OUR SHARED STORY:
LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES AND BELONGING IN INDIANAPOLIS

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF INDIANAPOLIS

Primary Grades Lesson Plan



Lesson Plan made possible by a generous grant from the Allen Whitehill Clowes Charitable Foundation.

© 2026 Encyclopedia of Indianapolis. This work is openly licensed via CC BY-NC-SA

This license enables reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format for noncommercial purposes only, and only so long as attribution is given to the creator. If you remix, adapt, or build upon the material, you must license the modified material under identical terms.

Our Shared Story: LGBTQ+ Communities and Belonging in Indianapolis

Lesson Plan by Dr. Nicholas Miller and Gabrielle Dumoulin

Nicholas Miller has a PhD in "Multispecies History and Anthropology" from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and has worked in the National Park system and at multiple museums. He teaches History and Gender Studies at Purdue University Fort Wayne and is currently an Assistant Teaching Professor of History & Anthropology at Ball State University. As a multi-disciplinary scholar, he combines in his research environmental history, historical animal studies, public history, and folkloristics.

Gabrielle Dumoulin is a student at Ball State University studying anthropology, women's and gender studies, and history. Her academic interests center on identity, inequality, and community-based histories, with a particular focus on multispecies ethnography and the relationships between humans, animals, and the environment. She has worked with Dr. Nicholas Miller, professor at Ball State University, on research examining cultural perspectives and multispecies ethnography.

Contents

Introduction **5**

We All Belong **6**

Lesson Overview 6

Indiana Academic Standards 7

Lesson Sequence 8

Word Bank—Vocabulary Reference 15

Short Reading 16

Activity 1—Define the Word in the Sentence 17

Activity 2—Fill in the Blank 18

Activity 3—Short Answer Reflection 19

Drawing Activity—My Community Celebration 20

Bonus Activity—Coloring! 21

Further Resources **22**

Notes **23**

Introduction

To understand Indianapolis's story, it helps to look at a turning point in LGBTQ+ history (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and more). In 1969, at The Stonewall Inn in New York City, LGBTQ+ people fought back against police raids that had long targeted their community. This event, known as The Stonewall Uprising, sparked protests and became a defining moment in LGBTQ+ history. It inspired people across the entire country to organize, speak out, and demand equal rights. Pride celebrations held around the world today trace their roots back to this courageous stand.

That spirit of activism reached Indianapolis as well. In a city where LGBTQ+ people had long worked to build spaces of safety and belonging, small but meaningful gatherings began taking shape as early as 1976. Picnics, dances, and social events gave community members a chance to connect at a time when simply being together took courage.

Over time, those gatherings grew into Indianapolis Pride, an annual celebration that moved to the heart of the city, Monument Circle, where thousands of people come together each year to celebrate, march, and show support for the LGBTQ+ community. The event has expanded to include parades, live music, speakers, and family-friendly activities that welcome people of all backgrounds and ages. A beloved part of both the celebration and broader LGBTQ+ culture is drag performance, where performers use costume, makeup, and artistry to express creativity and tell stories, bringing joy, humor, and powerful self-expression to audiences of all kinds.

Pride is more than celebration. It is a reminder of the struggles LGBTQ+ people have faced, the progress made, and the importance of every person feeling seen and supported. From quiet gatherings in 1976 to a city-wide celebration today, Indianapolis's LGBTQ+ community has built a rich history rooted in resilience, creativity, and the belief that every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

We All Belong

LGBTQ+ History and Community in Indianapolis

Lesson Overview

Estimated Time:	Materials:
60–75 Minutes	Pencil, Coloring Tools, White Paper

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Think about a time you felt left out or didn't belong. What would it have meant to you if someone stood up and made space for you?

What does it mean to be brave enough to be yourself? How do you think it feels to celebrate who you are with an entire city cheering you on?

Tip for educators: Give students 2–3 minutes to think quietly, then invite a few to share with the class. Let students know that today they will be learning about real people in their own city who asked themselves that same question.

