



INBETWEEN

A LETTER
TO LOVE

A FREE
EDU GUIDE

BEN
IN BLOOM

THROUGH OUR EYES

SHORT FILMS FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH **BY LGBTQ+ YOUTH**

IT GETS BETTER®

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Letter from the Writer

It is truly magical to get to witness the creativity, art, and storytelling of LGBTQ+ youth. It is even more magical for these young people to share their heart with us in such raw and authentic ways. The magic is tenfold when LGBTQ+ youth come together, witness each other's art, and create a plan to share this art with others. And that's exactly what happened here.

Three of It Gets Better's [Youth Voices](#) alumni (LGBTQ+ youth ambassadors who team up with our organization to share their story with the world) independently worked on short films about their lives as queer teenagers. Then, our Youth Voices cohort of 2025 came together to watch these films, discuss their content and impact, and created their own discussion questions and activities for the films to be used in educational or community-based settings.

These queer teens know what they want to share with their peers. They know what messages they want you to walk away with. And they're making it happen through art, film, storytelling, and behind-the-scenes resources, through lessons and activities.

This is a true example of "by queer youth, for queer youth" and I couldn't be more excited for it to be out in the world, so you get to witness this magic too.

Raelee Sweet (they/them)

Assistant Manager of Education
It Gets Better

Raelee Sweet is a seasoned LGBTQ+ educator, community organizer, and youth worker, currently serving as the Assistant Manager of Education at [It Gets Better](#). They were recently featured in [The Advocate's 2025 Thriving Under Thirty](#).

EduGuide Overview

This EduGuide consists of 3 lessons, each of which corresponds to a short film from one of our Youth Voices.

These lessons can be used together to form a unit of study, or they can serve as individual supplements to larger units on civil rights, LGBTQ+ history, identity, etc. We recommend using this guide to inspire larger conversations about queerness and acceptance.

Short Film/Video #1 – [Ben in Bloom](#)



A short film that tells the story of Ben (now Stella), a non-binary and queer teenager from the contentious Bucks County, Pennsylvania school district. In this film, she weaves a heartfelt tapestry of her past, reliving the moments and people that shaped her into a fearless LGBTQ+ advocate.

Short Film/Video #2 – [a letter to love](#)



A short film by Violet Chin that explores the struggles of coming out and delivers a powerful message of self-acceptance, love, and the strength of the queer community.

Short Film/Video #3 – [Inbetween](#)



A trans short film written and directed by Eli Press-Reynolds that follows Julian, a transgender male teenager who, while struggling to fit in among his cisgender peers, discovers through a trans support group that he doesn't need to conform to be accepted and understood.

Time Needed Each individual video and accompanying lesson can be taught in a single class period (about 45 minutes), though you may want to factor in an additional 30 to 60 minutes for any extension activities. To do all three, plus the culminating activity, as a unit would require 4+ hours total.

Audience This EduGuide is intended for middle and high school students between the ages of 13–18, though we welcome you to adapt it for younger and older audiences if you believe it's appropriate to do so. We hope this guide is inviting for both LGBTQ+ people and allies alike.

Setting These lessons can be used in small or large groups. Some connector activities and some group activities may be best suited for a small group, so if the lesson is facilitated with a larger group, divide the large group into small groups (no more than 6–8 students) to complete the activity.

While we encourage in-person discussions, all activities included below can also be conducted in a virtual environment. Facilitators will want to make use of break-out rooms for smaller group activities, with shared documents or online boards to facilitate collaboration.

Common Core Standards

Production and Distribution of Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-12.6

Range of Writing

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-12.10

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-12.7

Comprehension and Collaboration

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-12.1-3

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-12.4-6

Participant Support

We encourage you to make these workshops absolutely voluntary. We think a basic agreement for the space of these workshops should be that everyone is here because they have decided to be here and anyone can choose not to participate in a part of the lesson.

Additionally, depending on the experiences shared by students during the lesson, individual follow up may be needed. As students share challenges they currently face or anticipate facing, they may need to have individual discussions for support and intervention. If a school counselor is facilitating the lesson, plan an individual session to follow up with the student to determine the level of support they need. If a teacher or other educator is facilitating the lesson, report the concern to a school counselor who can follow-up with the student individually. If the student has an individualized education program (IEP) or receives any additional support, be sure to include special education teachers or support systems in the conversation. Let the student know you are sharing the concern so trust is not broken.

