\$15.99 • 128 pages • Age 14 and up

ABOUT THIS BOOK

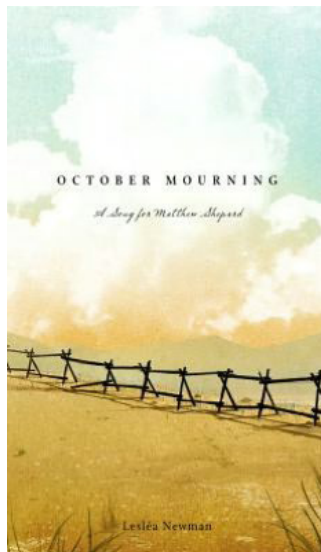
On the night of October 6, 1998, a gay twenty-one-year-old University of Wyoming student named Matthew Shepard was lured from a bar by two young men, then savagely beaten, tied to a fence on the outskirts of Laramie, and left to die. Five days later, Lesléa Newman arrived on campus to give the keynote speech for the University of Wyoming's Gay Awareness Week.

October Mourning is Newman's deeply personal response to the events of that tragic day and its brutal aftermath. This work of poetic imagination explores the impact of the vicious crime through fictitious monologues from various points of view, including the fence to which Matthew was tied, the deer that kept watch beside him, and even Matthew himself.

This stunning cycle of sixty-eight poems serves as an illumination for readers too young to remember and as a powerful, enduring tribute to Matthew Shepard's life and legacy.

ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

Lesléa Newman is the author of more than sixty books for readers of all ages, including the children's classic *Heather Has Two Mommies*. She has been awarded poetry fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Artists Foundation. From January 2008 through April 2010, she served as the poet laureate of Northampton, Massachusetts. Lesléa Newman is a faculty member of Spalding University's brief-residency MFA in Writing program. She lives in Holyoke, Massachusetts. For more about her, visit www.lesleakids.com.



FROM LESLÉA NEWMAN'S INTRODUCTION:

While the poems in this book are inspired by actual events, they do not in any way represent the statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and attitudes of any actual persons. The statements, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and attitudes conveyed within the poems are figments of my imagination; no actual person spoke any of the words contained in the body of any poem. Those words are mine and mine alone. The poems, which are meant to be read in sequential order as one whole work, are a work of poetic invention and imagination: a historical novel in verse.

The poems are not an objective reporting

of Matthew Shepard's murder and its aftermath; rather they are my own poetic interpretation of them.¹

FOR TEACHERS WORKING WITH COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

October Mourning is a unique text in that its creative approach to a historical event allows for students to analyze literature but also consider the implications of the narrative with respect to its historical and cultural impacts. Because *October Mourning* can be used so diversely in the classroom, teachers can meet a number of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for English Language Arts. The activities in this guide ask students to perform critical thinking tasks required by the grades 8-12 Reading Standards for **both** Literature and Informational Texts. Most of the questions below can be used to fulfill the "Key Ideas and Details," "Craft and Structure," and/or "Integration of Knowledge and Ideas" standards for reading.

¹ Excerpt from Introduction from *October Mourning: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD*. Copyright ©2012 by Lesléa Newman. Reproduced by permission of the publisher, Candlewick Press.

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Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD TEACHER GUIDE CONTINUED

TEACHER'S & DISCUSSION GUIDE

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OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

Furthermore, if students are expected to write answers and submit them for review, they can also fulfill standards for Writing and Language for grades 8-12, especially if these activities are used to inspire larger research projects. *October Mourning* could then be used to meet "Text Types and Purposes," "Production and Distribution of Writing," and "Research to Build and Present Knowledge" Writing standards, as well as "Convention of Standard English," "Knowledge of Language," and "Vocabulary Acquisition and Use" Language standards.

Lastly, with some adjustment, such as asking students to discuss their responses in groups, or staging debates in class, teachers can modify these activities to fulfill requirements for Speaking and Listening. Students could then meet "Comprehension and Collaboration," and "Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas" Speaking and Listening standards.

October Mourning is a rich text that can inspire various and thoughtful readings and responses. It allows for methods to fulfill the Common Core Standards that engage both student and teacher.

ISSUES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY, AND SENSITIVITY/SAFE SPACE

Before your discussions, remind students that you will be discussing some sensitive topics. In order to create a safe space for discussion in your classroom, everyone (teachers included) needs to be respectful of each other's experiences.

If you have not discussed issues of gender and sexuality in the classroom before, try practicing the terminology ahead of time, so that you do not get tripped up. That said, it is all right to be honest with students, and acknowledge that these might not be topics usually discussed in your classroom/school. While it is important for your students to see that you are comfortable discussing gender and sexuality, it is also important that they see that you are honest and open about these topics. This can include being willing to research answers to questions and getting back to them. A safe space is one in which everyone, teachers included, can discuss and explore issues. You can model this process for them. The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educational Network (GLSEN) has many resources for

creating a safe space for gender and sexuality inclusion. (<http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/home/index.html>). Remember to make distinctions between gender and sexuality. Gender has to do with how someone expresses masculinity, femininity, and everything in between and beyond. Sexuality has to do with desire. People who express conventional genders can be gay; people who express unconventional genders can be straight.

Gay: Can be used as both an umbrella term for "homosexual," as well as a term to describe a man who is attracted to men.

Lesbian: A woman who is attracted to other women.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to men and women.

Queer: Can be used as an umbrella term for the entire LGBTQIA (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer/Questioning Intersex Asexual/Ally) community, as well as anyone who challenges conventions of gender and sexuality.