This lesson invites primary school students, particularly fourth graders, into a meaningful exploration of LGBTQ+ history and community in Indianapolis. The lesson opens with an engaging question that encourages students to reflect personally on what it means to be yourself and to celebrate who you are. From there, students are introduced to five key vocabulary words (pride, community, celebrate, included, and drag) before reading a short passage about how Indianapolis's LGBTQ+ community built spaces of belonging over time, beginning with small gatherings in 1976 and growing into the city-wide Pride celebration at Monument Circle that exists today.

Students then move through three connected activities: using context clues to define vocabulary words in sentences, completing fill-in-the-blank sentences that deepen word understanding, and responding to short answer prompts that bring the learning into their own lives. The lesson closes with a creative drawing activity where students imagine and illustrate their own community celebration, followed by a gallery walk that gives the class a chance to appreciate one another's work. Throughout, the lesson centers on empathy, belonging, and the idea that every person deserves to feel seen and welcomed.

Indiana Academic Standards

**Based on the 2023 Indiana Academic Standards for Social Studies*

Grade 4 Social Studies:

4.H.11 Identify and describe important events and movements that changed life in Indiana from the mid-twentieth century to the present.

Lesson Sequence

Step 1—Word Bank Introduction (5–10 minutes)

Before reading, introduce the five vocabulary words. For each word:

- Read the definition aloud together
- Ask students if they have ever seen or heard the word before
- Give a simple real-life example

Word	Definition
Pride	Being proud of who you are and respecting others.
Community	A group of people who support each other.
Celebrate	To come together and honor something important.
Included	Feeling welcome and like you belong.
Drag	A performance using costumes, makeup, and creativity.

Quick Check: Ask students to give a thumbs up if they feel confident with each word before moving on.

Step 2—Short Reading (5–10 minutes)

Read the passage aloud together as a class, then have students read it a second time independently or with a partner.

> In Indianapolis, LGBTQ+ people created spaces where they could feel welcome and celebrate who they are. In 1976, small Pride events began, like picnics and dances. Over time, these events grew larger and moved to Monument Circle, where many people gathered together. Pride helps people feel included and supported. Performances like drag shows also help people express creativity and bring communities together.

Discussion prompt after reading: "Which vocabulary word stood out to you most in the passage, and why?"

Step 3—Activity 1: Define the Word in the Sentence (10–15 minutes)

Students use the word bank to identify and define the underlined vocabulary word in each sentence. Remind students to use their own words when writing the definition.

Tip for educators: Encourage students to look back at the word bank and the reading passage to support their answers.

1. People gathered together to celebrate Pride at Monument Circle.
    - What does Pride mean?
2. The community came together to support one another.
    - What does community mean?
3. The performer wore a bright costume during a drag show.
    - What does drag mean?
4. The event helped people feel included and welcome.
    - What does included mean?

Step 4—Activity 2: Fill in the Blank (5 minutes)

Students complete each sentence using the correct vocabulary word from the word bank.

1. People gathered to _____ Pride together.
2. A _____ is a group of people who care about each other.
3. Pride helps people feel _____ and accepted.
4. You can show _____ by being proud of who you are.
5. The drag performer wore a colorful costume to _____ their creativity and bring the _____ together.

Answer Key:

- Pride (4)
- Included (3)
- Community (2, 5)
- Celebrate (1, 5)

Tip for educators: Question 5 challenges students to use two vocabulary words in a single sentence, encouraging deeper thinking about how the words connect to each other.

Step 5—Activity 3: Short Answer Reflection (10–15 minutes)

Students respond to the following questions in writing. Encourage complete sentences.

What makes you feel proud of yourself?
How can you help someone feel included?

Optional extension for early finishers: "If you could plan a community celebration in Indianapolis, what would it look like? Who would be there and what would you include?"

Share Out: Invite 2–3 volunteers to share one of their short answer responses with the class. Close with a brief reminder: "Just like the people in Indianapolis who worked to build a community where everyone belongs, we can each do our part to make sure the people around us feel seen, welcomed, and celebrated."

Step 6— Activity 4: Drawing Component, "My Community Celebration" (20-30 minutes)

Materials Needed:

- White drawing paper if space on sheet is too small.
- Crayons, colored pencils, or markers.
- Optional: printed outline of Monument Circle or Indianapolis skyline as a background template.