Additional Resources

- It Gets Better - [Videos](#)
- It Gets Better - [LGBTQ+ Glossary](#)
- LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health Web-App - [imi.guide](#)
- American Psychology Association (APA) - [Toolbox to Promote Healthy LGBT Youth](#)
- Advocates for Youth - [Youth Activist Toolkit](#)



Launching the Unit

Materials Needed

- Paper
- Writing utensils

Community Agreements

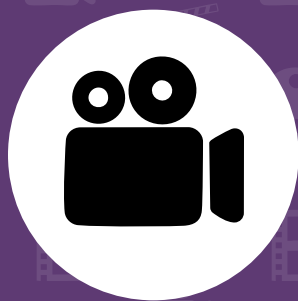
Conversations in this and all It Gets Better EduGuides will require maturity and sensitivity. Staying curious, while keeping all comments respectful, will be the key to a successful learning experience. If you have not already established these or similar guidelines in your learning environment, consider soliciting student ideas for community guidelines and agreeing to the shared expectations. Once established, please be mindful and remind students of these agreements before each lesson.

Total Time

15 minutes

Overview & Activities

- 1. Say:** "If you were to make a short film about your life, what would the title be? Who would star in it? What songs would be in the soundtrack? Write out your answers on your paper and then share with the person next to you."
- 2. Allow time for participants to write and share their responses.**
- 3. Say:** "Imagine you've made your short film. What do you want people to feel after watching it? What do you want them to learn from it? What do you think the reaction would be? Write out your answers on your paper and then share with the person next to you."
- 4. Allow time for participants to write and share their responses.**
- 5. Say:** "In this unit, we are going to be watching short films made by and about LGBTQ+ teens, from a few alumni of It Gets Better's Youth Voices. And, we'll be discussing the films using questions and activities created entirely by LGBTQ+ teens who were part of It Gets Better's Youth Voices Class of 2025."



Episode/Lesson #1

Ben in Bloom (Stella)

Objectives

- Watch a short film about an LGBTQ+ teen.
- Discuss one of the following topics: self expression + self acceptance, family + allyship, or third spaces.
- Create a poster illustrating and/or advocating for the ideal scenario of their topic.
- Present on their topic and poster to the rest of the group.

Relevant Concepts/Vocabulary

- [Allyship](#)
- [Chosen Family](#)
- [Inclusive](#)
- [AIDS / HIV](#)
- [Swing state](#)
- [Third spaces](#)

Teacher Preparation

- Watch the short film and preview the activities in advance to see if there are any areas or concepts you may need to clarify for your students.
- Print Printout #1 (Page 19) and cut into strips
- Gather materials (below).

Total Time

45 minutes

Materials/Supplies Needed

- SHORT FILM/VIDEO: Ben In Bloom - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGecOjURKgQ&feature=youtu.be>
- 3 poster-sized papers or giant post-its
- Printout #1 (page 19), cut into strips
- Markers



Welcome & Agreements 5 min

Entire Group

Welcome participants to the space and ask a student to review group agreements that have been established. The facilitator then shares the lesson plan's objectives and key concepts/vocabulary from above.

Let's Learn 16 min

Entire Group

Have the group watch the short film/video [Ben In Bloom](#).

NOTE: The main individual featured in the film uses the name and pronouns Ben, they/them in the film, but now goes by Stella, she/her. Throughout the Eduguide, we'll be referring to Stella by the name and pronouns she has at the time of writing this (Stella, she/her).

Discussion 14 min

3 groups

- 1. Separate** participants into three groups and assign one topic to each group.
- 2. Give** each group their assigned topic sheet of questions (Printout #1 on page 19).
- 3. Say:** "In your groups, discuss the questions assigned to you. When you're finished, create a poster based on the prompt at the bottom of the page. You will present your poster to the entire group at the end of class"

Group #1

Self Expression + Self Acceptance

In the film, you get to see how Stella's self expression and self acceptance has evolved over time.

Let's talk about it!

- How do you express yourself day-to-day?
- What advice would you give to someone who is struggling to accept part of their identity?
- What does the most true version of you look like? What would it look like if you didn't worry at all about judgment, family, society, gender roles, etc?

Activity: As a group, create a PSA (public service announcement)-style poster encouraging people to express themselves how they want. Include elements of your own style and self expression. (See examples at <https://transstudent.org/graphics/>)

Group #2

Family + Allyship

In the film, Stella is surrounded by allies and community like her Mom, Marlene, and her friends.

Let's talk about it!

- Who do you turn to when you're struggling, and how do they make you feel supported?
- How do you support the people you care about?
- What does "chosen family" mean to you? What elements do you look for in a chosen family?

Activity: As a group, draw a "dream chosen family." Draw out what role each person plays in the community. Show how they support each other and what makes them a good chosen family.

