

Edie for Equality: Edie Windsor Stands Up for Love

written by Michael Genhart

illustrated by Cheryl Thuesday

About the Book

Genre: Biography

Format: Hardcover, 40 pages
8-1/2 x 10-1/2

ISBN: 9781643795829

Reading Level: Grade 4

Interest Level: Grades 2–8

Guided Reading Level: W

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
N/A

Lexile™ Measure: N/A

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Biography / Memoir, Conflict resolution, Courage, Discrimination, Diversity, Dreams & Aspirations, Empathy / Compassion, Identity / Self Esteem / Confidence, Leadership, LGBTQ / Nonfiction, Optimism / Enthusiasm, Overcoming Obstacles, Persistence / Grit, Pride, Protest, Social Justice & Activism, United States History

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/edie-for-equality

SYNOPSIS

Growing up in the 1930s, Edie Windsor hadn't always been bold. In fact, she was someone who played by the rules and loved math. Numbers added up right every time and equal meant equal. But when the US government refused to acknowledge the loving relationship of over forty years between her and her spouse Thea Spyer, Edie made a bold move and sued the US government!

In this comprehensive picture book biography, acclaimed author Michael Genhart shares the story of LGBTQ icon Edie Windsor and the pivotal case that set the stage to take down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). In *United States v. Windsor*, Edie's tenacious spirit proved to the Supreme Court and the world that love is love and equal means equal.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Backmatter from *Edie for Equality*

Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was passed in 1996 and signed into law by President Bill Clinton. It consisted of three sections. The first was just a title, but the second two were the important parts. Section 2 said that no US state (or US territory, US possession, or Native American tribe) had to recognize a same-sex marriage from another state. This was in stark contrast to how states were mandated to recognize opposite-sex marriages from other states. Then Section 3 defined the mention of marriage in any federal law to mean only a legal union between a man and a woman.

Edie Windsor's case, *United States v. Windsor*, was about overturning Section 3 of DOMA because the law allowed the federal government to discriminate against married lesbian and gay couples (from the nine states plus the District of Columbia that recognized same-sex marriage at the time the Windsor case was heard), treating them as unequal to straight married couples. This discrimination included gay and lesbian couples being denied hundreds of federal benefits provided to straight married couples, including: filing taxes jointly, having no inheritance taxes owed by a surviving spouse, and unpaid leave to care for a sick or injured spouse.

In *United States v. Windsor*, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 3 was unconstitutional. This meant that the federal government must recognize any same-sex marriage performed in a state where same-sex marriage was legal. Since only Section 3 was under review in the *United States v. Windsor* decision, states could still choose not to recognize legal marriages from other states. However, the reasoning that was used by the Supreme Court would set the stage two years later for the challenge to Section 2 in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, when same-sex marriage was made the law of the land.

What is the Supreme Court of the United States?

The Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) is the highest court in the nation. SCOTUS's ultimate responsibility is inscribed on the building where the court is located: equal justice under law. As the top court, SCOTUS has the last say on all cases that involve federal laws. The decisions of SCOTUS are final and cannot be appealed. There are nine justices (or judges), including a chief justice. They are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate whenever there is a vacancy. Justices are appointed for life and serve until they resign, retire, are impeached, or die. SCOTUS receives over seven thousand requests a year to review cases but only about a hundred to a hundred and fifty of these are presented to them each year (they are in session from October to June). These cases affect the entire country and can have a big impact by setting policies that result in real social change. After hearing a case, the justices reach a decision, with each judge having a single vote. When five justices or more agree on an outcome, that is called a majority. The chief justice or the most senior justice (meaning the judge who has been on the Supreme Court the longest) in the majority decides who will write up the decision (or opinion). The minority also writes the reason they disagree (or their dissent).

SCOTUS and the rest of the court system (the judicial branch) comprise one of the three equal

branches of government, along with the Congress (the legislative branch) and the president (the executive branch). SCOTUS has the power to determine whether laws passed by Congress or actions taken by the president violate the Constitution and are deemed not legal or not valid.

How Does a Case Reach the United States Supreme Court?

There are two court systems: state courts, which deal with state laws; and federal courts that handle national laws. The Supreme Court is part of the federal court system.

The federal court system has three levels: district, appeals, and supreme courts. Most cases start out at the lowest level, at one of the ninety-four district courts around the country. Judges and juries listen to the arguments from both sides of the dispute and sometimes hear from witnesses. The juries reach a decision (called a verdict) in favor of one side or the other. Judges give rulings about the law.

If either side believes the district court verdict or some of the rulings are wrong, the case can be taken to the middle level, at one of the twelve appeals courts around the country. Appeals courts do not have juries or witnesses, only judges who determine whether the law was applied correctly in the district court. Most decisions of the appeals courts end there, but those decisions can be appealed to the highest court, the Supreme Court in Washington, DC.