Transgender: An adjective meaning "cross-gendered." Can refer to anything challenging conventional gender expression, and is culturally-and historically-dependent. There are a range of identities that fall under the umbrella category of transgender, including both people who wear the clothes of another gender and people who physically transition to another gender.

Intersex: A person who identifies as intersex was born with ambiguous genitalia, that is genitalia that does not conform to "masculine" or "feminine" categories. "Intersex" replaces the outdated term of "hermaphrodite."

Asexual: Someone who identifies as having no sexual desire.

Ally: Someone who does not necessarily identify as LGBT or Q, but actively accepts and supports them. An ally is interested in combating homophobia and heterosexism, and furthering the social and political equality of the queer community.

Homophobia: The irrational fear of gay people and homosexuality.

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CLASSROOM RESOURCES

OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD TEACHER GUIDE CONTINUED

TEACHER'S & DISCUSSION GUIDE

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OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

Heterosexism: While not necessarily homophobic, an engrained series of assumptions, practices, and laws that privilege the heterosexual. In other words, the assumption that all people are straight.

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

(many of these questions may be returned to as a post-reading activity)

- Visit www.leselakids.com to read about the author's background and other books she's written.
- Visit www.matthewshepard.org and www.matthewsplace.org.
- Watch a performance of or the film version of *The Laramie Project*.
- Research the facts of Matthew Shepard's murder and the trials of his assailants.
- Do you think that Matthew Shepard's attackers received a fair sentence? Why or why not?
- Does your school have a Gay-Straight Alliance? Why or why not? Why is it important for allies to be involved in working for LGBTQIA rights?
- Why do people bully others? Have you ever been bullied? What did it feel like? Did you tell anyone? Why or why not?
- Have you ever bullied anyone? What did it feel like during the incident? After the incident?
- Have you ever witnessed someone being bullied? Did you intervene? Why or why not?
- What can you do to stop bullying at your school? Does your school have an anti-bullying policy?
- Research the origins of the word "fag/faggot." How did these words come to be anti-gay slurs?
- Do you think that being gay is a choice? Do you think that being straight is a choice?
- Do you believe in the death penalty? Why or why not?
- What is the definition of premeditated murder? Felony murder? What would a juror have to determine in order to support convictions for these charges?
- What is the value of a life? Is the life of a killer worth the same amount as the life of a victim?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WITH THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

Suggested themes (issues of historical narrative, issues of community, issues of parenthood and family relationships, and issues of justice) are marked in bold next to the question.

*Note that Newman includes context for specific references in "Notes" (93-103).

OVERALL QUESTIONS

Which of these poems do you find the most powerful? Why?

Some poems begin with epigraphs that are quotations from people who were actually involved in the events. What role do these quotations play? How do they affect your reading of the poems? What is it like to read real peoples' responses to the event? (**Historical, Community**)

In her introduction, Newman writes that the bench dedicated to Matthew is inscribed with the words "He continues to make a difference" (xi). How might this book contribute to making a difference? How has it made a difference with you? How might it make a difference with others?

Newman explores the impact of Matthew Shepard's murder via inanimate objects. Why might she have included these fictitious poetic monologues? How do poems like "The Truck" and "Road Rage" affect how you view the world of inanimate objects? What stories might your objects tell about you?

In her introduction, Newman writes that she began writing this book "in order to gain a better understanding of [the events of Matthew Shepard's murder]'s impact on myself and the world" (x). What are their impacts upon you and your world? Which poems in this cycle have affected your understanding, and how? (**Community**)

What roles do nature and the natural world play in these poems?

Where do we see issues of community in this poem cycle? Who forms a community? What kinds of communities do we see? What are the concerns of the various communities? (**Community**)

If you had been a juror, how would you have decided your verdict and what would it be? Is this a comfortable or uncomfortable position for you to take on as a reader? What is at stake for Matthew Shepard's family? For Matthew Shepard's murderers? For the gay community? For our nation? For the world? (**Historical, Justice**)

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD TEACHER GUIDE CONTINUED

TEACHER'S & DISCUSSION GUIDE

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OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

Why are there so many apologies in this poem cycle? Who apologizes, and to whom?

In her afterword, Newman notes that she speaks on “how education can end prejudice and hatred” (88). How can *October Mourning* be part of this? How can you be part of this? (**Community, Justice**)

In her afterword, Newman writes that a woman she met shortly after speaking at the University of Wyoming said regarding Matthew Shepard’s murder, “I can’t imagine” (90). Newman says that “we must imagine.” Why must this be our response, as survivors? Who needs to imagine? How can we reach people who need to imagine? (**Justice**)

FORM/STRUCTURE

Note that Newman includes notes on her poetic forms in “Explanation of Poetic Forms” (105-8).

Newman writes, “The poems are not an objective reporting of Matthew Shepard’s murder and its aftermath; rather they are my own personal interpretation of them” (xi). What do we get from “objective reporting,” like a newspaper article? What do we get from Newman’s imaginative poem cycle? What are the differences between this imaginative poetic narrative and “objective reporting”?

In her introduction, Newman calls this book her “side of the story” (xi). How would you describe/characterize her side? How many perspectives are there to her side?

We can call Newman’s poem cycle polyvocal, or consisting of many voices. What are the effects of having multiple fictitious voices comment on the impact of Matthew Shepard’s murder? (**Community, Historical**)

What distinctions does Newman make between Part I and Part II? What purposes do the Prologue and Epilogue serve?

What does the introduction offer you as a reader? What questions might you have for the author? Are they answered by the introduction?

