

The Stonewall Riots

Source: History.com



The 1960s and preceding decades were not welcoming times for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Americans. For instance, homosexual relationships were illegal in New York City, and there was a criminal statute that allowed police to arrest people wearing less than three gender-appropriate articles of clothing. For such reasons, LGBT individuals flocked to gay establishments, places of refuge where they could express themselves openly and socialize without worry. Despite advances made due to the efforts of activists and advocates, engaging in gay behavior in public (holding hands, kissing, or dancing with someone of the same sex) was still illegal, so police harassment of known gay establishments continued.



In 1966, the Genovese crime family purchased Stonewall Inn (a "straight" bar and restaurant), cheaply renovated it, and reopened it the next year as a gay bar. The Genovese family bribed New York's Sixth Police Precinct to ignore the activities occurring within the club. Without police interference, the crime family could cut costs how they saw fit: The club lacked a fire exit, running water behind the bar to wash glasses, and clean toilets that didn't routinely overflow. What's more, the Mafia reportedly blackmailed the club's wealthier patrons who wanted to keep their sexuality a secret.

Nonetheless, Stonewall Inn quickly became an important Greenwich Village institution. It was large and relatively cheap to enter. It welcomed drag queens, many runaways and homeless gay youths who received a bitter reception at other establishments...but raids were still a fact of life. In fact, the NYPD had stormed Stonewall Inn just a few days before the riot-inducing raid. When police raided Stonewall Inn on the morning of June 28, it came as a surprise.

Armed with a warrant, police officers entered the club, roughed up patrons, and arrested 13 people, including employees and people violating the state's gender-appropriate clothing statute (female officers would take suspected cross-dressing patrons into the bathroom to check their gender).

Fed up with constant police harassment and social discrimination, angry patrons and neighborhood residents hung around outside of the Stonewall Inn rather than disperse, becoming increasingly agitated as the events unfolded and people were aggressively manhandled. At one point, an officer hit a lesbian over the head as he forced her into the paddy wagon – she shouted to onlookers to act, inciting the crowd to begin throw pennies, bottles, cobble stones, and other objects at the police. Within minutes, a full-blown riot involving hundreds of people began. The police, a few prisoners, and a Village Voice writer barricaded themselves in the Stonewall Inn, which the mob attempted to set on fire after breaching the barricade repeatedly.

The fire department and a riot squad were eventually able to douse the flames, rescue those inside Stonewall, and disperse the crowd. But the protests, sometimes involving thousands of people, continued in the area for five more days, flaring up at one point after the Village Voice published its account of the riots.

Though the Stonewall uprising didn't start the gay rights movement, it was a galvanizing force for LGBT political activism, leading to numerous gay rights organizations, including the Gay Liberation Front, Human Rights Campaign, GLAAD (formerly Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), and PFLAG (formerly Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).

In 2016, President Barack Obama designated the site of the riots—Stonewall Inn, Christopher Park, and the surrounding streets and sidewalks—a national monument in recognition of the area's contribution to gay and human rights.



STONEWALL RIOTS JUNE 28, 1969

Terminology



1. **Transgender:** people who do not exclusively identify with the gender they were assigned at birth
2. **Homosexual:** people who are attracted to members of the same gender
3. **Statute:** a written law
4. **Refuge:** a place providing safety and security
5. **Activist:** a person who campaigns for social justice and change
6. **Advocates:** People who publicly support a cause
7. **Sexuality:** An inherent emotional, romantic attraction to others
8. **Drag Queens:** Performers of one or multiple genders
9. **Patron:** a customer
10. **Inciting:** to encourage or stir up violence
11. **Douse:** to pour liquid over/drench

Discussion



The text states, "There was a criminal statute that allowed police to arrest people wearing less than 3 gender-appropriate articles of clothing."

1. What do you think makes clothing "*gender-appropriate*?"
 - a. Why are some clothes designated "girl clothes" while some are marketed as "boy clothes?"
 - b. Who do you think *benefits* from having different clothing for sale for boys and girls?

2. Should somebody else get to decide what is appropriate for you to wear?
 - a. Should schools be able to determine dress codes?
 - b. Why do you think schools have dress codes?
 - c. In what ways do you think telling people what they can wear might be harmful?

3. What does the clothing you wear say about you?
 - a. How did you choose the clothes that are currently in your closet?
 - b. Do you worry about what people will think or say about you if you wear certain clothes?

Performance Task



PROMPT:

Based on your reading of the anchor text as well as the 4 additional sources, write an essay that answers the following question:

What caused the Stonewall Riots?