The Supreme Court tends to hear cases for which there are conflicting lower court rulings or when there is an issue of law that has not been resolved (including the possibility that a previous Supreme Court ruling could be wrong). As in the appeals courts, there are no witnesses or jury at the Supreme Court—and the justices ultimately determine whether the law has been interpreted and applied correctly.

Edie Windsor Goes to Washington, DC

Edith Windsor had never set out to become an activist. In fact, quite the opposite: as she discovered her attraction to other women, she also learned that this had to stay hidden or risk losing family, friends, or employment. But then, in 1963, Edie met Thea and fell in love. That's all Edie wanted: to find love, to be loved, and for this love to be accepted and respected. And that's exactly what she ended up fighting for in *United States v. Windsor*. Together for nearly forty-four years, legally married their last two years together, and coping with Thea's long battle with MS, they had a relationship that was a testament to the power of love. Despite their long-standing commitment to each other, Edie faced a large inheritance tax bill after Thea passed away. Fueled by love for Thea and an upswelling of anger and feelings of unfairness, Edie stood up and shifted from that quiet, timid young woman to a bold, vocal activist. It resulted in Edie becoming a very visible face of modern-day gay and lesbian rights when she sued the United States government to repeal Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA).

Following the arguments in *United States v. Windsor* at the Supreme Court came the waiting for the official ruling. While the team of lawyers felt confident that the ruling would be favorable, for many others, patiently waiting was understandably a difficult process. And then the ruling came during New York City's annual gay pride celebration. Edie was at Robbie Kaplan's home on the day the

ruling was released: Section 3 of DOMA was unconstitutional. As soon as they read the ruling, Edie, Robbie, and friends shouted, cried, and jumped up and down. President Obama called Edie to thank her for speaking out and making such a difference in the country.

Edie wanted to go to the Stonewall Inn, known as a major site of modern-day gay rights activism, to celebrate the victory. At Stonewall, hundreds of people had gathered in excitement and love. Other celebrations included a fabulous dance party, honoring Thea and Edie's lifetime of dancing together. Edie was also the Grand Marshal of the New York City LGBTQ Pride Parade and was a runner-up (to winner Pope Francis) for Time magazine's Person of the Year.

Why Was *United States v. Windsor* Important, and What Impact Has it Had Going Forward?

On June 26, 2013, SCOTUS delivered their 5–4 ruling: Section 3 of DOMA was unfair and unconstitutional. Edie was refunded the taxes she had paid. More important, she got the US government to recognize gay and lesbian marriages in the states where they were already legal—equal protection under the law. *United States v. Windsor* was a huge gay rights victory. In Justice Anthony Kennedy's majority opinion, he used the word "dignity" (a word that means worthy of honor and respect) nine times. He wrote that, "interference with the equal dignity of same-sex marriages was more than an incidental effect of DOMA. It was its essence." He added that DOMA had written inequality into the United States Code. Edie's case, therefore, was about bringing dignity and equality to married same-sex couples and their children and families.

United States v. Windsor was also about reversing discrimination against gay and lesbian couples. It paved the way for *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a US Supreme Court case that was decided two years later, in 2015. Like Edie and Thea, Jim Obergefell had been in a long-term relationship. Jim married his partner, John Arthur, in Maryland shortly before John died of Lou Gehrig's disease. But they lived in Ohio (where it was not yet legal to marry), and Jim wanted his marriage to John to be legal in their home state. His case was challenging Section 2 of DOMA, which said that one US state did not have to recognize the marriage of a same-sex couple that took place in another state.

On June 26, 2015, SCOTUS made same-sex marriage legal everywhere in the country. In his majority opinion, Justice Kennedy emphasized this point: "In forming a marital union, two people become greater than they once were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate, marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death. . . . They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right. . . . It is so ordered."

Author's Note from Michael Genhart

Growing up as a gay kid, I vividly remember witnessing a few boys being teased and beaten up mercilessly just for being themselves in high school. Seeing this, I stayed away from those boys—which did not feel right at all.

Later, in college and graduate school, I came out as gay, thankfully to a supportive group of friends. My family, however, was very lukewarm. They didn't know what to make of it, and their silence felt like an unspoken disapproval. I felt alone. Then I met John, who would later become my husband, and we started our lives together in Washington, DC, and then we moved to San Francisco.

Like many couples, John and I thought about starting a family. In 1995, it wasn't common for an openly gay couple to adopt children. In fact, in many states same-sex couples were banned from adopting children. We were lucky though and met our daughter's birth mother when she was four months pregnant. Our daughter, Gabby, was born on Christmas Day, and her birth mother handed the baby to us in a bright red stocking. We cried many tears of joy. Having a baby brought us closer to our families of origin; Gabby, appealing and delightful, was a kind of bridge to our relatives, who could relate to all the wonder of having children.