Newman calls this collection of poems “a historical novel in verse” (xi). What expectations do we bring to historical novels? What expectations do we bring to poems? A poem cycle? What does Newman’s work do to your expectations? (**Historical**)

Newman models “A Sorry State” and other poems after William Carlos Williams’ poem “This is Just to Say.” Why might she have done this? What does the original poem sound like? How does Newman transform the original poem to fit this situation? Look at “Lame Excuse,” “Heartfelt

Apology,” and “Sorry Boy.” Who is apologizing, and for what?

Newman is very careful about marking her sources and contexts for her material. She also offers a list of resources. What does this indicate about her approach to the events of Matthew Shepard’s murder? (**Historical**)

Newman uses a variety of approaches in her poem cycle, including various poetic forms. How would you describe her approach? What are the effects? How would you describe her project?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS LANGUAGE ARTS

Choose a poem and read it aloud. How did you decide to read it? What is your pacing like? Your tone? Why?

Write letters to Matthew Shepard, and/or his parents.

Write a poem in the voice of someone who has been bullied. Write a poem in the voice of a bully.

Think about an important event in your life that was witnessed by inanimate objects. Write a poem in which that object (i.e. a chair, a bed, a car) speaks.

Research the various poetic forms in the book (haiku, found poem, acrostic, villanelle, etc.). Write your own poems in these forms.

Write a poem in free verse that uses poetic techniques such as alliteration, repetition, etc.

Newman writes imitations of “This is Just to Say” by William Carlos Williams, and “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” by Wallace Stevens. Find a poem that you admire and write an imitation of it.

Find a quotation that inspires you in the newspaper or on a website and write a poem that uses that line as an epigraph.

ART, MUSIC

The fence has become a recognizable symbol of the events that took place during the night of October 6-7, 1998. Draw, paint, or create a sculpture of the fence that expresses your feelings about Matthew Shepard’s murder.

Create a collage or poster in memory of Matthew Shepard and/or other victims of hate crimes.

Design an armband for Matthew Shepard. Or, an anti-hate-crime armband.

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD TEACHER GUIDE CONTINUED

TEACHER'S & DISCUSSION GUIDE

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OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

Create a soundtrack for the poem cycle. Make one consisting of popular songs, and then another one consisting of instrumentals only.

SOCIAL STUDIES

How would you define a hate crime? How does the FBI define a hate crime? How does your state define a hate crime? Does your state have hate crime legislation, and if so, whom does it protect? Who should be protected?

Research the Matthew Shepard Act. Who was James Byrd, Jr., and why is his name associated with the Act? What do he and Matthew Shepard have in common?

Newman pays close attention to the role of the fence in Matthew's memorialization. Research other historic tragedies. How have they been publicly memorialized? What are some factors that must be considered when creating a memorial to someone or an event? In what ways can this be a sensitive subject?

Newman considers place in her poetry. Create a map or some other form of visual representation of place to accompany this poem cycle.

MATH

Some of the poems demonstrate ways in which Newman approaches the subject matter of Matthew's murder via numbers. Try your own hand at this. Write a poem in which you use numbers or mathematics to explore the impact of Matthew Shepard's murder.

BEYOND THE BOOK ACTIVITIES

Start a GSA at your school.

Research and observe the Day of Silence (usually in April).

Research and observe National Coming Out Day (October 11).

Newman challenges each of us to, "think of one thing to do to help end homophobia and do it this week" (90). What will you do?

RESOURCES

(In addition to the resources listed in the book)

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN): www.glsen.org

American Library Association (ALA): www.ala.org (for resources on how to proceed when a book is challenged, as well as the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Round Table (a special division of the ALA devoted to LGBTQ issues), which has a mailing list.

The Rainbow Project Blog (part of ALA): <http://rainbowlist.wordpress.com>

Gay Straight Alliance Network: www.gsanetwork.org

National Education Association (NEA): www.nea.org (has a Bully Free Schools page)

GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation): www.glaad.org

GLAAD's guide to terminology: <http://www.glaad.org/files/allys-guide-to-terminology.pdf>

Lambda Legal: www.lambdalegal.org

American Civil Liberties Union: www.aclu.org

Southern Poverty Law Center: www.splcenter.org

FBI Hate Crime page: http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/civilrights/hate_crimes/

The Leadership Conference: <http://www.civilrights.org/hatecrimes/>

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services site on bullying: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/index.html>

Hill, Robert J., ed. *Challenging Homophobia and Heterosexism: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Issues*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education Series. Jossey-Bass, 2007.

hooks, bell. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Sears, James T. *Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Issues in Education: Programs, Policies, and Practice*. New York: Haworth Press, 2005.

Wallowitz, Laraine, ed. *Critical Literacy as Resistance: Teaching for Social Justice Across the Secondary Curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD TEACHER GUIDE CONTINUED

TEACHER'S & DISCUSSION GUIDE

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OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDE TO INDIVIDUAL POEMS

There are four poems that focus on the fence to which Matthew Shepard was tied. Why so many? What does the fence have to tell us? Why might Newman have returned to the fence to punctuate her poem cycle?

In the Prologue, "The Fence (before)," the second half of the poem is italicized. Why? What do these lines anticipate?

How does Newman use numbers in "Outnumbered"? Which adverbs are vague? Which are precise? When do they become precise, and why? What is the effect of repetition? Where do you fit in her numbers? (**Historical**)

The second poem in Part I is titled "Recipe for Disaster." What do we expect in a recipe? What is the job of a recipe? What argument does Newman make here regarding the cause of this disaster? (**Bullying**)

Look at "Something Snapped." Which words are words of hatred? Which words describe gender? Which words describe sexuality? Which words, if any, make you, the reader, uncomfortable? What is the catalyst according to this poem? (**Bullying**)

Look at "Raising Awareness." How do you read this poem: across or down the page? Try both ways. What are the different effects? What do the two columns demonstrate? What kinds of awarenesses are raised here, and for whom? What are the ironies involved in the last lines? (**Bullying, Community**)

In "Every Mother's Plea" What kinds of advice is given? What connections does this advice have to the larger events of the poem cycle? (**Parenthood**)

How does "The Truck" compare to the poems in the cycle that offer an apology? Does the use of language pertaining to vehicles and driving have a deeper meaning? (**Bullying**)

Which words in "Road Rage" have double meanings? What does it mean to be "tough as time"?