Click on the clipboard below or type in the following link: goo.gl/a1qwiz which will provide 4 additional articles related to the Stonewall Riots. Read through the articles and use the information to determine your answer the question in the prompt. Select relevant evidence from at least 3 total sources that supports your answer.



Your essay should respond to the prompt and include evidence from at least 3 sources that supports your answer. Be sure to use proper citation format, strong evidence that supports your claim(s), and clear reasoning.

Document A



New York Daily News (Excerpt)

According to reports, the Stonewall Inn . . . was a mecca for the homosexual element in the village who wanted nothing but a private little place where they could congregate, drink, dance and do whatever little girls do when they get together.

Last Friday the privacy of the Stonewall was invaded by police from the First Division. It was a raid. They had a warrant. After two years, police said they had been informed that liquor was being served on the premises. Since the Stonewall was without a license, the place was being closed. It was the law. . . .

Two participants recently recalled the battle and issued a warning to the cops: "If they close up all the gay joints in this area, there is going to be all out war."

Bruce and Nan: Both said they were refugees from Indiana and had come to New York where they could live together happily ever after. . . . "I'll bet you didn't see what they did to the Stonewall. Did the pigs tell you that they smashed everything in sight? Did you ask them why they stole money out of the cash register and then smashed it with a sledge hammer? Did you ask them why it took them two years to discover that the Stonewall didn't have a liquor license?" .

. . . "They let us operate just as long as the payoff is regular," Nan said bitterly. "I believe they closed up the Stonewall because there was some trouble with the payoff to the cops. I think that's the real reason. It's a shame. It was such a lovely place. We never bothered anybody. Why couldn't they leave us alone?" . . .

The men of the First Division were unable to find any humor in the situation, despite the comical overtones of the raid. "They were throwing more than lace hankies," one inspector said. "I was almost decapitated by a slab of thick glass. It was thrown like a discus and just missed my throat by inches. The beer can didn't miss, though. It hit me right above the temple." Police also believe the club was operated by Mafia connected owners. The police did confiscate the Stonewall's cash register as proceeds from an illegal operation. . . .

Source: Jerry Lisker, The New York Daily News, July 6, 1969.

Document B



Sylvia Rivera (Excerpt)

Born and raised in New York City, Sylvia Rivera participated in the Stonewall Riots as a teenager. Throughout her life, she fought for equal rights for LGBT people. This is an excerpt of a speech she gave at a meeting of the Latino Gay Men of New York, a community organization.

We were all involved in different struggles, including myself and many other transgender people. But in these struggles, in the civil rights movement, in the war movement, in the women's movement, we were still outcasts. The only reason they tolerated the transgender community in some of these movements was because we were gung-ho. . . . We had nothing to lose. . . .

We were all in the bar, having a good time. Lights flashed on, we knew what was coming; it's a raid. . . . The routine was that the cops get their payoff, they confiscate the liquor . . . a padlock would go on the door. What we did, back then, was disappear to a coffee shop or any place in the neighborhood for fifteen minutes. You come back, the Mafia was there cutting the padlock off, bringing in more liquor, and back to business as usual. . . .

The confrontation started outside by throwing change at the police. We started with the pennies, the nickels, the quarters, and the dimes. "Here's your payoff, you pigs!" . . .

Once word of mouth got around that the Stonewall had gotten raided, and that there's a confrontation going on, people came from the clubs. But we have to remember one thing: that it was not just the gay community and the street queens that really escalated this riot; it was also the help of the many radical straight men and women that lived in the Village at that time, that knew the struggle of the gay community and the trans community. . . .

So then the tactical police force came and heads were being bashed left and right. But what I found very impressive that evening, was that the more that they beat us, the more we went back for. We were determined that evening that we were going to be a liberated, free community.

Source: Sylvia Rivera, speech to the Latino Gay Men of New York, June 2001. Reprinted in *Centro Journal*, Spring 2007.

Document C



Mattachine Society of New York Newsletter (Excerpt)

This is an excerpt from an article written by Dick Leitsch, a founder of the Mattachine Society of New York, an early gay rights organization. Leitsch wasn't present at the Stonewall Inn when the riot began, but he came to the scene when he heard a report of the conflict on the radio.

Coming on the heels of the raids of the Snake Pit and the Sewer, and the closing of . . . other clubs, the Stonewall raid looked to many like part of an effort to close all gay bars and clubs in the Village. . . Since 1965 the homosexual community of New York has been treated quite well by the City Administration. . . . Now we've walked in the open and know how pleasant it is to have self-respect and to be treated as citizens and human beings. . . . Efforts to force us back in the closet could be disastrous for all concerned.