In September 2008, John and I got married during a brief window of time when it was legal in California. Gabby, age twelve, gave us away and stole the show with her singing and guitar playing. John's family flew out from Washington, DC, to join us in celebrating, but upsettingly, no one from my Southern California family was present. It felt pretty awful. Despite this hurt, surrounded by chosen family, our wedding day gave us an enormous feeling of legitimacy—just as it had for Edie and Thea. It felt like equality was finally within reach.

But very sadly, on November 5, 2008, California passed Proposition 8, and gay and lesbian couples could no longer marry in the state. Like many others, we felt this was the continuation of a great inequality. So when Edie Windsor took her case to the US Supreme Court to fight for love and equality, there was hope again. Edie inspired me to use my voice to stand up for marriage equality and love for all. And it is my hope that everyone who reads about Edie and her fight will be inspired to find their own boldness in standing up for fairness and equality too.

Timeline of Legal and Societal Events Leading Up to and Following *United States v. Windsor*

For the full timeline, consult the Backmatter in *Edie for Equality* for additional information and context.

Selected Bibliography

For sources, texts, and articles that were used in the development of *Edie for Equality*, consult the Bibliography in the Backmatter of *Edie for Equality*.

More Resources on LGBTQ History through Picture Books: Adapted from *The Story of Harvey Milk* Backmatter

- Ellison, Joy Michael. *Sylvia and Marsha Start a Revolution!: The Story of the Trans Women of Color Who Made LGBTQ History*. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2020.
- Pitman, Gayle E. *Sewing the Rainbow: A Story About Gilbert Baker*. Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2020.
- Sanders, Rob. *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag*. New York: Random House Books for Young Readers, 2018.
- *–Stonewall: A Building. An Uprising. A Revolution*. New York: Random House Books for Young Readers, 2019.

Middle Grade & Young Adult: Adapted from *The Story of Harvey Milk* Backmatter

- Bronski, Michael. *A Queer History of the United States for Young People*. ReVisioning History for Young People. Adapted by Richie Chevat. Boston: Beacon Press, 2019.
- Prager, Sarah. *Rainbow Revolutionaries: Fifty LGBTQ People Who Made History*. New York: HarperCollins, 2020.
- Sicardi, Arabelle. *Queer Heroes: Meet 53 LGBTQ Heroes From Past and Present!* London: Wide Eyed Editions, 2019.
- Topping, Kimm. *Generation Queer*. Lee & Low Books, 2024.

Adult: Adapted from *The Story of Harvey Milk* Backmatter

- Faderman, Lillian. *Harvey Milk: His Lives and Death*. Jewish Lives. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019. *Milk, Harvey. An Archive of Hope: Harvey Milk's Speeches and Writings*. Edited by Jason Edward Black and Charles E. Morris. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Reynolds, Andrew. *The Children of Harvey Milk: How LGBTQ Politicians Changed the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Van Sant, Gus, dir. *Milk*. Universal City, CA: Focus Features, 2009.

LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum

For LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum, lesson plans, and booklists, consult the following organizations for more information:

- New York City Department of Education's LGBTQ Hidden Voices Curriculum: https://www.weteachnyc.org/media2016/filer_public/61/19/6119a2aa-af90-4389-88af-757a0ed217c4/hv_LGBTQ_v17f_web.pdf
- Garden State Equality: <https://www.gardenstateequality.org/trainings/safe-schools/>
- California History-Social Science Project (CHSSP): <https://chssp.ucdavis.edu/blog/teach-history-LGBTQ-joy>
- Learning for Justice Gender & Sexual Identity: https://www.learningforjustice.org/topics/gender-sexual-identity?gclid=Cj0KCCQiAmKiQBhCIARIsAKtSj-kvW8E3-NJzTyCIDmqB-HSOp-55n6lRyz4cUfwYAbgcNwKCRtUwE4bkaAhzIEALw_wcB
- Welcoming Schools: https://www.hrc.org/resources/schools?utm_source=GS&utm_medium=AD&utm_campaign=BPI-HRC-Grant&utm_content=276041283782&utm_term=LGBTQ-inclusive%20curriculum&gclid=Cj0KCCQiAmKiQBhCIARIsAKtSj-lqvPXTXDtm-4dtrKEvuq5-OqccdgD_30xQjQ5aKRZK9Eiv0x13SdbMaAqtQEALw_wcB
- GLSEN Inclusive Curriculum Guide: <https://www.glsen.org/activity/inclusive-curriculum-guide>
- Safe Schools Project Curriculum: <https://safeschoolsproject.org/curriculum/>

Resources on Teaching about Anti-Semitism

Both Edie and Thea experienced discrimination and antisemitism in their lives. For more resources on teaching about Antisemitism, consult the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's "Teaching Materials on Antisemitism and Racism" (ushmm.org/teach/teaching-materials/antisemitism-racism) and Anti-Defamation League's "Resources to Address and Challenge Antisemitism" (<https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/resources-address-and-challenge-antisemitism>).