Who is the "you" in "A Sorry State"? What is the significance of the knowledge that the state wishes it had imparted? The epigraph comes from the sign on the border of Wyoming. How do you read this slogan now? (**Community**)

"Signs of Trouble," like "Now Showing: Matthew's Story," is a found poem. Where do these lines come from? What makes the road signs especially appropriate? (**Bullying**)

Read "The Clothesline." What is the effect of the repeated "They/I"? (**Bullying**)

"The Pistol" consists of only twelve words. What is the effect of these one-word lines? Do the adjectives in this poem describe anything or anyone other than the pistol? (**Bullying**)

Read "Witness." What if someone had witnessed the attack? What is it had been you? What might you have done? (**Community**)

Read "The Fence (That Night)." How does the comparison of the fence cradling Matthew Shepard "just like a mother" make you feel? How does it relate to the other fictitious mothers mentioned throughout the book? (**Parenthood**)

How does Newman measure time in "What You Can Do in Eighteen Hours"? What kinds of activities does she include? What is the effect of her inclusion of both ordinary and extraordinary activities?

Who is the "you" in the title of "What You Can Do in Eighteen Hours"? What does it mean for you as the reader to be included in this narrative? Is this a comfortable or uncomfortable position for you to be in, and why? (**Community**)

How would you describe the form of "Stars"? How does it affect your reading experience?

What is the role of nature and the natural world in the poem "The Wind"? What other natural elements bore witness to Matthew Shepard's murder? What might they say in an imagined poetic monologue?

What is the role of alliteration, or the repetition of a consonant sound, in "The Doe"? What, specifically, does it emphasize?

A line in "The Doe" reads, "I felt the two fawns in my belly curl into a ball." What other kinds of mothers and mother figures does Newman include in the poem cycle? Why might there be so many? (**Parenthood**)

Read "Where is My Boy?" What do pets know about us? This poem is written in rhymed couplets. What does it sound like to you? What other kinds of poetry uses this kind of rhyming?

Read "The Biker." Newman refers to Shepard as a "smashed shattered pumpkin of a boy" (23). What does the word "pumpkin" imply?

What role do colors play in "The Patrol Officer's Report"? Why is the last line in italics?

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD TEACHER GUIDE CONTINUED

TEACHER'S & DISCUSSION GUIDE

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OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

How is contrast used in "The Doctor"? What is being contrasted, and what does this tell you about people who work in the medical profession? (**Community**)

In "The Housekeeper, ICU" Newman uses a refrain ("I see them come/I see them go"). What effect does this create? Does the word "straight" at the end of the poem have more than one meaning?

Read "Lame Excuse." Whose excuse is this? How does Newman use the word "lame"?

Read "How to Have the Worst Day of Your Life." What do we expect from "How to" guides or instruction manuals? Who is the "you" in the titular "your"? Might it be anyone who has loved anyone who has survived an "incident"? How would you write a poem with this title? (**Parenthood**)

Read "The Journalist." How do you feel about the fictitious "newscaster" described by the speaker? What kind of impression does she make? How do you feel about the advice being given at the beginning of the poem? (**Community**)

What does "Vigil: Candles in the Wind" look like? Sound like? How do you read it? How does Newman play with words in the last stanza? (**Community**)

Read "The Armbands." Who or what besides the armbands is being described? (**Community**)

Discuss the role of fear in "Scared to Death." (**Bullying**)

Look carefully at the line breaks in "Heartfelt Apology." Do any of them imply double meanings? How do the line breaks affect your reading of this poem?

In "October 12, 1998," why might Newman use the word "somebody" in both lines? Why doesn't she refer to Matthew Shepard by name in this poem?

Read "Now Showing: Matthew's Story." How has Newman used each of these other narratives to compose Matthew's own story? What story do they tell? (**Historical**)

In the poem "Tree," what effect does the use of repetition create? What is the effect of the use of ordinary objects made of wood in the poem as compared to the extraordinary image of a "small oak chest filled to the brim/with ashes that once were a boy"?

In "Class Photo" why is the word "martyr" in italics? Why isn't it capitalized? Why isn't it followed by an exclamation mark?

Read "Then and Now." What are some of the differences between then and now? What has happened in the space between?

Read "Thirteen Ways of Looking at Matthew." This poem, as Newman notes, is based on Wallace Stevens' "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." What does Newman offer us here? What kinds of ways of looking at Matthew does she provide? Whose points of view are used? Why might this poem be the last of Part I?

Part II

What has the fence become in "The Fence (one week later)"?

What does the title "Stand by your Man" allude to? What is the role of repetition in this poem? What would you do if someone you loved came home with something to hide? (**Justice, Community**)

In the poem "Accessory," both the words "accessory" and "sorry" have more than one meaning. What are they? What is Newman saying with the way she uses these two words?

Read "Officer of the Court." What are the differences between the italicized and the non-italicized lines? What does the phrase "this courtroom feels so cold" mean? (**Justice, Community**)

Read "His Shoes." Which words indicate that Matthew's shoes are valued? Which words indicated that they are disvalued? What is "irreplaceable"?