Group #3

Third Spaces

In the film, Stella finds community at the Rainbow Room. This could be considered a "third space" which is an informal, public gathering place outside of home and work that fosters community and social interaction, like coffee shops, libraries, or parks.

Let's talk about it!

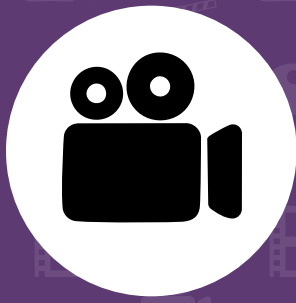
- Why was Stella's "third space" so important?
- What is a space outside of work or school that makes you feel comfortable?
- What are the qualities that make a space safe and inclusive for you?

Activity: As a group, design your own "third space" on a large poster. What does it look like? How is it arranged? What does it include? Note how it fosters community and social interaction. Highlight elements that make your third space LGBTQ+ friendly and accessible.

Presentation --- 10 min

Entire Group

Have each group share about their topic and the discussion they had, and present their poster to the whole room.



Episode/Lesson #2

a letter to love (Violet)

Objectives

- Watch a short film made entirely by teens.
- Discuss topics of self love, understanding love, and growth/change.
- Write a letter to or about love, or to their younger or future self.

Relevant Concepts/Vocabulary

- [Self love](#)
- [Coming out](#)

Teacher Preparation

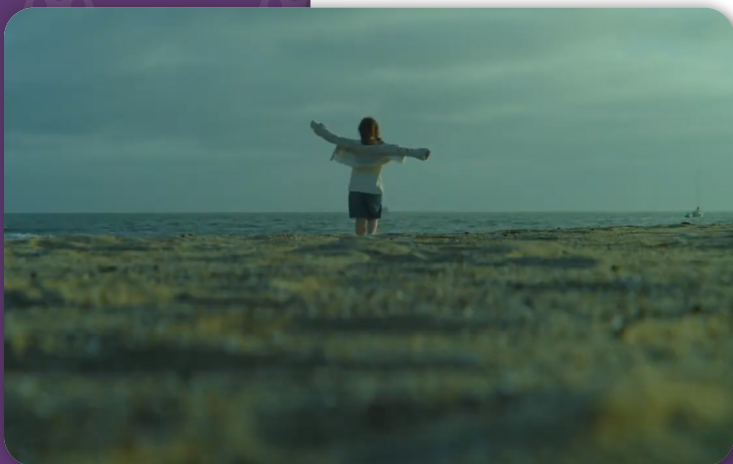
- Watch the short film and preview the activities in advance to see if there are any areas or concepts you may need to clarify for your students.
- Print Printout #2 (page 20) and cut into strips; post strips around the room.
- Gather materials (below).

Total Time

45 minutes

Materials/Supplies Needed

- SHORT FILM/VIDEO: a letter to love - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0Yi65hzuA4+>
- Printout #2 (Page 20), cut into strips
- Tape
- Paper and writing utensils for each student



Welcome & Agreements 5 min

Entire Group

Welcome participants to the space and ask a student to review group agreements that have been established. The facilitator then shares the lesson plan's objectives and key concepts/vocabulary from above.

Let's Learn 3 min

Entire Group

Have the group watch the short film/video [a letter to love](#).

Discussion 16 min

3-5 groups

1. Post the following questions around the room (from Printout #2 on page 20).

- In the film, Violet struggles to accept who and how she loves. What is an aspect of your identity that you struggle to accept? What are ways you're working on accepting this part of yourself?
- In the film, Violet learns to love herself and let herself love. What is a part of your identity that you love? How have you been able to love this part of yourself? What has helped you accept this part of yourself?
- In the film, Violet shares how much she's changed over time. What do you think will change about you? What won't change about you?
- What do you think you have not fully "come out" to yourself about yet? What are you afraid to admit about yourself?
- In the film, Violet wishes she could give advice to her younger self. What advice would you give your younger self?
- How do you show love to yourself and others? How do you show love to yourself and others when you're feeling afraid, uncomfortable, or hopeless?
- In the film, Violet is trying to understand love. What is "love" to you?
- In the film, Violet says "Coming out to others was not as hard as coming out to myself." What do you think she means?

2. Have participants separate into groups of 3-5 and move around the room -OR- print a copy of Printout #2 for each group to spend time discussing 4-6 of the questions.

ACCESSIBILITY – For a more accessible option, have groups sit together, and pass around the papers with questions every couple of minutes.

