

# LGBT+ History Month

## What is LGBTQ+ History Month and why do we celebrate it?

While LGBTQ+ History Month originated in the US in 1994, It began 11 years later in the UK following on from an initiative that was created by a group of teachers. In 2005, educators and activists Sue Sanders and Paul Patrick organised LGBTQ+ History Month as part of a Schools Out UK project. This is a programme that aims to educate young people about the issues members of the LGBTQ+ community face and to make schools feel inclusive for everyone, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. The event was held in February to coincide with the 2003 abolition of Section 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act.

## What is Section 28?

Section 28, a piece of legislation introduced by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, stated that local authorities were not allowed to "intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality". This piece of legislation prevented teachers from talking about same-sex relationships in schools, forcing teachers to hide their identity or leave their jobs. This scarred a generation of LGBTQ+ people – all at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis, causing more hurt to an already marginalised community. Despite being scrapped in 2000 in Scotland and 2003 in England and Wales, Section 28 still casts a shadow within education and beyond.

## What is the difference between Pride Month and LGBTQ+ History Month?

February is LGBTQ+ History Month, a 28-day celebration to honour lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer achievement and influence on the world. The Month is intended to bring queer history to light in education after this long period of school children growing up hearing nothing positive about LGBTQ+ people and our lives.

Pride Month is focused on honouring the visibility of LGBTQ+ people as well as the movement towards equality. Pride is celebrated in June to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall Riots. Pride Month is observed with parties, parades, concerts, and other events that celebrate queer identity, and it is also a time for raising awareness of ongoing issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community.



## Where is the flag from?

Intersex journalist and media personality Valentino Vecchietti designed the new rendition of the rainbow Pride flag. The flag was officially unveiled by the advocacy group Intersex Equality Rights UK in late May but has since spread virally on social media, continuing a tradition of Pride flags being updated and reimagined.

***“We really need support to gain [equal] rights and access to ethical healthcare which is centred around our needs. And we need non-consensual, non-essential, surgeries and medical interventions in childhood to end.”- Valentino Vecchietti.***

As the new design of the Progress Pride flag continues to be shared and celebrated, Vecchietti hopes the new iteration can “empower” the LGBTQ+ community and allies to be more inclusive of intersex.

## Why a rainbow?

Rainbow flags have been used in many places over the centuries: in the German Peasants' War in the 16th century, as a symbol of the Cooperative movement; as a symbol of peace, especially in Italy; to represent the Tawantin Suyu, or Inca territory, mainly in Peru and Bolivia; by some Druze communities in the Middle east; by the Jewish Autonomous Oblast; to represent the International Order of Rainbow for Girls since the early 1920s, and as a symbol of gay pride and LGBT social movements since the 1970s.

Gilbert Baker (June 2, 1951 – March 31, 2017) was an American artist, gay rights activist, and designer of the rainbow flag (1978), a worldwide symbol of LGBTQ+ pride.

Today, the flag is flown as a sign of inclusion. When flown outside businesses, or placed in shop windows, it tells LGBTQ+ people they can relax, and feel safe to do what others' take for granted: to hold hands or kiss their partners, to rent a hotel room together, to book a table for Valentine's Day, to demonstrate their love without hate. As an image, it reminds us of not only the diversity of sexual orientation but also of the diversity of human characteristics as a whole.

Characteristics help shape identity. The flag's 6 colours represent different aspects of LGBTQ+ communities, but the rainbow is also a symbolic representation of the variety of human expression, in all its hues and shades. The widespread use of the pride flag allows LGBTQ+ individuals to connect with each other and feel included regardless of their location. No matter where you are or how you identify, the rainbow colours are meant to signify that you are included, welcome, and safe as part of the LGBTQ+ community.



**Red - Life**  
**Orange - Healing**  
**Yellow - Sunlight**  
**Green - Nature**  
**Turquoise - Magic/Art**  
**Indigo - Serenity**  
**Violet - Spirit**  
**Black & Brown - People of colour**  
**Blue, Pink & White - Trans flag**  
**Yellow with a purple circle - Intersex flag**

## Ask for my pronouns!

It's a simple way to respect identities... because you can't judge a book by its cover, and you can't tell someone's gender by their looks!

LGBTQ+ History Month raises awareness of gender-neutral pronouns and diversity in gender identities, demonstrating that asking someone what pronouns they use is a simple way to show respect.

Gender neutral pronouns are singular third person pronouns that function exactly like he/him and she/her in a sentence. Common gender-neutral pronouns include the singular they/them, and neologisms (newly created words) such as ze/zir, pronounced 'zee' and 'zeer'.

Why would someone want to be referred to with gender neutral pronouns?

People choose to use gender neutral pronouns for all kinds of reasons. For example:

- To demonstrate a non-binary, trans, genderqueer, agender, gender fluid, creative, and/or gender questioning identity.
- To indicate that gender is not relevant in many contexts, or to make a political statement about gender.
- To act in solidarity with a friend or loved one who uses gender neutral pronouns.

