

VIDEO

Write With . . . Life Stories: Excavate Your Story with Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Lewis

by 826 National and Life
Stories

GRADES 9–12

TYPE

NARRATIVE
POETRY

PRESENTED BY

LIFE STORIES

In this lesson, you will learn about Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Lewis’s life, an idea she calls “fierce-love,” and the importance of learning to love yourself.

WHAT YOUR STUDENTS WILL LEARN

About [Life Stories](#)

Life Stories is a non-profit media organization that creates and distributes documentaries, interviews, and educational resources about people whose lives inspire meaningful change. These stories address issues of civics, history, politics, the arts and culture by shining the spotlight on relatable human stories of purpose and meaning in times of change. Life Stories provides open access to all their content for communities and classrooms through their curated website and YouTube channel.

About [The Thread](#)

The Thread is a new documentary interview series by Life Stories, exploring what it means to live a purpose-driven life through conversations with multi-faceted people who have helped shape our society. Each 30-minute episode takes viewers on a personal journey into the life of extraordinary people who candidly share their triumphs and failures. *The Thread* is available on the Life Stories website and YouTube channel, and as a podcast across all major platforms. Teaching

The Thread brings the series into the classroom with episode lessons designed to strengthen social emotional learning and media literacy skills and expand the scope of subject matter in Social Studies and English Language Arts. Future seasons of *The Thread* will include similar curricular support.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Introduction:

In this video, Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Lewis recalls how difficult childhood experiences shaped her commitment to activism. She shares her belief in the interconnectedness of humanity, advocates for conscious voting and learning from diverse perspectives, emphasizes the importance of self-love as a foundation for “fierce-love,” and acknowledges the power of individuals to make a positive impact to change the world. Please visit “[Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Lewis: Finding Wisdom in Pain](#),” to see the full lesson created by Life Stories.

Content Notes:

- In this lesson, students are instructed to watch the parts of the video that are relevant to their writing. If you decide to watch the full video, please note that the beginning of this video contains mature content that may not be appropriate for younger viewers.
 - We suggest you screen the video beforehand for topics that might need more historical or cultural context to help students access the full meaning of the speaker’s story. [The lesson](#) provided by Life Stories offers discussion questions to help your students dig deeper.
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STEP 1

To begin, watch the video from 19:21–28:01. Read this quote, and then answer the following questions in your writing journal:

Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Lewis said, “. . . being curious about yourself grows your muscle for being curious about others, and that curiosity for people who are different from you is the foundation for fierce-love and advocacy work.”

**What does “fierce-love” mean to you? What does “being curious about others” mean to you?
How do you think they connect?**

STEP 2

One aspect of fierce-love that Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Lewis mentions is the act of knowing yourself while staying awake to the parts of your identity that are ever-changing. It’s in this state of self-awareness that you develop empathy and natural curiosity for others; that empathy for others will fuel your advocacy work—because you’ve chosen to love others fiercely, without judgment, you are better equipped to see how you can support them.

The work of fierce-love begins with fiercely loving yourself. Next, you will begin exploring parts of your self-identity, using the Starburst Identity Chart on page 1 of the [Excavate Your Story—Handout](#). Write your name in the gray box. Then, write words and phrases that describe elements of your identity at the ends of the lines. Feel free to add more lines. Below are some components of self-identity to help you brainstorm; however, only use words and phrases that resonate with you, your identity, and your experiences:

- Your background (e.g., race, ethnicity, biological gender, gender expression, religion, place of birth)
- Your hobbies (e.g., soccer fan, theater kid, animal lover)
- Your interests (e.g., the music you listen to, the TV shows and movies you watch, the subjects you know a lot about)

- The roles you have (e.g., friend, sister, uncle, cousin)

STEP 3

After you've completed your identity chart, pause for a moment and read the elements of your identity that you called out. Answer the reflection questions on page 2 of the handout.

Then, return to your identity chart and circle 3–5 of the identity words and phrases you wrote down. Try to select a mix of the identities you already know you love and the identities you are still learning about. Then, find the Your Identities Chart on page 3 of the handout. In the first column, write the identity words and phrases you circled. In the second column, write what you love about that identity. In the third column, write about what power that identity gives you.

STEP 4

Finally, write a poem or a narrative about who you are and the power you possess. Write your piece in your writing journal. Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- **Poem:** Start each stanza of your poem with “I am [identity word or phrase]” and then fill out the rest of the lines with the information you brainstormed on page 3 of the handout. Try to include a simile or a metaphor that describes how you feel about this identity. Example:

I am a theater kid.

Before every show, I am a candle waiting to be lit

The audience's applause energizes me

To perform my best every night.

- **Narrative:** Choose one of your identity words or phrases and write about a time when that identity helped you choose fierce-love. Try to include a question about your identity that you didn't know you had.

STEP 5

Finally, reflect on a phrase that Rev. Dr. Lewis said in the video: “excavate your story.” The word *excavate* means “uncover.” **Do you feel like you began excavating your story? What will you do next? How will deepening your understanding of yourself help you engage in acts of fierce-love?** Write your reflections in your writing journal.

MATERIALS

- Finding Wisdom in Pain with Rev. Jacqueline Lewis – *The Thread* video
- [Excavate Your Story—Handout](#)
- Writing journal and writing utensil