Read "The Frat Boys." How do the words "homo," "queer," and "freakin' fairy" make you feel when you read this poem? What does the last line mean? Why do we tell/perform jokes? What do jokes have the power to do? What do they indicate about us? How might someone who is gay have felt when seeing this homecoming parade float? (**Bullying, Community**)

What is the job of "The Songwriter" and other artists, including poets?

Why is the line "into the closet" repeated in "The Drag Queen"? What different kinds of people are facing consequences after Matthew Shepard's murder? How can we use this to talk about power dynamics? In a situation like this, what happens when someone belongs to a minority group? How can we confront this? (**Historical, Community, Bullying**)

He Continues to Make a Difference

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OCTOBER MOURNING: A SONG FOR MATTHEW SHEPARD TEACHER GUIDE CONTINUED

TEACHER'S & DISCUSSION GUIDE

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OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

In "The Cop" what kinds of words are these, and what do they have the potential to do? What happens when we hear them? What kind of message does it send out when a person in a position of authority, uses these words? Have you ever heard anyone use these words? Have you ever used these words? (**Bullying, Community**)

What role does retrospect play in "The Bartender"? (**Community**)

Read "Let's Say." The line "let's say" is repeated throughout the poem, and yet the "you" in the poem chooses not to speak. What keeps the "you" from speaking? What are the risks of speaking? Why is it important to speak up? What are the consequences of silence? In her essay "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action," Audre Lorde writes that "your silences will not protect you."² What are you afraid of speaking up for? How might you overcome this fear? What role does visibility play in the gay community? Why does it matter that Newman went to the University of Wyoming as "an out, proud lesbian, right before their very eyes" (89)? (**Community, Bullying, Justice**)

What role does fear play in "The Student"? What happens at the end of the poem? Why is this so important? What is at stake? (**Community**)

"A Father" and "A Mother" appear on pages that face each other. What is the effect of having these two poems so close together? What are the concerns of parents of gay sons and daughters? How universal might these concerns be? What is a parent's role? (**Parenthood, Community**)

Read the epigraph to "A Mother." If this had happened in your hometown, how would you feel about your community? About how the world would view your community? What could you do to change that? (**Historical, Community**)

These two poems are followed by "A Chorus of Parents." The fictitious sons mentioned in the poem are all different sons. What does this indicate about parents and their relationships with their children? What effects does Matthew Shepard's story have on parents and children? (**Parenthood, Community**)

Look at the last lines of "The Church Lady." How might Matthew Shepard's murder affect a religious person's faith? (**Community**)

What is the effect of placing "A Protestor" and "An Angel" on facing pages? What visual images do they suggest? (**Community, Justice**)

Read "A Protestor." What does it mean to include this voice? In a case so charged with silences, and so much is at stake in speaking out, why might Newman have included the voices of hate? Read the last stanza of this poem. What portrait of parenthood does this offer? It follows a series of poems focusing on parents. Can we consider this a parent poem, too? (**Community, Bullying, Parenthood**)

Where does the phrase "where angels fear to tread" come from? How are prayers used in both "A Protestor" and "An Angel"? How is religion invoked in both? Where do you see biblical traces in both? What does it mean to have these two positions so structurally ordered in a villanelle? What is the history of Angel Action? (**Community**)

Discuss the role of shape in the poem "Jury Selection." Potential jurors are usually asked a series of questions in order to determine if they will be suitable to participate in a given trial. Based on their responses, what is the one question asked here? Why is this significant? (**Justice**)

Compare and contrast the jobs of "The Prosecutor" and "The Defense." How would you argue your case if you were the prosecutor? The defense? What is at stake? (**Justice**)

Read "Don't Flatter Yourself." What is behind this fear that a gay person might be coming on to someone else? Where is the misunderstanding? (**Bullying**)

Read "Sorry Boy." What is meant by a "gay panic" defense? How does Newman play with the language of "gay panic"? (**Justice, Bullying**)

Read "Logic Problem." How does Newman use numbers and statistics here? Connect these to the title and epigraph. What is Newman implying? How would you define a hate crime? How does the FBI define a hate crime? How does your state? Does your state have hate crime legislation, and if so, whom does it protect? Who should be protected? (**Historical, Bullying, Justice**)

What is the role of the boldface type in "Verdict"? (**Justice**)

"Mercy" offers us yet another parental voice. What is significant about what Dennis Shepard says here? What does it mean to offer mercy? Who is "the boy" in the last line? Again, what is at stake? "Mercy" is a haiku, as is "Every Mother's Plea." Their form is the same; what is the connection in their content? (**Parenthood, Justice**)

² Lorde, Audre. "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action." *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* by Audre Lorde. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007. 40-44.

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OCTOBER MOURNING: *A Song for Matthew Shepard*

Again, Newman uses listing in "What Twenty Bucks Could Get you in 1998." What point is she making with all of these numbers and items? How much is a life worth? (**Justice, Historical**)

Who is wounded in the poem "Wounded"? What comparisons can be made between the first and last stanzas? Why are identical lines used in both of these stanzas? What is the effect of having the poem broken up with the isolated line "heard his own mama"? What role do the natural elements play in this poem?

In "This is the Hand," Newman describes the hand as though it is an entity in and of itself, and not attached to a body. Why might Newman have described it in such a way? What is the effect of this? What is the effect of the alliteration that appears throughout the poem? Have you ever committed a hurtful act that you later regretted? (**Bullying**)

"Once upon a time" is a phrase commonly used to begin a children's story, notably a fairy tale. Why might Newman have used it as the title of this poem? What is the effect of starting the first line of each stanza with the word "once," and the second line of each stanza with the word "now"? What is the effect of the use of repetition throughout the poem?

The last poem of Part II is "The Fence (after)." What progression have you seen in the fence poems?