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- What does it mean to be persistent? How do you demonstrate persistence even though something may be challenging? Why is it important to be persistent? Do you think persistence can be learned? How so?
- How does someone "make a difference"? What do you think making a difference means? Who are some famous people who have made a difference in this country?
- Was there a time when you took a chance on something? What did you do? What was the result? Was it worth taking a chance? How are taking chances important in your life?
- How can dancing be powerful? How is dance a form of resistance? How does dance make other people feel? Give some examples of powerful dances that you've seen or experienced.
- Have you ever spoken up about something when you were afraid? Have you ever spoken up about something that you felt was unfair? What did that feel like? What happened? Why did you stand up against this?
- What does it mean to stand up for what's right? What are some instances in history where people had to stand up for what they believe in even though they encountered opposition?
- How is a sense of belonging important to someone? Why is it important to feel like you belong? What do you think it feels like to not belong? What does that mean to you?
- What does it mean to be discriminated against? Why do people discriminate against other people? How does it feel? What are ways that you can defend people against discrimination? Why is it important to stand up to discrimination?
- What discrimination have gay people experienced politically? Do you know what laws have been passed to support gay people's rights? What about laws that have been rejected or protested in favor of gay people's rights?
- What does it mean to vote? Why is voting important to have as a right? How can people exercise their vote?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Book Title Exploration: Talk about the title of the book, *Edie for Equality*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Read Michael Genhart's Biography: Read about author Michael Genhart on the back jacket flap and on his website (<https://michaelgenhart.com/>). Encourage students to think about his possible inspiration for writing *Edie for Equality*.

Read Cheryl "Ras" Tuesday's Biography: Read about illustrator Cheryl "Ras" Tuesday on the back jacket flap as well as on her website (<https://rasillustration.com/>). Have students look into her other illustrations and compare and contrast across books. How are her illustrations similar? How are they different? Does the subject matter influence her illustrations?

Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.

Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how Edie Windsor's childhood influenced her career and pursuit for justice
- how Edie's observations about unfairness ultimately led to initiating the DOMA court case
- how Edie and Thea met and what brought them together
- why Edie wanted to speak up for others and make a difference
- how Edie paved a way and stood up for gay people
- how Edie and Thea's relationship was powerful and impactful, particularly to the LGBTQ community
- what Edie did to help people during her life
- why Edie was a trailblazer for LGBTQ rights and how her legacy is important today
- how love is a powerful force and is worth fighting for

Encourage students to consider why the author, Michael Genhart, would want to share with young people this story about Edie Windsor.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

civics, Jewish, gay, lesbian, New York City, computer programmer, merengue, the Lindy Hop, hully gully, engagement, the Stonewall Inn, drag queens, transgender, queer, Canada, inheritance tax bill, Roberta "Robbie" Kaplan, therapist, "Defense of Marriage Act" (DOMA), Supreme Court, the Supreme Court, *United States v. Windsor*, 570 U.S. 744 (2013), unconstitutional

Academic

bold, fairness, unfairness, hardships, postpone, sued, discrimination, unequal, roar, stature, activist

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How does the story begin? How does the narrator describe Edie?
2. What did Edie like learning about in school? Why?
3. What did other people in the neighborhood say to Edie and her family? Why?
4. What did Edie discover in college? Why was this different from what people expected of her?
5. Where did Edie move?
6. What was Edie's job? How did she stand out?
7. Who was Thea? How did Edie and Thea meet?
8. Why did Thea know about unfairness? What did she go through during her life?
9. What did Edie and Thea like to do together?

10. What did Thea ask Edie one day? How did Edie respond?
11. Why could Edie and Thea not marry?
12. What happened in New York City in June 1969?
13. What was the Stonewall Inn known for?
14. Why did Edie and Thea hide their relationship from their families?
15. How did Edie and Thea stand up for their rights?
16. What began to happen to Thea? How did Edie care for her?
17. What happened forty years after their engagement? Where did they marry?
18. What happened to Thea?
19. What bill did Edie receive in the mail? How did Edie react? What did she do about it?
20. What did people warn Edie about? How did Edie respond?
21. What was the "Defense of Marriage" Act? What were Edie and her lawyer Robbie fighting against?
22. What was the first step in fighting against DOMA?
23. How did the US government respond to the lower court's decision about DOMA? How did Edie and Robbie respond?
24. What is the highest court in the country?
25. What did Robbie argue before the Supreme Court justices?
26. How did the crowd react to Edie and Robbie leaving the Supreme Court? What was the final decision from the Supreme Court justices?
27. How old was Edie when the decision about DOMA was announced?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *Edie for Equality* mean to you after reading? Why do you think the author chose this title?
2. The story starts with, "This is a story about a great unfairness and how Edie Windsor stood up for what was right." Provide evidence from the story about how Edie stood up for what was right. What do you think the author meant by the great unfairness? How did Edie change her life and the lives of others?
3. Why do you think Edie enjoyed math and civics in schools? What did she appreciate about those subjects? How did those interests relate to what she ended up doing as an adult?
4. Why did people say mean things to Edie in her neighborhood during her childhood? What did

she think about it?