The above, while a true evaluation of the situation, does not explain why the raid on the Stonewall caused such a strong reaction The answer lies, we believe, in the unique nature of the Stonewall. This club was more than a dance bar, more than just a gay gathering place. It catered largely to a group of people who are not welcome in, or cannot afford, other places of homosexual social gathering. The "drags" and the "queens," two groups which would find a chilly reception or a barred door at most of the other gay bars and clubs, formed the "regulars" at the Stonewall. To a large extent, the club was for them. . . .

Another group was even more dependent on the Stonewall: the very young homosexuals and those with no other homes. . . . There are hundreds of young homosexuals in New York who literally have no home. . . . They live in the streets, panhandling or shoplifting for the price of admission to the Stonewall. That was the one advantage to the place—for \$3.00 admission, one could stay inside, out of the winter's cold or the summer heat, all night long. . . . The Stonewall became "home" to these kids. When it was raided, they fought for it. That, and the fact that they had nothing to lose other than the most tolerant and broadminded gay place in town, explains why the Stonewall riots were begun, led and spearheaded by "queens."

Source: Dick Leitsch, "The Stonewall Riots: The Gay View," from the Mattachine Society of New York Newsletter, August 1969.

Document D



The Ladder (Excerpt)

This is an excerpt of an article that appeared in *The Ladder*, which was the first nationally distributed lesbian magazine in the United States.

Gay power—social and political power for homosexuals—has become a reality in New York, with the inadvertent help of the Police Department. At about 2 A.M. late Saturday night of June 29, the police raided the Stonewall Inn. . . . They had previously closed . . . gay bars within the territory of the Sixth Precinct; but this was the first raid during peak hours, when the bar was jammed.

The raid touched off a riot by approximately 400 homosexual men and women, who yelled “gay power” and threw pennies, garbage and even uprooted parking meters at the police. . . . Both the Mattachine Society of New York and the Homophile Youth Movement began leafleting the Village in order to organize protests against the conditions which sparked the riots. . . .

CORRUPTION IN THE BARS. It is generally believed that the gay bars in New York City are controlled by the Mafia, in cooperation with the police. Reputable leaders of the gay community stated as much in private during the days following the riots. . . . However, no solid evidence has yet been presented in court.

It is also generally believed that in order to obtain a liquor license from the State Liquor Authority, a bribe ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000 must be paid. . . .

Since the SLA refuses to issue licenses to gay bars, these bars are generally run without licensing . . . and are therefore a perfectly legitimate target of police raids. During ordinary times, the police have allowed these bars to operate, overlooking violations in return for a percentage of the take. During election years, these bars become the target for raids and round-ups of homosexuals.

The raids in the Sixth Precinct are believed to have been triggered off by the presence of a new captain, who wishes to make his reputation as a “law-and-order” man during a conservative year by “cleaning up the Village.”

Source: “Gay Power in New York City,” *The Ladder*, October–November 1969.

Rubric

W.S. 1: WRITE ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT CLAIMS WITH EVIDENCE

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Introduces claim(s) that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text. | Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8 | |
| Supports claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence | Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8 | |
| Uses words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons. | Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8 | |
| Establish and maintain a formal style | Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8 | |
| Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented. | Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8 | |

CONVENTIONS OF ENGLISH STANDARD 1-2

| | | |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Correct Spelling | Exceeds standard 10 Meets standard 8 Approaching Standard 6 Below Standard 4 | |
| Correct Punctuation | Exceeds standard 10 Meets standard 8 Approaching Standard 6 Below Standard 4 | |
| Correct Grammar | Exceeds standard 10 Meets standard 8 Approaching Standard 6 Below Standard 4 | |

Standards Alignment



READING (ANCHOR TEXT & SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS)

READING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS 8.1

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

READING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS 8.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

READING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS 8.8

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SPEAKING AND LISTENING 6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING 6.1a

Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING 6.1b

Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING 6.1c

Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING 6.1d

Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

Standards Alignment



PERFORMANCE TASK

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence

WRITING 8.1.a

Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

WRITING 8.1.b

Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

WRITING 8.1.c

Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

WRITING 8.1.d

Establish and maintain a formal style.

WRITING .8.1.e

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

WRITING (RESEARCH) 8.8

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

WRITING (RESEARCH) 8.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.