The epilogue is entitled "Pilgrimage." What does it mean to make a pilgrimage? Who makes pilgrimages? What do they seek and hope to find? Whose pilgrimage is this? What role does Newman, the poet, place herself in? Is she someone other than the poet in this poem? What traditions does she draw upon? Why use phrases from more than one religious/spiritual tradition? Why have multiple traditions in one poem? Why the refrain of beauty? (**Community, Justice**)

Prepared by Katie R. Peel, Assistant Professor of English at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, where she teaches young adult, children's, queer, and Victorian literatures.

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He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

BRING LESLÉA NEWMAN TO YOUR SCHOOL

"He Continues to Make a Difference: The Story of Matthew Shepard" uses poems, photographs, and guided visualization to inspire students to make the world a safer place for all.

Lesléa Newman presents:

He Continues To Make A Difference: The Story of Matthew Shepard

an anti-bullying presentation for high school, college, and adult audiences

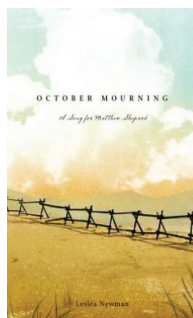
"The best assembly I've seen in 12 years of teaching" – Sara Barber-Just, *Amherst MA*

Shortly before midnight on October 6, 1998, Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old gay student attending the University of Wyoming, was kidnapped, robbed, brutally beaten, tied to a fence, and abandoned. Eighteen hours later, he was discovered by a biker, and taken to a hospital where he remained in a coma for five days until he died, with his family by his side.

Lesléa Newman arrived at the University of Wyoming on October 12, 1998 to give a keynote speech for Gay Awareness Week. She found a devastated campus and community. Her book, *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* tells the story of the impact of Matthew's murder in 68 poems that speak in the voices of the silent witnesses to this horrendous hate crime: the fence Matthew was tied to, the stars that watched over him, a deer that kept him company, his stolen shoes, the cold Wyoming wind.

In the presentation, "He Continues to Make a Difference", Lesléa Newman uses poetry, photographs, and creative visualization, to remind audience members that we all can—and must—make a difference to create a safe world for everyone.

Lesléa Newman is the author of sixty books for adults and children including the groundbreaking children's classic, *Heather Has Two Mommies* and the award-winning short story collection, *A Letter to Harvey Milk*. A gay activist for more than twenty years, she has received the James Baldwin Award for Cultural Achievement, the Continuing the Legacy of Stonewall Award, and the Hachamat Lev Award for "enduring commitment to justice and full inclusion for GLBT people in the Jewish community and beyond." A past poet laureate of Northampton, Massachusetts, Lesléa has received poetry fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Massachusetts Artists Fellowship Foundation.



If you would like information about bringing Lesléa Newman to your community, please contact her at leslea@lesleakids.com or 413-552-3865.

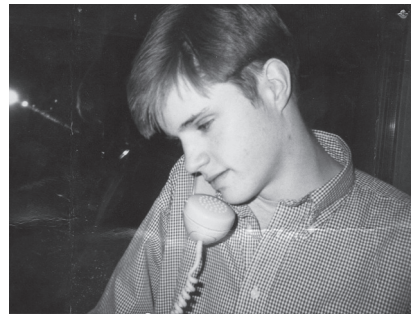


Photo courtesy of the Matthew Shepard Foundation

The Fence

I held him all night long
He was heavy as a broken heart
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes
He was dead weight yet he kept breathing
He was heavy as a broken heart
His own heart wouldn't stop beating
He was dead weight yet he kept breathing
His face streaked with moonlight and blood
His own heart wouldn't stop beating
The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing
His face streaked with moonlight and blood
I tightened my grip and held on
The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing
We were out on the prairie alone
I tightened my grip and held on
I saw what was done to this child
We were out on the prairie alone
Their truck was the last thing he saw
I saw what was done to this child
I cradled him just like a mother
Their truck was the last thing he saw
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes
I cradled him just like a mother
I held him all night long

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He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Witnessing History

OVERVIEW: In this lesson, students use text-text and text-self strategies to learn about Matthew Shepard and other key figures in LGBT history. Utilizing poetry, oral history clips and other sources, students explore key concepts, engage in small group discussion and produce a work of creative writing.

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to draw inferences from information evidenced in a poem.
- Students will be able to analyze the story of Matthew Shepard from various texts and perspectives.
- Students will be able to make text to text connections using the stories of Matthew Shepard and a other key figures in LGBT history.
- Students will be able to consider historic moments from the perspective of inanimate objects witnessing the events.
- Students will be able to create a work of fiction based on a real moment in LGBT history.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS ALIGNMENT--Common Core State Standards:

Grade-Specific Standards	Part I	Part II
READING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS		
Grades 9-10		
• Standard 1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	X	
• Standard 4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).	X	
• Standard 7: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.	X	
READING LITERATURE		
Grades 11-12		
• Standard 1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.	X	
• Standard 4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful	X	
• Standard 7: Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text.	X	
WRITING		
Grades 9-10		
• Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.		X
Grades 9-10		
• Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.		X

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Witnessing History continued

AGE/EXPERIENCE LEVEL: Grades 9-12

TIME: 2-3 class periods

MATERIALS:

- Student Handout—"The Fence"
- Student Handout—*The Story of Matthew*
- Internet access and equipment to play oral history testimonies from *Unheard Voices: Stories of LGBT History* at www.glsen.org/unheardvoices.

