

English

Mark Jennett, Editor *Out in School*

Wendy Anderson, Progress Leader, Year 8

Leon Manandhar, Advanced Skills Teacher in English

Theme

Further ideas

References

Web:

Wikipedia and other sites such as www.afterellen.com and www.afterelton.com are useful for finding lists of, and information about, LGBT authors, films, characters and so on.

Activities

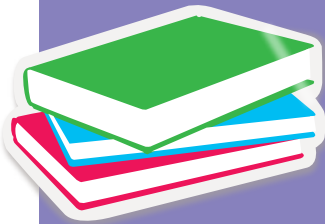
Set texts

Twelfth Night, *As You Like It* and *The Merchant of Venice* all feature female characters who disguise themselves as men.

- What are their reasons for doing this?

Viola becomes involved in a potential lesbian relationship when Olivia falls in love with 'Cesario'. At one point Rosalind is pretending to be a man who is in turn pretending to be a woman.

- What can the decisions these women make tell us about their place in society and why people might try to hide their true gender or sexual orientation?



LGB writers

Christopher Marlowe, Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Jackie Kay, Jeanette Winterson, Truman Capote, Carol Ann Duffy, U.A Fanthorpe, Christopher Isherwood, Walt Whitman, James Baldwin, Colm Tóibín, Patricia Highsmith, Daphne du Maurier, Manuel Puig...

- How has their work been informed by their sexuality and society's reaction to it?
- What wider lessons can we learn from this about how a writer's personal experience might influence their work in ways that are not immediately apparent?

Many of Tennessee Williams' plays do not contain many explicitly LGB characters.

- However, has his sexual orientation had an impact on his depiction of 'straight' people?
- Is there such a thing as a LGB (or black or female) sensibility in literature?

LGB characters

"The guy ain't right...he has blond hair...he looks like a chorus girl...he sings...he cooks. If ya close the paper real fast, you could blow him over!" is how Eddie Carbone describes his wife's immigrant cousin Rodolpho in Arthur Miller's *A View From the Bridge*. Yet it is Eddie who attempts to 'prove' that Rodolpho is gay by kissing him.

Although none of the characters is acknowledged to be LGB, the play's treatment of homosexuality (and that kiss) were so shocking in 1955 that it was originally banned by the Lord Chamberlain.

- What do plays like this – along with others containing explicit LGB characters like *The Children's Hour*, *A Taste of Honey* or *The Killing Of Sister George* – tell us about human sexuality and society's reaction to LGB people?
- How do more recent examples show what has (or hasn't) changed? (For example *Queer As Folk*, *My Night With Reg*, *The L Word*, *Desert Hearts*, *The Crying Game*, *Sugar Rush*, *The History Boys* or *Brokeback Mountain*)