5. How did Edie's discovery about her feelings for women in college change her life? What did she think wasn't fair about how people felt about women having feelings for other women?
6. Why did Edie move to New York City? How did her job as a computer programmer also make her stand out?
7. What did Edie and Thea feel when they danced? What did Edie appreciate about dancing?
8. What unfairness did Thea experience in her life? How do you think this brought Edie and Thea together?
9. Why could Edie and Thea not celebrate their engagement? How did people feel about same-sex couples during that time? How did their families feel about Edie and Thea's relationship?
10. How did the Stonewall Inn uprising influence Edie and Thea? What did they decide to do after that incident?
11. How can friends become family? Why do you think Edie and Thea created such a tight-knit community of friends?
12. What were some of the causes that Edie worked for? What issues did she care about? Why were they important to her?
13. What happened after Thea's death that inspired Edie to fight against discrimination toward same-sex marriage?
14. How did Edie fight for herself and Thea? Why do you think she selected Robbie Kaplan as her lawyer? Why is it important to have people in your life who understand and relate to what you've been through?
15. What was significant about the ruling of *United States v. Windsor*? How did this result impact gay people's lives?
16. How would you describe Edie Windsor to a person who had never heard of her before? What are some of the qualities that you would use to speak about Edie? What are the most important things to say about Edie's life and legacy?
17. Explore the structure of this text. Was it written as chronology, comparison, cause/effect, or problem/solution? Why do you think the author made this choice? How does it compare to other texts you have read?
18. Why is it critical to learn about LGBTQ history? How can we advocate to let others know that LGBTQ history is also American history?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about Edie Windsor's decision to go to the Supreme Court. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think is Michael Genhart's message to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind the author's intentions to write the book. What do you think he wanted to tell his readers?
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? What do Michael's experiences, thoughts, and feelings mean to you?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Edie for Equality*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world, such as on television or in a newspaper? Why did this book make you think of that?
6. What does making a difference mean to students after reading? After reading *Edie for Equality*, what does making a difference mean to you? Why?
7. How has a family member, teacher or other person close to you impacted your life? Robbie, Edie's lawyer, always encouraged her to stand up for what she believed in. Did you have a family member or other person who has made an impact in your life? What were some things that person did that were significant to you?
8. Why is Edie Windsor an essential person to learn about in our history? What about gay people's marriages and lives? What has she done for LGBTQ people in today's world?

Multilingual Learners Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are multilingual learners (ML).

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with another classmate. Afterwards, students can create their own drawing to connect with the book's message.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading: 1) Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing. 2) Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how they connected to *Edie for Equality* and what they learned about Edie's role in the famous court case, *United States v. Windsor*.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to

students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose ML students to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

6. Consider consulting www.multilinguallearningtoolkit.org/ for more ideas on how to support Multilingual Learners.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Edie experienced discrimination because she was a lesbian. How do you respond to discrimination, when you experience it yourself and/or when you see it happen? How did Edie react to discrimination? How did she help others who also experienced discrimination?
2. Which illustration in *Edie for Equality* best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How does it portray that emotion?
3. Michael Genhart writes about Edie receiving an inheritance tax bill, "First Edie was shocked, and then she got mad." Why do you think Edie went through these emotions? How did these feelings relate to her feelings about unfairness?
4. Robbie argued before the Supreme Court: "Gay married couples' relationships are not significantly different than the relationships of straight married people." Robbie argued that Edie was being told her marriage wasn't real. Help Robbie defend Edie and Thea's relationship before the Supreme Court. How do you think this impacted gay people emotionally, before and after the ruling?
5. People in the LGBTQ community experience frequent discrimination and hatred just because of their sexuality. The Human Rights Watch put together a report on Discrimination against LGBTQ youth in schools (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/12/08/walking-through-hailstorm/discrimination-against-LGBTQ-youth-us-schools#>). Have students react to the statistics and data from the article. How does this make students feel when they review this information? How can they support LGBTQ communities in their own environments? How can they try to make the world a better place for people who are LGBTQ?
6. Why is it important for people to feel comfortable and free to express themselves? Why should

we respect how other people choose to express themselves? How can we show others that we respect and accept their decisions?