PROCEDURE:

PART 1-Poem Analysis

- 1) To begin this lesson, display Lesléa Newman's poem, "The Fence", at the front of the room on the board, overhead or chart paper.
- 2) Ask students to read the poem silently to themselves, then ask one or more volunteers to read the poem aloud.
- 3) Lead a class discussion using some or all of the following questions.
 - a. What is happening in the poem? What clues help us understand the context?
 - b. What do we know about the main subject and what can we infer using evidence from the text? Who is he and who is holding him?
 - c. What does the author's use of repetition bring to the poem? How does the structure and tone of the poem impact the reader?
 - d. What feelings came up for you as you read?
 - e. What do you think this poem is about?
- 4) Distribute *The Story of Matthew* to each student and invite students to read the selection with a partner.
- 5) Ask students to talk with their partner about what they think connects "The Fence" and *The Story of Matthew*.
- 6) Distribute copies of "The Fence" and tell students it is one of many poems in Lesléa Newman's book *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*, her deeply personal response to the events of Matthew's tragic death and its brutal aftermath. This work of poetic imagination explores the impact of the vicious crime through fictitious monologues from various points of view, including the fence to which Matthew was tied, the deer that kept watch beside him, and even Matthew himself.
- 7) Divide students into small groups of 4-5.

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Witnessing History continued

- 8) Invite small groups to reread “The Fence” and engage in discussion with their small group using the following questions as a guide.
 - a. How did the “The Fence” make you feel the second time you read it?
 - b. In what ways is your understanding of the poem different after reading *The Story of Matthew*? How did the additional information enhance your understanding of the poem?
 - c. Why might it be important to learn about people like Matthew Shepard who have been targeted for who they are?

PART II: Historical Context and Creative Writing

The murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998 garnered incredible media attention and brought the problem of anti-LGBT hatred and violence to the forefront of the national conscience. It remains a key moment in the history of the LGBT community in the US. It's important for students to know about Matthew Shepard and other LGBT people who have faced bias and discrimination for who they are. It's also important for students to know that there is more to LGBT history than murder and violence. This part of the lesson allows your students to explore a diverse range of LGBT historic moments.

- 1) Begin this part of the lesson by asking students what they know about LGBT history. Their answers may include influential LGBT people, court cases, laws and policies, TV shows, current events, etc. List their answers on the board or chart paper.
- 2) Explain that students will be doing a creative writing assignment based on a moment in LGBT history from the perspective of an inanimate object, like Lesléa Newman's poem “The Fence”.
- 3) TEACHER TIP: Use *Unheard Voices: Stories of LGBT History* for inspiration:
 - a. Tell students that three organizations – Anti-Defamation League, GLSEN and StoryCorps – have teamed up to counter the invisibility of LGBT people in history by recording the oral histories of people who have made or witnessed LGBT history in the recent past. Explain that by bringing these oral histories to students in schools across the country, these organizations hope to reduce anti-LGBT stereotypes, prejudice and harassment; increase awareness and appreciation of the contributions of LGBT people; and fill in some of the gaps in the history that is presented in most school books and curricula.
 - b. Choose one or two of the *Unheard Voices* interviews to play for students at www.glsen.org/unheardvoices.
NOTE: You can also print out the accompanying *Classroom Resources* for each interview ahead of time for students to use in this lesson.
 - c. Following the interview, ask students to write down a list of inanimate objects that may have witnessed the events in the interviews. Then have students share the items on their list in pairs or small groups.
- 4) Have students select one moment and object that they found interesting in the *Unheard Voices* interviews. Either in class or for homework assign students to create a poem, letter, monologue, song or short story from the perspective of the inanimate object witnessing their chosen moment. (Examples include: a song from the jukebox at the Stonewall Inn on June 28, 1969 [Michael Levine]; a monologue from the limousine heading to City Hall [David Wilson]; a letter from the typewriter used to produce the first edition of *The Ladder* [Phyllis Lyon].)
- 5) At the end of the lesson, allow students to perform, present or otherwise share their work.

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Witnessing History continued

EXTENSION IDEAS:

- Assign a more thorough research project of students' selected moments in history. What was the larger cultural and political context? How might this piece of LGBT history compare to the history of other marginalized groups in the US?
- Invite students to pick two *Unheard Voices* interviews and create a piece of work that has inanimate objects from both in conversation with each other.
- Invite students to create a similar piece of writing from the perspective of an inanimate object witnessing an important moment in their own lives.
- After reading "The Fence" ask students to draw, paint, or create a sculpture that expresses their feelings about Matthew Shepard's murder.
- Assign additional poems for students to read and analyze from Lesléa Newman's book, *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard*. For example, you may ask them to consider how the four poems about the fence relate to one another.
- Use Matthew Shepard's story as a starting point to research current hate crime laws. What is a hate crime? Does your state have hate crime legislation? If so, how does it compare to the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act? Who was James Byrd, Jr. and what do he and Matthew Shepard have in common?

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

STUDENT HANDOUT



THE STORY OF MATTHEW

The story of Matthew Shepard began on December 1, 1976 when he was born to Judy and Dennis Shepard in Casper, Wyoming. He went to public school in Casper until his junior year of high school when he moved with his family to Saudi Arabia. Matt had to finish his high school education at The American School in Switzerland because there were no American high schools in Saudi Arabia at the time. In both high schools, he was elected by his peers to be a peer counselor. He was easy to talk to, made friends easily and actively fought for the acceptance of all people.

Matt had a great passion for equality. His experiences abroad fueled his love for travel and gave him the chance to make many new friends from around the world. Matt's college career eventually took him back to Wyoming where he studied political science, foreign relations and languages at the University of Wyoming in Laramie.