Letter Writing Activity 16 min

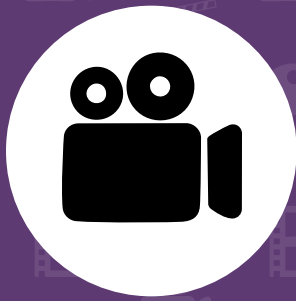
Individual

Share the following prompt with students: “Write your own letter to love. This can mean anything, like your understanding or experience of love, a love letter to your younger self, or a love letter to your future self.”

Debrief 5 min

Entire Group

1. **Ask** students to share with the group how this activity felt to them. Did they learn something new about themselves or their classmates?
2. **OPTIONAL:** Share Violet’s article *Challenging Gender Roles, One School Yard Crush at a Time* and *The Advocate’s Meet the young L.A. activist fighting for LGBTQ+ and AAPI people’s rights* as extra reading materials or as homework.



Episode/Lesson #3

inbetween (Eli)

Objectives

- Watch a short film made entirely by teens.
- Journal and discuss topics on gender and support systems.
- Explore a web-based mental health tool for LGBTQ+ young people and discuss their experience.

Relevant Concepts/Vocabulary

- [Trans/transgender](#)
- [Cis/cisgender](#)
- [Support group](#)

Teacher Preparation

- Watch the short film and preview the activities in advance to see if there are any areas or concepts you may need to clarify for your students.
- Gather materials (below).

Total Time

45 minutes

Materials/Supplies Needed

- SHORT FILM/VIDEO: inbetween - <https://youtu.be/aSvWRVftuE?si=g0y4zuHpYRUczlC7>
- WEBAPP: [imi.guide](#)
- If your students don't have access to personal devices, either print or present [The Gender Unicorn](#) for the activity in this lesson.



Welcome & Agreements 5 min

Entire Group

Welcome participants to the space and ask a student to review group agreements that have been established. The facilitator then shares the lesson plan's objectives and key concepts/vocabulary from above.

Let's Learn 16 min

Entire Group

Have the group watch the short film/video [inbetween](#).

Journal & Discussion 14 min

3 groups

1. **Share** each of the questions below to the group, allowing time for participants to journal their responses.
2. At the end of each "topic" **allow** participants to share their journal responses with a person close to them, and then have volunteers share with the group.

Topic #1

Gender

- What does gender mean to you? How do traditional gender roles differ, if at all?
- Why is it important to think about and discuss "gender" as a concept?
- Should we dismantle gender roles and, if so, how?

Topic #2

Safe Spaces

- What kinds of safe spaces are out there for queer youth, and if you're in one, how can you make it more welcoming for new people?
- What makes a space safe? What makes a space unsafe?
- Why is it important to have inclusive spaces?

Activity 10 min

Entire Group

- 1. Say** “Now we’re going to try out [imi](#) (pronounced “I’m me”)! imi is a webapp that features a series of guides, designed with and for LGBTQ+ teens, to help explore and affirm their identity. It’s free, backed by science, and helps teens learn practical methods to cope with sexual and gender minority stress in ways that are helpful, relevant, inclusive and joyful. However you identify, you can use imi to learn and explore. Spend some time in the ‘Gender’ modules and then we’ll share about our experiences after.”
- 2. Have** each student visit [imi.guide](#), and participate in one of the modules under “gender.”

Dig Deeper: For more activities and facilitator guidance on imi, check out our [Official Eduguide](#) for imi.

ACCESSIBILITY – *If your students do not have access to their own devices, you can print out or show them [The Gender Unicorn](#) and have them write or think about where they identify on each “spectrum”. Please read the Instructions for The Gender Unicorn available at the same link before doing this activity.*

Presentation 10 min

Entire Group

Ask volunteers to share what their experience was like on imi. Did they learn anything new about themselves?



Culminating Activity

Materials Needed

- Paper and writing utensils.
- Simple storyboards: why and how to make them:
<https://www.screenskills.com/starting-your-career/lesson-plans-and-classroom-resources/simple-storyboards-why-and-how-to-make-them/>

Community Agreements

Welcome students to the space and **ask** a student to review group agreements that have been established.

Total Time

30-45 minutes



Ben in Bloom



a letter to love



inbetween

Overview & Activity 30 min

In pairs, small groups, & individually

1. **Say** “Say: “If you were to make a short film about your life, what would it look like? What are important scenes that you would want to include in your short film? What message would you want to convey with your short film?”
2. **Have** participants review [Simple storyboards](#): why and how to make them on their own or with a partner. Then have volunteers share with the entire group what they’ve learned.
3. **Instruct** participants to create a storyboard for a scene in the short film of their life.
4. **Have** participants share their storyboards in small groups of 2-3 people.

