

Homer's Phobia

Season 8, Episode 15

Theme

This episode deals with the issue of LGBTQ rights. It won the Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program (For Programming One Hour or Less); and the GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding TV – Individual Episode. GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) called it "a shining example of how to bring intelligent, fair and funny representations of our community onto television".

Synopsis

The Simpsons visit Cockamamie's, a collectible shop featuring campy merchandise, and meet John, the antiques dealer. Bart and Lisa take an instant liking to John and Homer invites him to the Simpsons' house to see all of the campy items that they own.

The next morning, Homer shares that he likes John and suggests that they invite him and his wife over for a drink. Marge hints repeatedly to an oblivious Homer that John is gay, and finally tell him straight out. Homer is horrified and his attitude towards John changes completely. He turns against him, refusing to join his family as John takes them on a tour of Springfield. The rest of the Simpson family continues to enjoy John's company, upsetting Homer further. Homer is particularly upset with Bart, uneasy that Bart is becoming gay.

Homer tries to make Bart more masculine by making him look at a billboard featuring scantily clad women in the hopes he will be attracted to girls. He escorts Bart to a steel mill to show Bart a manly environment, which is revealed to have an all gay workforce. Finally, a desperate Homer takes Bart deer hunting with Moe and Barney. When they can't find any deer to shoot, they decide to go to Santa's Village instead and shoot the reindeer. Bart is reluctant to go along with this plan, and the plan backfires when the reindeer

attack them. The hunting party is saved by John, Lisa and Marge, as John uses a Japanese Santa Claus robot to scare off the reindeer.

Homer accepts John and tells Bart that he can live his life any way he likes. Lisa informs Bart that Homer thinks he's gay, and Bart is stunned.

Lesson Summary

➤ Opening	10 minutes
➤ Episode Viewing	25 minutes
➤ Wall to Wall	5 minutes
➤ Discussion	20 minutes
➤ Activity (optional)	10 minutes
➤ Closing	1 minute
Total Class Time:	60-70 minutes

Opening

- Welcome, especially new students or guests.
- Pass out nametags.
- Light chalice.
- Repeat opening words.
- 1 minute of silent meditation. Begin and end with the gong.
- Check in

Episode Viewing

Briefly introduce the episode and view it.

Wall to Wall

Have participants gather in the center of the room. Designate one wall of the room as “agree” and the opposite wall as “disagree”; an imaginary line connects the two and creates a continuum of opinion. Read statements that apply to the episode and have the participants go to the wall, or spot on the line between the walls, that best describes their belief. Discuss why students have placed themselves where they have.

- You can always tell when someone is gay.
- Gender stereotypes exist because they are true.
- People are born heterosexual or homosexual.
- People choose their sexual orientation.
- My school is accepting of people with different sexual orientations.
- My church is accepting of people with different sexual orientations.

Discussion

- Homer doesn't know that John is gay, until Marge points it out to him. Why does John being gay bother Homer so much? Why would he think that spending time with John would cause Bart to become gay? Do you think these attitudes exist in real life?
- Homer tries to “de-gay” his son, even though Bart is not really gay. Why is Homer so afraid of the possibility that Bart is gay? What was his “proof” of Bart's gayness? Have you encountered these stereotypes being applied to people that you know?
- What are the stereotypes applied to “masculine” and “feminine” behavior in the U.S.? Which are shown in this episode?
- By spending time with John, Homer realizes that he has nothing to fear about John being gay. How would more exposure to people with different sexual orientations help people who are homophobic?
- Have you ever used the phrase “that's so gay” to mean something negative? Discuss why that phrase hurts everyone, not just gay

- people. How can you respond the next time someone uses that phrase around you?
- Talk about the Gay-Straight Alliance. Some members of your class may be members of GSA in their local schools and can tell others what GSA is about. If not, learn more about GSA at <https://gsanetwork.org/>. How important are organizations such as GSA?

Activity (optional)

Take this quiz from PBS' FRONTLINE to see how homophobic you are: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/assault/etc/quiz.html>.
Please note: FRONTLINE has reproduced the "Wright, Adams, and Bernat Homophobia Scale." It is not intended as a perfect measure of anti-gay feelings or ideas, and is not a predictor of potential for anti-gay violence.

Closing

- Closing words
- Extinguish the chalice

Learn more about this topic:

- <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2009/exposing-hidden-homophobia>
- <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/ten-ways-homophobia-affects-straight-people>
- <https://gsanetwork.org/files/resources/National%20LGBTQ-inclusive%20lessons%20%26%20activities.pdf>
- <https://www.safeatschool.ca/resources/resources-on-equity-and-inclusion/homophobia/tool-kits-and-activities>