7. Describe a time that you or someone you know made a choice without worrying about what other people said and/or did. How did it make you feel? What advice might you give to someone who is always worried about what other people say and/or do?
8. Oftentimes, we learn about activists that start their work/pursuits at a young age, but Edie was older when she decided to fight DOMA. Why do you think activism and youth are often paired together? How does Edie refute that notion? How do you think Edie showcases that you can fight against injustice at any age?
9. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Edie for Equality*.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- ***Edie for Equality* ends with: “Although the fight for equal rights continues, Edie proved that love is love, that equal means equal. And that adds up every time.”** Why do you think author Michael Genhart decided to end the story with those lines? How do you think they embody Edie and her life? How is the fight for equal LGBTQ rights continuing today? How did Edie fight for herself, Thea, and all same-sex couples and people in general? Students can write an analytical essay detailing their thoughts.
- **Brainstorm and collaborate on ways to support LGBTQ communities in your school.** Have students brainstorm with a partner or small groups some ways that they can support LGBTQ communities in their own classroom and the school at large. There are many different resources to support your work in researching how you can support LGBTQ student and educator communities:
 - ACLU’s “Know Your Rights”: <https://www.acludc.org/en/know-your-rights/know-your-rights-LGBTQ-students-what-do-if-you-face-harassment-school>
 - Resources for LGBTQ Students from the U.S. Department of Education: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/LGBTQ.html>

- Resources for Gender and LGBTQ Inclusive Schools from Welcoming Schools: <https://welcomingschools.org/resources>
- Afterwards, have students come up with a word cloud (<https://www.wordclouds.com/>) or a chart that outlines how they are going to be supportive of LGBTQ people in their schools, and ways that they can work together to create safe and welcoming spaces.
- **Encourage students to prepare a presentation or write an essay about something in their community that they're passionate about.** Edie helped people through her activist work and fighting for gay marriage in the courts system. What is something that you want to improve in your school or neighborhood? Why is this an important cause? What are some ways that you can help others or work to improve this specific issue? Students can share their project in a visual presentation of their choosing, whether it's an information poster, flyers around the school, etc. Edutopia's "Social Justice Project in the Classroom" provides more information, resources and ideas for how to structure a social justice project in your relevant setting (<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/social-justice-projects-in-classroom-michael-hernandez>).
- **Read Lee & Low's *The Harvey Milk Story* alongside *Edie for Equality*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-harvey-milk-story/>). As students read both titles, have them think about the following questions: are there similar themes in both books? What do you think the authors' message is in both titles? How do they show readers critical LGBTQ history? How did Edie and Harvey align with their beliefs? What did students learn from engaging with *The Harvey Milk Story* and *Edie for Equality*? Start with a graphic organizer outlining the details, and then have students discuss in small groups or write or draw a reaction piece to their experience after reading *The Harvey Milk Story* and *Edie for Equality*. For older readers in middle and high school, consult Lee & Low's *Generation Queer* as an additional nonfiction text to support teaching about critical LGBTQ history (leeandlow.com/books/generation-queer).
- **Have students come up with a list of questions to ask author Michael Genhart.** What do students want to know about the process behind writing a children's book? How did the author come up with the idea to write *Edie for Equality*? What about his other books? Consider contacting Michael Genhart and inviting him to your school, library, or other relevant setting for an author visit (<https://michaelgenhart.com/>).
- **Consider using *Edie for Equality* as an anchor text to teach students about biography writing.** ReadWriteThink's "Writer's Workshop: The Biographical Sketch" has tips and step-by-step instructions on how to ease students into writing biography and the different techniques and strategies that are used to make engaging and informative stories (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/writers-workshop-biographical-sketch>). Afterward, have students select a picture book biography in their classroom and create their own book about that historical figure. Have students conduct a research study about their own historical figure from a picture book of their choosing to simulate the process behind *Edie for Equality*. Have students identify the different features in *Edie for Equality* that would help to inform their own book about their historical figure. What kinds of information do they need to research? How should they present it in the book? What images, diagrams, or photographs

would be helpful to their reader? Use the Lee & Low Books' Biography Toolkit with graphic organizers to take notes, organize thoughts, and analyze the text: <https://www.leeandlow.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Biography-Toolkit-2.pdf>.

- **Have students select a quote from the Backmatter and Author's Note section of *Edie for Equality*.** What did students learn about Edie that they hadn't read in the book? Students can select a quote or piece of information that they want to write more about in an essay. Students can share their pieces with a partner, small group, or whole class.
- **Write and design a commemorative plaque for Edie Windsor.** What would you want to say about Edie Windsor in a paragraph? What were the most important parts of her life, and what would you want to share with visitors? What was Edie passionate about, and what is her legacy? Students can create artwork for their plaque to display around the classroom.
- **Have students think about expository nonfiction versus narrative nonfiction.** How was reading *Edie for Equality* different from reading a newspaper article about Edie Windsor? Have students read the article from NPR, "Meet The 83-Year-Old Taking On The U.S. Over Same-Sex Marriage" (<https://www.npr.org/2013/03/21/174944430/meet-the-83-year-old-taking-on-the-u-s-over-same-sex-marriage>). Then students can create a Venn Diagram with the headings "Narrative Nonfiction: *Edie for Equality*" and "Expository Nonfiction: Meet The 83-Year-Old Taking On The U.S. Over Same-Sex Marriage". Students can compare the different formats of the texts and the information they learn in both.

