

## Title: The Harvey Milk Story

Grade: 4th -5th

### BACKGROUND

There are many different kinds of discrimination, including homophobia. This story is about Harvey Milk, and how he fought for equal rights for gays and lesbians.

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

- List three facts about the life of Harvey Milk;
- Discuss different kinds of discrimination and prejudices
- Understand the importance of standing up for what you believe in.

### TIME

- **Part one, 15 minutes:** Introduction and discussion of  
**15 minutes:** Reading / Discussing The Harvey Milk Story
- **Part two, 15 minutes:** Writing: Thinking about Prejudice

### STANDARDS

- **California Health Education Standard (IC): Interpersonal Communication**  
Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health
- **Reading** 1.0, 2.0, 3.0
- **Written and Oral English Conventions** 1.0, 2.0
  - ❖ See **extensions** at the end of the lesson for additional activities.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- The Harvey Milk Story by Kari Krakow
- Whiteboard and pen or butcher paper and markers

**VOCABULARY**

- **Diversity:** Many differences
- **Gay:** A term to describe people of the same sex who have feelings for one another in a romantic way. The term is usually used to describe men
- **Lesbian:** Women who have feelings for one another in a romantic way
- **Respect:** To be considerate of other persons
- **Homophobia:** The fear or hatred of people who are gay or lesbian
- **Discrimination:** An action that treats people unfairly. Denying equal treatment to individuals of groups of people
- **Prejudice:** A negative belief about all people within a given group
- **Coming Out:** The process of understanding one's sexual orientation, accepting it, acting on it and telling others
- **Sexual Orientation:** An identity based on whether someone is attracted to a person of a different sex, the same sex or both sexes. Everyone has a sexual orientation

**CLASSROOM PROCEDURE**

**Introduction:** Explain to students that we will be discussing the story of Harvey Milk. Harvey Milk was on the San Francisco Board of supervisors. He was also gay. Define gay (See Vocabulary). Explain that Harvey Milk was the first openly gay elected official in the United States and he experienced prejudice for his sexual orientation. Define the term prejudice (See Vocabulary).

- The students will have an opportunity to discuss the book.
- Let the students know they will be reading the book, [The Harvey Milk Story](#)
- Finally, the class will have an opportunity to write a letter about prejudice.

**Ground rules:** Introduce or review classroom rules in order to create a safe place for students to discuss the book. Students in the class may have same sex parents or know people who are gay or lesbian. Consider using the ground rules listed below:

Respect other people in the class:

- No put downs
- One person speaks at a time
- Everyone has the “right to pass” if s/he doesn’t want to talk
- Everyone will have a chance to speak

**Part One: Brainstorm Different Types of Prejudice**

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- Have students turn to a partner. With their partners, ask students to define prejudice and to assemble a list of different kinds of prejudice that people may encounter (Give examples, such as *based on the color of your skin or the language you speak*). Have them write the list down on a piece of paper. Remind the students of the definition of prejudice.

- Next, ask the students to share their lists. Write a compiled list on butcher paper or on the board. Tell them you will get back to this list after the story is read.

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**Part Two: Reading/Discussion “The Harvey Milk Story”**

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- Introduce the book, The Harvey Milk Story. Show the students the cover of the book, read the title, and ask students to predict who Harvey Milk was.
- Briefly review the brainstorm list of prejudices with the class. (Inform the students that as the book is read, they will look for similarities and differences to the other types of prejudice listed in the class brainstorming session).
- Read the story.

Discussion Questions (after reading)

1. When Harvey Milk was growing up he was afraid to tell his friends and family he was gay. Discuss with students what Harvey feared would happen to him if people found out that he was gay. Why might someone want to “come out” about his or her sexual orientation?
2. Have you ever kept silent or seen someone else keep silent, fearing a negative response from friends or family? Why might someone respond in a negative way? Have you ever responded negatively?
3. Ask students how “coming out” might be the same or different for young gay people today. Is it any different today than it was when Harvey Milk was young?
4. When Harvey Milk was a young man, many people were the subject of prejudice and mistreatment. Gays and lesbians were routinely fired from their jobs and evicted from their homes. How do anti-discrimination laws like the one Harvey worked hard to introduce in San Francisco, help gay and lesbian people have the same rights as everyone else in their communities?
5. What might you do if you are with friends or classmates who are calling someone “gay” in a mean way?
6. Harvey Milk often spoke about the importance of hope. What message did Minnie Milk (his mother) give to Harvey that he never forgot, and why was this so important to Harvey?

### Part Three: Writing about Prejudice

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- Inform students that they will write a paragraph about prejudice.
- Explain to students that they may, or have already, experienced, learned about, or witnessed different kinds of prejudice in their neighborhoods, school, or larger communities. Ask, “What would you do to confront the prejudice?” Remind them that Harvey became active in his community and ran for office to confront the prejudices happening to gay and lesbian people.
- What groups of people experience prejudice? Why do you think this happens?
- To assist students, review the definition of gay, prejudice and other key words from the vocabulary. Keep the list visible for the students so they may copy key words for the sentence completion.
- Review the book and summarize the story.

### EVALUATION

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The objectives have been met if the student is able to:

- Understand the discrimination that Harvey Milk faced for being gay.
- Express respect for personal and family differences through discussion and/or writings.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

#### SEE YOUR HEALTH ADVOCATE FOR LOCATION OF RESOURCES

- ❖ **HEALTH:**  
Actions for Health, ETR Associates
- ❖ “**That’s A Family**” video and curriculum by Women’s Education Media
- ❖ **King and King** book and lesson plan
- ❖ **All Families are Special** book and lesson plan
- ❖ **Community Based Organizations (CBO):** A list of CBOs which may be used as a resource to supplement health lessons is available on the SHPD website, [www.healthiersf.org](http://www.healthiersf.org), under the Programs and Services link. Click Health Presenters.