

# LOVE, SIMON



EVERYONE DESERVES  
A GREAT LOVE STORY

COMING OUT MARCH 2018

## **LOVE, SIMON: COMING OUT & INVISIBLE IDENTITIES**

### **GRADE LEVEL**

9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, English Language Arts

### **LOVE, SIMON OVERVIEW**

Everyone deserves a great love story. But for seventeen-year old Simon Spier it's a little more complicated: he's yet to tell his family or friends he's gay and he doesn't actually know the identity of the anonymous classmate he's fallen for online. Resolving both issues proves hilarious, terrifying and life-changing. Directed by Greg Berlanti (*Dawson's Creek*, *Brothers & Sisters*), written by Isaac Aptaker & Elizabeth Berger (*This is Us*), and based on Becky Albertalli's acclaimed novel, *LOVE, SIMON* is a funny and heartfelt coming-of-age story about the thrilling ride of finding yourself and falling in love.

### **LESSON OVERVIEW**

In this lesson, students who have watched *Love, Simon* will compare Simon and Blue by creating life-sized character studies of each, decorating them with character traits and identity terms. As a class, students will discuss identity characteristics and the idea of "invisible identities." Students will write to the characters, showing support for them and sharing ways that they are similar and different from them. To conclude, students generate a list of suggestions for supporting LGBTQ people who want to be out and visible in their schools, but may not yet be comfortable to do so.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Students will compare identities and traits of main characters with a focus on "invisible" identities and identify factors that affect people's decision to come out as LGBTQ.

Students will reflect on their own identities around race, sexuality, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and ability, in order to strengthen their capacity to empathize, connect, and collaborate with a diverse group of people.

Students will demonstrate allyship and commitment to an inclusive learning environment by discussing ideas for supporting LGBTQ people who want to be out and visible in their school.

### **THINGS TO PREP & TOOLS NEEDED**

Large butcher paper, markers, lined paper, chart paper, pencils

*As much of this lesson centers around "coming out" or sharing about LGBTQ identity and other "invisible" identities, you may want to have students read or use GLSEN's Coming Out Guide for support: [glsen.org/comingout](http://glsen.org/comingout).*

### **TIME**

60 minutes

## ALL ABOUT THE ACTIVITY

1. (5 minutes) Introduce the lesson to students familiar with *Love, Simon* stating, “Today we will focus on the main characters Simon and Blue, and their identities around race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and ability. We’ll also talk more about ‘invisible identities’, or identities people need to ‘come out’ about or share in order to be recognized.”
2. (20 minutes) Divide the class into partners or small groups. They should have their notes from the movie and two pieces of butcher paper large enough for your students to lie down and trace an outline. Students work together while one student lies on the paper and another traces their outline. They should repeat this so that each pair or group has two student outlines labeled “Simon” and “Blue,” respectively.

*Note: The butcher paper can be placed on a table to help students with mobility challenges better reach their classmates for tracing. Alternatively, students can use smaller paper or paper that is pre-outlined to best meet individual needs.*

- Ask students to add identity words, labels, and/or symbols for the character’s race, sexuality, income, religion, and ability, as well as adjectives, feelings, and other character traits. Ask students to consider which identities might be “invisible” and to write these on the inside of the character’s outline. Ask students to draw or write traits, identities, or other descriptors that are visible on the outside of the outline.
    - For example: for Simon, students may write “white” on the outside of the outline, and “gay” on the inside. Other identities, adjectives, and traits for Simon include *able-bodied, brother, two-parent family, Christmas-observer, high-income or upper-middle class family, creative, masculine, coffee-drinker*. Students can also include feelings at different parts of the story, for example, “scared when he was outed” or “furious when he was teased for being gay.”
    - Identities, adjectives, and traits for Blue include *Jewish, gay, divorced family, upper-middle class family, Oreo-lover, outgoing*.
  - Display the discussion questions for students to consider as they work on their character comparisons. Tell students to start reflecting on their own identities, as they’ll be including their own experiences and identities later in the lesson.
3. (10 minutes) Come together as a whole group to discuss these characters, with a focus on the idea of “invisible identities” vs. visible identities, and ask the students:
    - What words, labels, and symbols did you write for Blue and Simon’s identities around race, sexuality, income, religion, or ability? Where and how did you choose to represent them, and why?
    - Simon is “outed” by another high school student, while Blue decides to come out. You should never share people’s “invisible” identities without their permission. Everyone has a right to share their identities on their own terms. How are Simon and Blue’s experiences with coming out different and similar? How do you think other identities or factors impacted Simon and Blue’s difficulty coming out? What parts of Simon’s identity and privileges help him to navigate being “outed”?
    - “Heteronormativity” is the assumption that heterosexual identity is the norm. Simon complains that it’s unfair that he has to “come out” or share his sexual identity when “straight” or heterosexual people don’t. What other identities do people sometimes have to “come out” about? How does heteronormativity and assumptions around sexual identity affect people who don’t identify as