Discuss 15 min

Entire Group

Close out with a larger discussion about the unit as a whole. Questions to consider:

- What was your experience reflecting on gender, identity, love, and support systems during this unit?
- Were certain activities more challenging than others? Why?
- What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about others, either from your peers or from the videos?
- Why is it important to let young people take control of their own stories?
- Do you have any questions?

Printout #1

Cut here - - - - -

Group #1 – Self Expression + Self Acceptance

In the film, you get to see how Stella’s self expression and self acceptance has evolved over time.

Let’s talk about it!

- How do you express yourself day-to-day?
- What advice would you give to someone who is struggling to accept part of their identity?
- What does the most true version of you look like? What would it look like if you didn’t worry at all about judgment, family, society, gender roles, etc?

Activity: As a group, create a PSA (public service announcement)-style poster encouraging people to express themselves how they want. Include elements of your own style and self expression. (See examples at <https://transstudent.org/graphics/>)

Cut here - - - - -

Group #2 – Family + Allyship

In the film, Stella is surrounded by allies and community like her Mom, Marlene, and her friends.

Let’s talk about it!

- Who do you turn to when you’re struggling, and how do they make you feel supported?
- How do you support the people you care about?
- What does “chosen family” mean to you? What elements do you look for in a chosen family?

Activity: As a group, draw a “dream chosen family.” Draw out what role each person plays in the community. Show how they support each other and what makes them a good chosen family.

Cut here - - - - -

Group #3 – Third Spaces

In the film, Stella finds community at the Rainbow Room. This could be considered a “third space” which is an informal, public gathering place outside of home and work that fosters community and social interaction, like coffee shops, libraries, or parks.

Let’s talk about it!

- Why was Stella’s “third space” so important?
- What is a space outside of work or school that makes you feel comfortable?
- What are the qualities that make a space safe and inclusive for you?

Activity: As a group, design your own “third space” on a large poster. What does it look like? How is it arranged? What does it include? Note how it fosters community and social interaction. Highlight elements that make your third space LGBTQ+ friendly and accessible.

Printout #2

Cut here - - - - -

In the film, Violet struggles to accept who and how she loves. What is an aspect of your identity that you struggle to accept? What are ways you're working on accepting this part of yourself?

Cut here - - - - -

In the film, Violet learns to love herself and to let herself love. What is a part of your identity that you love? How have you been able to love this part of yourself? What has helped you accept this part of yourself?

Cut here - - - - -

In the film, Violet shares how much she's changed over time. What do you think will change about you? What won't change about you?

Cut here - - - - -

What do you think you have not fully "come out" to yourself about yet? What are you afraid to admit about yourself?

Cut here - - - - -

In the film, Violet wishes she could give advice to her younger self. What advice would you give your younger self?

Cut here - - - - -

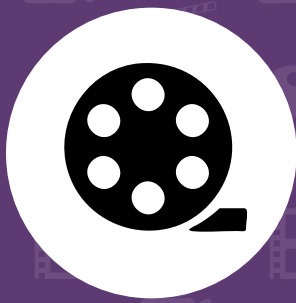
How do you show love to yourself and others? How do you show love to yourself and others when you're feeling afraid, uncomfortable, or hopeless?

Cut here - - - - -

In the film, Violet is trying to understand love. What is "love" to you?

Cut here - - - - -

In the film, Violet says "Coming out to others was not as hard as coming out to myself." What do you think she means?



Conclusion

Final Thoughts

We hope you enjoyed this EduGuide and the activities and resources it presented. This is part of a growing portfolio of materials that help ensure that the uplifting stories crafted and collected by It Gets Better reach LGBTQ+ youth wherever learning takes place. You can help make our EduGuides even better by offering your feedback at itgetsbetter.org/EduFeedback.

Learn more at itgetsbetter.org/education, and for inquiries, email us at education@itgetsbetter.org.

About the It Gets Better

[It Gets Better](https://itgetsbetter.org) is a nonprofit organization on a mission to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe.

Connect & Follow the Organization

Website: www.itgetsbetter.org

Email: info@itgetsbetter.org

Get Help: www.itgetsbetter.org/GetHelp

Facebook: www.facebook.com/itgetsbetter

Instagram (English): www.instagram.com/itgetsbetter

Instagram (Spanish): www.instagram.com/itgetsbetterespanol

TikTok: www.tiktok.com/@itgetsbetter

Tumblr: www.itgetsbetter.tumblr.com

Twitch: www.twitch.tv/itgetsbetter

Twitter: www.twitter.com/ItGetsBetter

YouTube: www.youtube.com/itgetsbetter

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