

SPARKS

Write with Pride

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GRADES 7-12

TYPE

POETRY

Students consider the influence that labels hold and write poetry to become empowered to describe themselves however they want.

WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

In this Spark, your class will create an open and safe space, free of judgment, for discussion and creativity. Students then consider the meaning and effect of labels and write portrait poems, where they can use writing to become empowered to describe themselves however they want.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Share the YouTube video clip [“Coming Out: I am Gay, I am Human”](#) with students.

Next, give students five minutes to freewrite on what labels mean to them, specifically when it comes to LGBTQIA+ issues (or any other letter they feel should be included in that acronym). Some questions to help students get started:

- How do labels make you feel?
- Do you like them? Hate them?
- Does it depend on the label or who is using it?

From there, ask students to discuss their thoughts in small groups and share their writing if they want.

Then discuss the video and student thoughts in a large group:

- What did you think?
- What stood out to you?
- What was the overall message the video was sending?
- Does anyone agree or disagree?

Introduce Portrait Poems

Tell students that they are going to write their own “I Am” poems, called Portrait Poems, so that they use writing to become empowered to describe ourselves however we want. This doesn’t have to focus solely on LGBTQIA+ pieces of their lives; the poem should address any and all parts of their identities. Show examples of Portrait Poems, of which a variety of examples can be found here:

<http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/portrait.html>

Portrait Poem Writing

Now, it’s time for students to write their own portrait poems. You can provide templates that students can use if they want. Students can write multiple poems exploring different parts of themselves.

To conclude, students who want to share can share a few lines of their poem.

Or, do a **bonus activity**: Write a list poem using one of the following phrases as the beginning of each sentence of your poem:

1. I wish people knew that I...
2. Being myself is....
3. I am proud because...

MATERIALS

- Internet, projector, writing utensils
- Poem Templates — Handout