Instructions: After completing Activity 3, students will create an original drawing that responds to this prompt: "Draw a community celebration where everyone feels included and proud of who they are. Think about what you see, hear, and feel when people come together."

Drawing Guidelines for Students:

- Include at least 3 people in your celebration.
- Show at least 2 vocabulary words visually in your drawing (for example, drawing someone performing on stage shows drag and celebrate).
- Add a title at the top of your drawing.
- Write one sentence at the bottom describing what is happening in your scene.

Share Out: Once complete, invite students to do a gallery walk, placing their drawings on their desks and quietly walking around to view their classmates' work. Give each student 2–3 sticky notes to leave kind observations on drawings that stood out to them.

Tip for educators: The gallery walk reinforces the lesson's themes of community and inclusion in a hands-on, social way.

Step 7—Bonus Activity: Coloring!

Materials Needed:

- Crayons, colored pencils, or markers.

If there is time, students can color the scene from Monument Circle and Indy Pride:

Everyone belongs! Use the color scheme provided to color the buildings, people, and sky.

NAME _____ DATE _____

Word Bank—Vocabulary Reference

Use this word bank throughout the lesson to help you understand and complete each activity.

Word	Definition
Pride	Being proud of who you are and respecting others
Community	A group of people who support each other
Celebrate	To come together and honor something important
Included	Feeling welcome and like you belong
Drag	A performance using costumes, makeup, and creativity

Use it in a sentence!

Choose TWO words from the word bank and write your own sentence using each one.

Word 1: _____

_____

Word 2: _____

_____

★ **Quick Check:** Circle how confident you feel about each word:

Pride:	☹ Not sure	🙂 Getting there	😀 Got it!
Community:	☹ Not sure	🙂 Getting there	😀 Got it!
Celebrate:	☹ Not sure	🙂 Getting there	😀 Got it!
Included:	☹ Not sure	🙂 Getting there	😀 Got it!
Drag:	☹ Not sure	🙂 Getting there	😀 Got it!

NAME _____ DATE _____

Short Reading

Read along with your teacher, then read again on your own or with a partner.

In Indianapolis, LGBTQ+ people created spaces where they could feel welcome and celebrate who they are. In 1976, small Pride events began, like picnics and dances. Over time, these events grew larger and moved to Monument Circle, where many people gathered together. Pride helps people feel included and supported. Performances like drag shows also help people express creativity and bring communities together.

Comprehension Questions
Answer each question in a complete sentence.

1. Where did LGBTQ+ Pride events in Indianapolis begin, and what were they like?

_____

2. Where did the Pride events move over time, and why do you think that matters?

_____

3. What is drag, and how does it help bring communities together?

_____

Discussion Prompt

Which vocabulary word from your word bank stood out to you most in the reading, and why?

NAME _____ DATE _____

Activity 1—Define the Word in the Sentence

Directions: *Read each sentence. The bold word is from your word bank. Write the definition of the bold word in your own words.*

1. People gathered together to celebrate Pride at Monument Circle. *What does Pride mean?*

_____

2. The community came together to support one another. *What does community mean?*

_____

3. The performer wore a bright costume during a drag show. *What does drag mean?*

_____

4. The event helped people feel included and welcome. *What does included mean?*

_____

Hint!

Look back at your word bank and the reading passage to help you write your definitions. Try to put it in your own words!

NAME _____ DATE _____

Activity 2—Fill in the Blank

Directions: *Use the words from your word bank to complete each sentence. Each word may be used more than once!*

Word Bank: Pride community celebrate included drag

1. People gathered to _____ Pride together.

2. A _____ is a group of people who care about each other.

3. Pride helps people feel _____ and accepted.

4. You can show _____ by being proud of who you are.

5. The drag performer wore a colorful costume to _____ their creativity and bring the _____ together.

★ Challenge—Question 5 uses TWO words. Can you figure out which ones?