heterosexual but rather lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, or queer?

- While Simon and Blue are able to keep their sexual orientation “invisible” for most of the movie, their classmate Ethan is already known as the “resident gay.” What identities does Ethan hold? How might Ethan’s gender expression, or the ways he communicates his gender to others, including mannerisms, clothing, hair styles, etc., shape his experience with “coming out” or sharing his sexual identity? [See GLSEN’s Gender Discussion Guide for more information.](#)

4. (10 minutes) Guide students to reflect on their own identities around race, sexuality, income, religion, and ability. Have students divide a notebook or blank paper into six sections to generate words, labels, and/or symbols for their own identities for race, sexuality, income, religion, ability, and “other.” Tell students that this reflection can be done privately, and that what they decide to share in the writing assignment is up to them. After a few minutes of reflection, have students write individually to Simon or Blue as if it is the day after the school play and carnival. Following the pen-pal theme of *Love, Simon*, have students create imaginative letters, emails, blog posts, or text exchanges with one of the characters, showing support and sharing some similarities and differences as a friend.
5. (10 minutes) To conclude, tell students, “Actively hiding part of our identities isn’t easy, and doesn’t feel good. It can lead people to feeling depressed and to thinking that there is something wrong with who they are, whom they love, or how they express themselves. Being part of the LGBTQ community is important for many people all over the world, and more people every day are coming out. Still, it’s important that people get to decide for themselves when and if they come out, and who they share that information with.”
  - “People who want to be out as LGBTQ should feel safe in our school.” *[If possible, reference school guidelines and policies that support this. Also, if there are out faculty member who want to be referenced as examples of out educators, check with them beforehand.]*
    - Follow up: “Are there any cases where someone may not want to come out or be visible about a certain part of their identity?”
  - Ask students, “How could someone who wanted to come out about their sexual orientation or gender identity share this part of their identity here at our school? What ways have you seen that people come out? What about with other identities that might require people to ‘come out’ or share?”
  - Ask students, “How can we help make our school safe and inclusive for all students to be open about their identities?” Write their suggestions on the board or on chart paper.

## FOLLOW-UP/EXTENSIONS

1. Use GLSEN's *Love, Simon* Discussion Guide ([glsen.org/lovesimon](https://glsen.org/lovesimon)) to have even more discussions on themes from this film such as safe spaces, cyber-bullying, and consent.
2. This same lesson plan can also be utilized with Becky Albertalli's novel, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*.
3. Continue the discussion around coming out experiences. Some young LGBTQ people are not having the "coming out" moments or process that has been historically necessary because of the challenges to heteronormativity and increased visibility of LGBTQ people through films like *Love, Simon*. Does this resonate with your students? Do they find the act of coming out unnecessary? Or is it still an important aspect in gaining positive visibility for LGBTQ-identified people?
4. Coming out around gender identity is an important topic to discuss, and one that may be a different or separate experience from coming out around sexual orientation. Go to [glsen.org/trans](https://glsen.org/trans) to watch videos and find resources on trans identity and gender terminology. Be sure to ground your explorations and stories in trans voices that represent a variety of experiences.

## TAGS

movies, LGBTQ, race, ability, coming out, love simon.

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COMING OUT  
IN THEATERS MARCH 16



DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS ACTIVITY? TELL US HOW IT WENT AND WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER! EMAIL US AT [STUDENTS@GLSEN.ORG](mailto:STUDENTS@GLSEN.ORG) OR [EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG](mailto:EDUCATORS@GLSEN.ORG). FIND MORE RESOURCES AND DISCUSSIONS ABOUT *LOVE, SIMON* ONLINE AT [GLSEN.ORG/LOVESIMON](https://glsen.org/lovesimon).