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Read New York City Department of Education's "When Edie Met Thea—A New York Love Story" from the LGBTQ Hidden Voices Curriculum** (<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/subjects/social-studies/hidden-voices/contentdetails/hidden-voices/2023/07/05/when-edie-met-thea-a-new-york-love-story>). After students read the piece, have them respond to the following questions: What information was new that they learned about? What else did Edie do during her life to support her final initiatives to fight for same-sex marriage? Have students consult the links featured in the article to learn more about topics such as the Lavender Scare, what it was like to work in the technology world as a woman, and more. Students can select one historical topic to learn and read more about from the article and write an essay or create an informational poster with their findings. For more information about teaching about LGBTQ history, consult New York City Department of Education's LGBTQ Hidden Voices Curriculum (<https://www.weteachnyc.org/resources/resource/hidden-voices/>).
- **Examine *United States v. Windsor* in more detail** (<https://www.oyez.org/cases/2012/12-307>). Students can answer the following guiding questions: What was the topic of the court case? How did the court case begin? Who initiated it? Who worked on the court case? What are the petitioner and respondent? What are those roles in a court case?

What was the result of the court case? What kind of language do they use in the court case to showcase Edie's cause? Students can present their findings with photographs, videos (if possible), and other primary source documents, and talk about its significance in LGBTQ history. Check out the United States Courts' "Educational Activities" for more information about teaching about the court system and court cases (<https://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/educational-resources/educational-activities>). Refer to the Backmatter in *Edie for Equality* for additional information on *United States v. Windsor* and the impact of the courts system. Have students create visuals to aid their learning about the court case in the forms of informational posters or other diagrams.

- **As a follow-up activity, learn more about other same-sex marriage court cases, using the article from Human Rights Campaign, "Four Cases That Paved the Way for Marriage Equality and a Reminder of the Work Ahead"** (<https://www.hrc.org/news/four-cases-that-paved-the-way-for-marriage-equality-and-a-reminder-of-the-w>). Have students select one case that's featured in the article and conduct additional research on that case, and answer the questions posed in the above *United States v. Windsor* activity. How was this case important? Who did it impact, and why? Who brought the case to trial? What were the results of the case, and what are the long-lasting effects today?
- **Reflect on Edie Windsor's legacy and how she impacted the world today** (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/us/edith-windsor-dead-same-sex-marriage-doma.html>). Have students research how Edie Windsor's courage still impacts people today. How are Edie Windsor's efforts long-lasting? Students can also use the Time article, "9 Landmark Supreme Court Cases that Shaped LGBTQ Rights in America" (<https://time.com/5694518/LGBTQ-supreme-court-cases/>). Finally, ask students why Edie Windsor's legacy is important to learn about. Students can share their thoughts in an essay.
- **Encourage students to select a resource from the "Selected Bibliography" section from the back of the book.** Students can examine the piece, whether it's a book, video, photograph, or website, and write a reaction to how they think the author and illustrator were informed by this information and how it helped to develop the book. Have students consider what kind of resource it is, how they know that it contains accurate and correct information, and why research is critical in developing a book. The Library of Congress has a lesson plan for further information about teaching students about using primary sources (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>).
- **Have students create a timeline of Edie Windsor's life from the biography and elaborate on the events that happened during the time.** For students to understand the historical context of Edie's life, encourage students to research the events in the book and on the timeline by gathering photographs and other primary source documents about the events mentioned. Display both enlarged timelines in the front of the class so that students have easy access to both the dates and events. Students can work in groups in different years (i.e. 1940-1950) and then add their events and findings to the class timeline.
- **Research issues impacting LGBTQ legislation today** (<https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-LGBTQ-rights-2025>). Edie Windsor worked to overturn Section 3 of DOMA because the law allowed the federal government to discriminate against married lesbian and gay

couples from the 9 states plus Washington D.C. that recognized same-sex marriage at the time the Windsor case was heard (from the "Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)" Section of *Edie for Equality*). What are issues that are still present today for LGBTQ people? Students can work with a partner and select one of the bills/laws from the ACLU and research more about that bill/law. Ask students the following questions: What is the law/bill in question? Why is there an issue surrounding this bill? How does the law discriminate against people who are LGBTQ? What can students do in their own community to improve discrimination against people who are LGBTQ? What can they do with their local or state governments to work towards passing effective legislation in defending LGBTQ people?

Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Have students analyze Edie Windsor's poster in the NYC LGBTQ Hidden Voices Curriculum** (https://www.weteachnyc.org/media2016/filer_public/3b/60/3b6000e3-b16a-455c-bc78-1f53c8e29c45/edith_windsor_poster.pdf). Students can research the artist, Cristy Road Carrera, and the historian who wrote the caption, Hugh Ryan. Why do you think they chose to portray Edie in this way? How did students react to this visual of Edie? Students can create their own visual interpretations of Edie and what she stood for, and share with a partner, small group, or whole class.
- **Have students create a drawing, painting, or other visual representation of a cause in their community that they're passionate about, inspired by Edie.** Why did they choose this cause? Students can create posters, paintings, or other visual representations of the cause that they're passionate about and then display them in small groups or for the whole class to see.
- **What are ways that you like to express yourself?** What does it mean to express yourself? What makes you feel good? Edie loved to dance. How did dancing make her feel? Why was dancing important to her, especially as she was experiencing injustice and unfairness in her life? Students can share the ways that they like to show their identities through art or any other kind of visual or written presentation.
- **Conduct an illustrator study about Cheryl "Ras" Tuesday.** Visit Cheryl's website for a complete list of her children's books (<https://rasillustration.com/>). If possible, display the books for students to examine the illustrations, and have students brainstorm how Cheryl's work is similar across the books, and how it differs by book.
- **As a follow-up activity, have students come up with questions to interview the illustrator Cheryl Tuesday.** What is her process behind creating the illustrations with a children's book? What medium did she choose to create the illustrations? Why? What was it like to illustrate Edie Windsor and presenting her life story through art? Consider contacting Cheryl Tuesday for a school visit.

- **Encourage students to select an illustration that resonated with them the most from *Edie for Equality*.** Have students write a reflection about the illustration. What stood out to them? How did it make them feel? What did it make them think about?

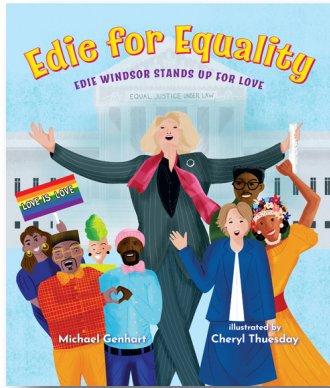
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Provide students with the list of organizations from the Background section in this Teacher's Guide.** Caregivers can learn more through resources about how they can advocate for LGBTQ students and their families in their respective communities.
- **Have students and caregivers brainstorm how they can demonstrate respect and acceptance of all people.** What are some ways that you can show respect to people? How can students and families support LGBTQ in their immediate families and communities?
- **Ask students to interview family members about what they love about themselves.** Have students share what they learned about *Edie for Equality* and how they can appreciate themselves. What do family members love about their own selves? How can they share their confidence with others? How does this make them feel good?
- **If possible, reach out to families or their networks to find adults to invite to your classroom who are part of the LGBTQ community.** Ask students to prepare questions for the visitors about their experiences, including challenges, obstacles, and personal achievements. What advice do they have for others struggling to challenge gender norms and stereotypes?
- **Consult PFLAG's website to learn more about how to involve families with the LGBTQ community.** PFLAG is the nation's largest organization dedicated to supporting, educating, and advocating for LGBTQ people and those who love them. Learn more about how to get involved with the PFLAG community in your area (<https://pflag.org/>).



Ordering Information

🌐 General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

🔒 Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/edie-for-equality

☎ **By Phone:** 212-779-4400

✉ **By Mail:**

381 Park Ave S, #1401

New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Genhart, PhD, is a licensed clinical psychologist and author of several picture books, including: *I See You, Love Is Love*, *Rainbow: A First Book of Pride*, and *Spanish Is the Language of My Family*. After being together for twenty-two years, Michael and the love of his life were wed in 2008—when they could legally marry. He is thrilled to share Edie and Thea's story about love, commitment, and courage with readers of all ages. You can learn more about him at michaelgenhart.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Cheryl "Ras" Tuesday is an illustrator originally from London who grew up in New Jersey. Her art style and love of vibrant colors are heavily influenced by her Caribbean and Asian heritage. Her book illustration credits include *Kind Like Marsha: Learning from LGBTQ Leaders* and *Willis Watson Is a Wannabe*. Ras lives in the Tri-State area. You can see more of her work at rasillustration.com.

Reviews

"The importance of Edie's story is conveyed effectively ... A solid picture-book biography of an unforgettable hero for queer rights activism." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"A solid biography and an important addition to law and LGBTQIA+ collection." —*School Library Journal*

"*Edie for Equality* is a loving tribute to a woman who stood up for love ... We owe a great deal to Edie for her courage and determination, and we owe a great deal to Michael Genhart and Cheryl Tuesday for bringing her story to life. This is an important and inspiring book." —*Leslea Newman, author of Heather Has Two Mommies and Sparkle Boy*

"I can hardly imagine how different my childhood might have been had I been able to read a book about Edie Windsor ... Kudos to Genhart and Tuesday for recognizing how important it is to introduce children to a true American hero." —*Robbie Kaplan, lawyer*

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.