Finding out what pronouns someone uses is as easy as asking (when you can catch a private moment): "What pronouns do you use?"

## Where did gender neutral pronouns come from?

The gender neutral pronouns they/them/theirs have been used in the singular since at least as far back as the 15th Century:

***“There's not a man I meet but doth salute me / As if I were their well-acquainted friend” — Shakespeare, Comedy of Errors***

## When is it appropriate to use gender neutral pronouns for someone else?

When someone is describing another person whose gender identity and pronouns they are not aware of (see, we just did it in this very sentence!)

This can be hard!

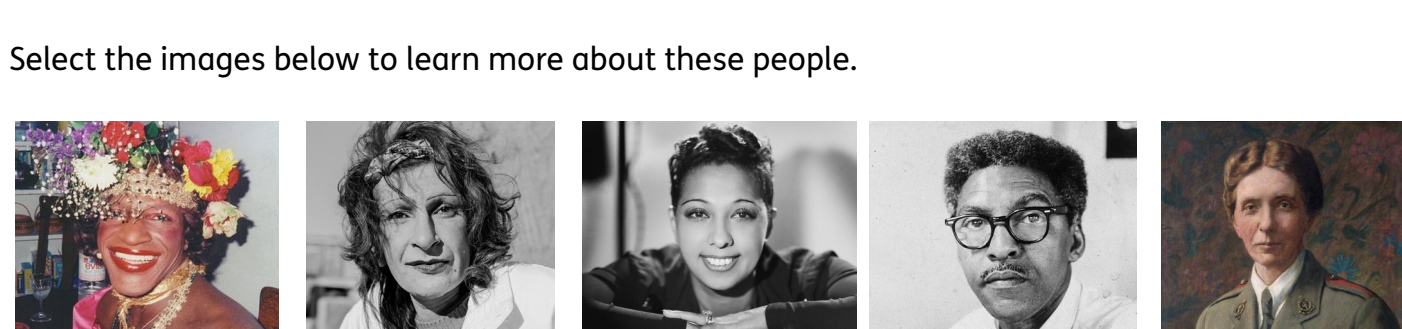
Getting used to using gender-neutral pronouns, or even asking people what pronouns they use, can take practice. The Student Union in the Old Mill Lane campus are offering students free pronoun badges! This is a common way to display your preferred pronouns and makes addressing your peers that little bit easier.

Here are a couple of other suggestions for ways to practice on your own:

- Use gender neutral pronouns for your pets - they really don't mind!
- Find a friend who watches the same show or reads the same book series as you. Switch all the characters' pronouns to be gender neutral and have a conversation about the latest instalments of the media of your choice.
- Practice not gendering random strangers. For example, if you are talking about a store clerk, another driver on the road, or a classmate you haven't officially been introduced to, use the pronouns 'they/them' until or unless you get a chance to ask their pronouns.

## Prominent Figures

Select the images below to learn more about these people.



## Banning of books in the United States

Book bans have plagued many US schools throughout 2022, with stories focusing on LGBTQ+ and race issues being targeted by conservatives across the country.

Through the first eight months of 2022, there were 681 attempts to ban or restrict library resources, targeting 1,651 different books (according to the American Library Association.)

The Keller Independent School District in Texas spoke with The Washington Post in the wake of the US book bans. "Students are upset, especially LGBTQ+ students," said a Keller employee who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "Students are upset, especially LGBTQ+ students," said a Keller employee who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "They want to see themselves reflected, and they're not able to."

"I don't expect this to be waning," said Jonathan Friedman, director of free expression and education programmes at Pen America, which champions freedom of writing and speech worldwide.

## Disclaimer

***Whilst we have done our best to gather information from reputable sources, we understand that we may have made unintentional omissions simply because we don't know. We ask for your patience, and please know that we are always grateful if someone wishes to share their knowledge to fill in any gaps. Thank you for your understanding.***

## Further Reading

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_History\\_Month#cite\\_note-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_History_Month#cite_note-2)
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/lgbt-history-month-uk-date-2022-b2004851.html>
- <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/about-us/news/lgbt-history-month-let%E2%80%99s-champion-inclusive-education-all>
- <https://www.gaytimes.co.uk/culture/lgbtq-flag-2021-redesign-to-better-represent-intersex-community/>
- <https://www.su.ualberta.ca/services/thelanding/learn/pronouns/>
- <https://www.them.us/story/progress-pride-flag-intersex-inclusive-makeover>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marsha\\_P.\\_Johnson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marsha_P._Johnson)
- <https://www.cnn.com/culture/article/historical-lgbt-figures-activists-culture>
- <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/06/26/us/most-influential-lgbtq-activists/index.html>
- <https://www.harnham.com/post/2021-2/lgbt-history-month-reflections-on-alan-turing>
- <https://www.theproudtrust.org/young-people/people-like-me/people-from-history/>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/01/22/students-want-new-books-thanks-restrictions-librarians-cant-buy-them/>