NAME _____ DATE _____

Activity 3—Short Answer Reflection

Directions: *Answer each question in 2–3 complete sentences. Use your own thoughts and experiences. There are no wrong answers!*

1. What makes you feel proud of yourself?

_____

2. How can you help someone feel included?

_____

★ Bonus Question:

If you could plan a community celebration in Indianapolis, what would it look like? Who would be there, and what would you include?

_____

Reflect on your learning

Complete this sentence: One thing I will remember from this lesson is...

_____

NAME _____ DATE _____

Drawing Activity—My Community Celebration

Directions: *Draw a community celebration where everyone feels included and proud of who they are. Think about what you see, hear, and feel when people come together.*

Before you draw, check the guidelines below:

- Include at least 3 people in your celebration
- Show at least 2 vocabulary words visually in your drawing
- Add a title at the top of your drawing
- Write one sentence at the bottom describing what is happening

My drawing shows:

_____

Gallery Walk—Leave a kind note!

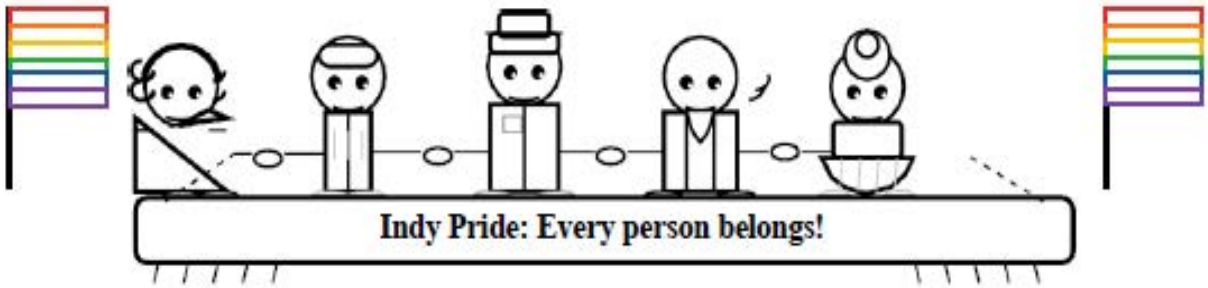
Write one thing you noticed in a classmate's drawing that stood out to you:

Bonus Activity—Coloring!

Indianapolis LGBTQ+ Community

Color this page and celebrate our community!





Did you know? Fun facts about Indianapolis & LGBTQ+ history

* Indianapolis has celebrated Pride every June since 1977 - over 45 years of marching together!
* The Soldiers & Sailors Monument downtown is a symbol of Indy and a landmark at every Pride parade.
* LGBTQ+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and more - people of all kinds!
* The rainbow flag was designed in 1978. Each color has a special meaning: life, healing, sunlight, nature, harmony, and spirit.

Writing Prompt

Think about this question, then write your answer below:

What does it mean to be a good community member? Think about the people in Indianapolis who march in the Pride parade every year. Why is it important to make everyone in your community feel welcome and included? Write 3-5 sentences sharing your ideas.

Color tip: Use red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple for the flag and rainbow!

skin tones | clothes | buildings | sky | rainbow | flags

Name: _____ Date: _____

Further Resources

Encyclopedia of Indianapolis

Chris Gonzalez Library and Archives

https://indyencyclopedia.org/chris-gonzalez-library-andarchives/

Gay Knights on the Circle

https://indyencyclopedia.org/gayknights-on-the-circle/

Indiana AIDS Memorial

https://indyencyclopedia.org/indiana-aidsmemorial/

Indianapolis Public Library

LGBTQ the Survival Guide for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Teens

https://indypl.bibliocommons.com/v2/record/S165C986947

LGBTQ Film

https://indypl.bibliocommons.com/v2/search?query=LGBTQ&f_FORMAT=VIDEO ONLINE&searchType=keyword

Other

Stonewall Uprising: The Year That Changed America

https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/stonewall/#part01

Hoosier LGBTQ+ History

https://indianamemory.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16066coll43/search

Freedom Indiana

https://www.freedomindiana.org

Indy Pride

https://www.indypride.org/about

Damien Center

https://www.damien.org

IYG (formerly Indiana Youth Group)

https://www.iyg.org/about/

Notes