



**THE NATIONAL
WWI MUSEUM
AND MEMORIAL**

Teacher Guide: Modern Gay Rights and World War I

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In these video clips, historian Dr. Caroline Radesky discusses the role that the First World War played in influencing modern gay rights. She starts by introducing Henry Gerber, who founded the first gay rights organization in the US in the interwar period, and tracks the evolution of (mostly) gay men who may have enlisted in the First World War as a form of suicide only to discover others like themselves, in addition to friendships, lovers, a thriving gay subculture in Europe, and a desire to create a place for themselves in American society. These soldiers returned to find discrimination, entrapment, and even arrest, but still went on to influence postwar changemakers and the modern gay rights movement.

Learning Objective: *As a result of the following work, students will have a greater understanding of the role the experience of the First World War had on American queer soldiers, and how it impacted their ability to influence the modern gay rights movement.*

The work: Students will watch 9 clips from a presentation made by Dr. Caroline Radesky, visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Iowa, for the National WWI Museum and Memorial in 2021. Through the use of a guided worksheet, students will visit reliable websites for additional background, define words and identify terms, and answer pre-, during, and post viewing questions as they view the video clips. A suggestion for an extension activity is also provided.

Grade Levels:	9-12, College
Curricular Standards:	National Council for the Social Studies C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards: D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights. D2.Civ.12.9-12. Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues. D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments

	<p>were shaped by unique circumstances of time & place as well as broader historical contexts.</p> <p>D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.</p> <p>D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.</p> <p>D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.</p> <p>D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people’s perspectives.</p> <p>D2.His.8.9-12. Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.</p> <p>D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.</p>
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All questions in this section are included in the student handout. See the “Student Handouts” section for the questions document. See the “Teacher Tools” section for the answer key.

Essential Question:

How and in what ways did the experience of queer soldiers during the First World War influence the modern gay rights movement?

Note: See student worksheet for questions organized by clip.

Before Viewing Questions:

1. Queer is a word whose meaning has evolved over time. What was the primary definition of queer in 1914?
2. What is another, more recent definition of queer today?
3. Why do you think historians may have difficulty finding sources related to homosexuality from the First World War?

During Viewing Questions:

Henry Gerber

1. Who was Henry Gerber, and why is he important?
2. The queer community and the liberatory thinking that accompanied it was born out of what two elements?

3. What did the US Government give homosexuality by recognizing its existence?

Treatment and US Military Response

4. List 4 examples of 'treatments' for same-sex desire:
5. With the Selective Service Act of 1917, how many US men were drafted into service?
6. How was homosexuality defined by the sexologists of the period?
7. How did the US Military revise the 1806 articles of war in March, 1917?
8. What could some soldiers accused of being homosexual by the US military face?

The Experiences of Queer Soldiers

9. Why did queer men choose to enlist in the military during this period?
10. What were some queer men surprised to find once they met other soldiers both at home and abroad?
11. How did queer men react to one another during the War?

Queerness After the War: Culturally

12. What are the 1920s remembered for?
13. Lesbian nightclubs opened in US cities, such as _____ and _____
14. What is another term for being 'out of the closet'?
15. Companies such as Paramount put out records by lesbian and bisexual artists such as
16. *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall was based on her World War I experience as
17. How did the ending differ from other similar books?
18. As part of what movement did Black and biracial Americans also write about their experiences with sexuality?
19. What served as 'very elaborate celebrations of gender nonconformity'?

Henry Gerber, Part 2

20. What did Henry Gerber decide he wanted to do upon his return to the US after the War?
21. What did he name his organization?
22. Why didn't Chicago's elite join the Society?
23. What two groups were not welcome in the organization?
24. What was the name of their publication?
25. Why did the organization end in 1925?
26. How did Gerber respond?
27. What did Gerber decide to do next?

Conclusion

28. What happened to same-sex desiring culture as a result of the Great Depression?
29. Name two people who were inspired by the work done in the pre-WWII period:

After Viewing Questions:

- A. How do these video clips challenge the prevalent narrative that the modern fight for gay liberation really began during the Second World War?

B. *How and in what ways did the experience of queer soldiers during the First World War influence the modern gay rights movement?*

Extension Activity:

Encourage students to take another one of the groups discussed in Clip 2 (women, Black Americans, workers) and research and analyze the role the First World War played in their fight for greater rights and recognition.

Background Reading(s):	PBS: Milestones in the American Gay Rights Movement
Student Handouts/Worksheets:	Student Worksheet
Teacher Tools:	Student Worksheet Answer Key
Vocabulary List:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Homophile● Suffrage● Sodomy● Court martial● Homosocial● Furlough● Congenital● The Great Migration● Intersectional● Drag (art form)● Mattachine Society