

I Am Jazz by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings¹

Grade: 3rd-5th grade

OVERVIEW

I Am Jazz is a true story about a transgender teen who was labeled a boy at birth but knew from a very young age that she is actually a girl. One of the first children's books to explain "transgender," Jazz chronicles the real account of how a youth and her family deal with coming out as transgender and the struggle to be your true self.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Define **transgender** and explore an example of gender diversity
- Understand the importance of accepting differences
- Discuss the negative impacts of bullying and how to be an ally

STANDARDS

- **California Health Education Content Standard 4 - 4.2.G (3rd grade):** Identify how to show respect for individual differences.
- **California Health Education Content Standard 1 - 1.6.G (5th grade):** Recognize that there are individual differences in growth and development, physical appearance, and gender roles.
- **CCSS Writing:** Text Type and Purposes #1, Production and Distribution of Writing #4
- **CCSS Speaking and Listening:** Comprehension and Collaboration #1, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas #4-6

TIME

This lesson is divided into two 30-40 minute lessons:

- Lesson One: Introduction and Read Aloud
- Lesson Two: Writing Activity and Closure

MATERIALS NEEDED

- I Am Jazz by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- Whiteboard or chart paper, markers
- Writing paper and pencils
- OPTIONAL: PBS website: <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/two-spirits/map.html>

¹ Updated January 29, 2020

VOCABULARY

Define key words for discussion:

- **Acceptance:** The act or state of being supportive or welcoming of others. It is especially important to show acceptance to people different than you.
- **Ally:** A person who works against oppression by supporting those in an oppressed group. Anyone can be an ally
- **Cisgender:** When the label given to describe a person's body (given to a person by doctors and caregivers) is *the same* as the label used by a person to describe them self.
- **Gender Assigned at Birth (K-2):** A guess that grown-ups make to label bodies of babies when born.
- **Gender Assigned at Birth (3-5):** The label adults use to categorize bodies based on their outside appearance. This can include female, male or intersex.
- **Gender Identity:** Gender is a person's internal sense of themselves and the label they use to describe who they are (for example: boy, girl, nonbinary, transgender, cisgender, etc).
- **Gender Role:** Cultural ways of how men and women are "supposed" to act.
- **Nonbinary:** When a person's gender is not limited to being a girl or boy
- **Stereotype:** A generalization, usually negative, about a person based a certain characteristic. The generalization is then attributed to everyone who may fit into the group.
- **Transgender:** When the label given at birth to describe a person's body (given by doctors and caregivers) is *different* than the label used by a person to describe them self.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

Ground rules: Introduce or review classroom rules in order to create a safe place for students to discuss the book. Consider using the ground rules listed below:

- Respect other people in the class
- One person speaks at a time
- Everyone has the "right to pass" if someone doesn't want to talk
- Everyone will have a chance to speak

LESSON ONE

Introduction: Transgender

Post and review the vocabulary words for this lesson. Emphasize the fact that although for most people their biological sex will fit with their gender identity for some people this is not the case. The prefix *trans-* means across or through. **Transgender** is the term we use for someone whose gender identity (how someone feels inside about being a boy, girl, nonbinary) is different than the label used to describe that person at birth.

This information may be new and sensitive for some students. Provide an opportunity for them to share in a safe space. Pose one or two of the questions below and allow students a quick write or Think-Pair-Share:

What are you thinking about right now?

What is your reaction to the word 'transgender'?

What does this remind you of?

Are you aware of transgender people in media? in your community?

Optional: Transgender people are found in all cultures around the world and in many animal species. If time allows, show students examples of this to facilitate their understanding and provide images and a contextual background.

You may use this interactive PBS website to gather more information:

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/two-spirits/map.html>

Read Aloud

1. Introduce the book, I Am Jazz.
 - *Keeping our ideas about gender in mind, let's listen to Jazz's story and how she knew from a very young age that the label used to describe her (body) at birth did not match how she is feeling inside.*
2. Read I Am Jazz, pausing for discussion questions along the way. Questions can be discussed as a think-pair-share or whole group.
 - (p.1-6) Jazz is introduced. She is a typical little girl, seems happy, has fun with her friends, etc. *What are your thoughts about Jazz so far?*
 - (p.8) We find out Jazz is transgender. *How do your feelings about Jazz change when you learn this?*
 - (p.13) Jazz's parents let her wear dresses at home but not out in public. *Why do you think they did that? If you were Jazz, how would you feel in that situation? What would you do if you were the parent?*
 - Throughout the book Jazz says things like, "I'm not exactly like them... It didn't feel normal... Pretending felt like a lie..." *Have you ever been in a situation where you felt like you were "faking" it because of people expectations?*
 - (p.22) Jazz is teased because she is "different." *What other reasons are kids bullied in school for being different?*
3. Being an **ally**
 - *Why do people make fun of Jazz, or other people, when they are different?*
 - *Have you ever seen this happen, what did you do?*
 - *What does it mean to be an ally and how could you show support for a friend who is being bullied?*
 - **EL Sentence Frames:**
 - People make fun of people who are different because _____.
 - If I saw _____ I would _____.
 - Being an ally means _____. You can be an ally by _____.

LESSON TWO

Writing Activity: "Dear Jazz..."

Revisit the ideas discussed about gender and the story of Jazz from the last lesson. Ask students to imagine that they are friends with Jazz in school and she has come to them and shared her feelings and wants your advice. *Write a letter to Jazz telling her what you think she should do.*

- *Should she continue to wear girls' clothes because that's what makes her comfortable or wear boys' clothes because that is what society expects?*
- *How should she handle the bullying from other students?*
- *Tell her what you will do to help.*

This activity may also be assigned as homework.

Closure and Wrap Up

Students may express or be exposed to gender diversity in many different ways. Wanting to conform can be stressful for young people as they figure out what makes them comfortable. The important thing is to be **accepting** of all types of people and the decisions they make. Discuss what it means to be an **ally**. Use examples from their letters to Jazz when students wrote about what they would do to help. Emphasize that being an ally takes action.

ASSESSMENT

The objective will have been met if the student is able to:

- Understand transgender and identify an example of gender diversity
- Identify what it means to be an ally and accept differences
- Write the meaning of transgender and ally

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

LGBTQ Support Services, SFUSD

website: www.sfusd.edu/lgbtq – [Teaching Guide](#) (link embedded)

Keywords: LGBTQ family, gender, diversity, curriculum, approved vocabulary

Transgender Youth Rap

<https://youtu.be/xLPXE8NboAs>.

Keywords: transgender, trans, youth, rap,

LGBTQ History – Our Family Coalition

<http://www.lgbtqhistory.org/lesson-plans/>

Keywords: gender, equity, bullying, lessons, diversity, history

Trans Kids Purple Rainbow Foundation

<http://www.transkidspurplerainbow.org/>

Keywords: I am Jazz, book, videos, stories, trans kids, Jazz Jennings