The horrific events that took place shortly after midnight on October 7, 1998 would become one of the most notorious anti-gay hate crimes in American history and spawned an activist movement that, more than a decade later, would result in passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, a federal law against bias crimes directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered people. Two men, Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, abducted Matt and drove him to a remote area east of Laramie, Wyoming. He was tied to a split-rail fence where the two men severely assaulted him with the butt

of a pistol. He was beaten and left to die in the cold of the night. Almost 18 hours later, he was found by a bicyclist who initially mistook him for a scarecrow.

Matt died on October 12 at 12:53 a.m. at Poudre Valley Hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado with his family by his side. His memorial service was attended by friends and family from around the world and garnered immense media attention that brought Matt's story to the forefront of the fight against bigotry and hate.

The life and death of Matthew Shepard changed the way we talk about, and deal with, hate in America. Since his death, Matt's legacy has challenged and inspired millions of individuals to erase hate in all its forms. Although Matt's life was short, his story continues to have a great impact on young and old alike. His legacy lives on in thousands of people who actively fight to replace hate with understanding, compassion and acceptance.

He Continues to Make a Difference

Commemorating the Life of Matthew Shepard

STUDENT HANDOUT

THE FENCE

I held him all night long
He was heavy as a broken heart
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes
He was dead weight yet he kept breathing

He was heavy as a broken heart
His own heart wouldn't stop beating
He was dead weight yet he kept breathing
His face streaked with moonlight and blood

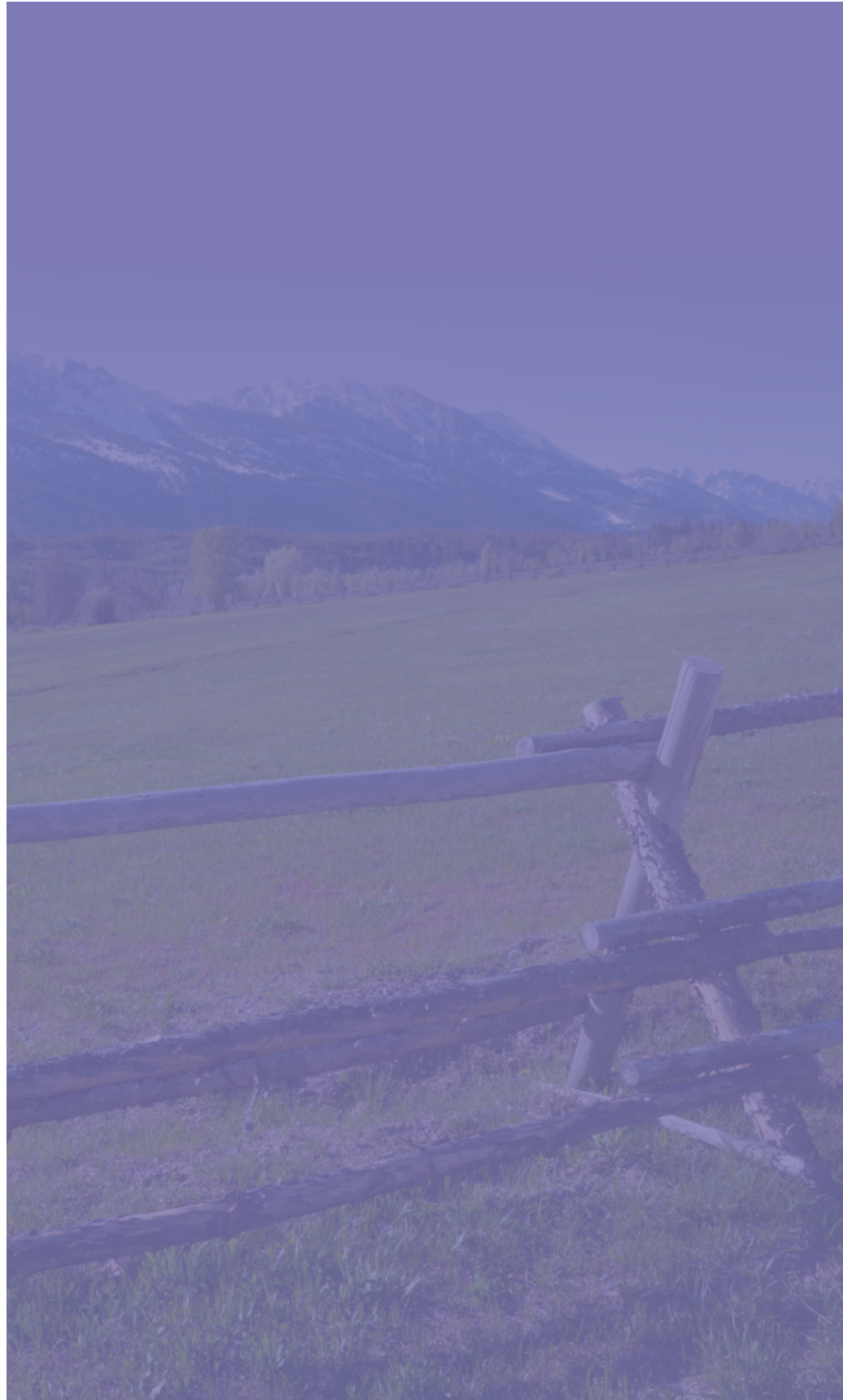
His own heart wouldn't stop beating
The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing
His face streaked with moonlight and blood
I tightened my grip and held on

The cold wind wouldn't stop blowing
We were out on the prairie alone
I tightened my grip and held on
I saw what was done to this child

We were out on the prairie alone
Their truck was the last thing he saw
I saw what was done to this child
I cradled him just like a mother

Their truck was the last thing he saw
Tears fell from his unblinking eyes
I cradled him just like a mother
I held him all night long

October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard.
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GLSEN

www.glsen.org

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