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The Harvey Milk Story

By Kari Krakow and illustrated by David Gardner

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

Guide written by Kari Krakow

About the Book

"On a rainy day in January, on the steps of San Francisco's City Hall, Harvey Milk was sworn into office, the first openly gay elected city official in the United States of America. Harvey Milk had made history."

In making history that day, Minnie Milk's intelligent, energetic and courageous son showed the world that by not being afraid to be yourself, you can give others the courage to be proud of who they are. In this picture-book biography of an important gay-rights figure, Krakow (an elementary school teacher for over twenty years) honestly looks at Milk's life in the broader context of discrimination and hope.

The discussion topics in this guide are meant to help teachers of grades 3 and up in your exploration of the book, its themes, and the life of Harvey Milk.

Thematic Connections

Bullying/Abandonment

- When Harvey was growing up he was afraid to tell his friends and family he was gay. Discuss with students what Harvey feared would happen to him if people found out that he was gay. What were the consequences of Harvey keeping such a big part of himself a secret?
- Ask students under what circumstances have they kept silent about their beliefs, feelings or actions because they feared the response of their peers their family? How did it make them feel to do this?
- Ask students how coming out might be the same or different for young gay people today.

Belonging

- When did Harvey finally feel like he belonged to a community? What conditions made this possible? How did this help Harvey take the risk to be open about who he was and whom he loved? How did it make him feel to be able to do this?
- Discuss why it is important to feel a sense of belonging. What does it feel like to not belong? What makes them feel like they belong? Have they ever "come out" to their peers about beliefs, feelings or actions that set them apart? What prompted or enabled them to take the risk? What were the results?

Discrimination

- When Harvey Milk was a young man, many people were the subject of prejudice and mistreatment. Gays and lesbians were routinely fired from their jobs and evicted from their homes. How do anti-discrimination laws like the one Harvey worked hard to introduce in San Francisco help gay and lesbian people have the same rights as everyone else in their communities?
- Ask students to research what states today have anti-discrimination laws that protect gay and lesbian people. What are the laws of anti-discrimination like in your community?



Hope

- Harvey Milk often spoke about the importance of hope. What message did Minnie Milk give to Harvey that he never forgot, and why was this so important to Harvey? When else does Harvey demonstrate the importance of hope in the story?
- How might Harvey's message help young people today?
- Did Harvey Milk die in vain? What other people in history died for who they were and what they believed? Did they have a message that is remembered after their death? Why is it important to read books like *The Harvey Milk Story*?

Post Reading Activity

- Students can research what events took place in San Francisco after the assassination of Mayor George Moscone and Harvey Milk. What was the outcome of Dan White's trial? What happened in San Francisco when the verdict was announced?

Resources

- For more information about creating supportive and welcoming school communities, contact GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network) at www.glsen.org and the Human Rights Campaign's Welcoming Schools initiative at <http://www.hrc.org/issues/parenting/7201.htm>.
- For more information about supportive family and friends, contact PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) at www.pflag.org.
- For more information about laws protecting gay people, contact Lambda Legal Defense Fund at www.lambdalegal.org.
- For more information about the trial of Dan White and the life of Harvey Milk, see "The Times of Harvey Milk," a film by Rob Epstein and Richard Schmiechen.

Reviews

"Capturing just the right tone for its audience, this is a significant contribution to the genre and a fitting tribute to an ordinary guy turned extraordinary."

— Kirkus Reviews

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Written by Kari Krakow • Illustrated by David Gardner

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