



STUDY GUIDE

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will watch and interpret a series of video clips that depict the journey of a middle-aged man after he learns his original man. Students will discuss how secrets affect the man's situation as he begins to try to find his birthmother and family in his fifties. Students will then consider more broadly how much they think a person's background prior to adoption should remain hidden by the state.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Make observations about how secrets have affected Dave's life and his perception of his origins.
- Determine if Dave benefits from learning the truth about his past.
- Form an opinion about whether adopted individuals should be able to have access to their origins and whether this state-by-state providing of information is in the best interest of the United States.
- Explain their reasoning on this issue in an opinion paper.

GRADE LEVELS: 9-12

SUBJECT AREAS: Psychology, Sociology, Social Studies, Current Events, Political Science

MATERIALS

- Internet access and equipment to show the class online video clips
- Handout: Viewing Guide (in packet)

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED: One 50-minute class period, plus homework time if needed

VIDEO CLIPS

[Clip 1: Dave Gets His Record \(length: 3:05\)](#)

The clip begins at 2:52 with Dave talking about his adoptive parents and ends at 5:57 when Dave's original birth record for Bruce Kegresse comes on the screen.

[Clip 2: The Adoptee Experience \(length: 1:45\)](#)

The clip begins at 6:04 with the image of an old photograph with rows of cribs and ends with the completion of DMC's testimony to the New Jersey Senate at 7:48.

[Clip 3: Kansas and Missouri \(length: 6:41\)](#)

The clip begins at 31:00 when Pam enters the records office and ends at 35:07 when Carolyn and Ina leave the Missouri office without their records.

[Clip 4: Dave's Fears \(length 1:20\)](#)

The clip begins at 43:32 when Dave begins to drive into the tunnel and ends when Dave expresses his fear that his mother ran off with someone in a bar.

[Clip 5: Dave Reads Poems His Mother Saved \(1:44\)](#)

The clip begins at 48:38 when Marylou says 'This is going to be your favorite thing of all' and ends when Dave cannot finish reading the poem and bites his lip, looking down.

ACTIVITY

1. Ask students to imagine that they are unable to know the family they've been raised by. Have them write for five minutes or so on how they think their lives might be affected if aspects of their own history were kept hidden from them for their lifetime.
2. Invite students to share their responses. Write on the board some of the changes they mention. Why would these things change? Then, ask students what would not change and list those. Have students explain their thinking.
3. Distribute the Viewing Guide. Explain that you are going to show the class a series of video clips that document what happened when a 52 year old man was able to finally have access to information about himself.
4. Guide the class through the video clips and the questions on the handout.
5. Invite students to consider their own backgrounds and think about how much their families and/or ancestors have preserved or let go of their cultural and medical heritages. Give students a few minutes to discuss this topic with partners and then allow a few students to share their thoughts with the class.
6. Ask students to think more broadly about adoption within in the United States. How important do they think it is for adoptees to be able to preserve their origins? Do students think that adoptees should just assimilate within their adoptive families or should they be able to incorporate both heritages? Which process do they believe is in the best interest of the country? Students should take a stand on this issue and write opinion papers that explain their reasoning.

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

Students can be assessed on:

- Thoughtful and complete responses on the Viewing Guide.
- Clear arguments provided in their opinion papers.

EXTENSIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

- Explore POV's documentary stories of adoption, including [In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee](#), [First Person Plural](#), and [Off and Running](#). Each film has website resources and a lesson plan to facilitate classroom use.
- Determine community attitudes towards adoption. Have the class develop a survey designed to measure to what degree your local community thinks adoptees should have access to information versus maintaining privacy. Have students administer the survey to members of your community and analyze the resulting data. Then, connect attitudes in your community to current legislative action in your state regarding adoption. Predict how likely your community would be to vote for

or against issues related to adoptee access. Use an upcoming or past legislative effort to compare predictions with previous results. (maps exist at www.adoptedforthelifeofme.com that show active and past legislation)

- Read adoption stories from multiple perspectives.. Have student groups write plays that dramatize what they have read in one or more of these books (or others that you prefer).

RESOURCES

American Adoption Congress for information on the adoption reform movement
www.AmericanAdoptionCongress.org and click on Legislation

Evan B. Donaldson's July 2010 Report on Adoptee Access
http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/2010_07_for_records.php

National Council for Adoption supplies an opposing point of view.
www.adoptioncouncil.org

Family/Consumer Sciences

Standard 1: Understands the family as the basic unit of society.

Standard 2: Understands the impact of the family on the well-being of individuals and society.

Standard 10: Understands how knowledge and skills related to child development affect the well-being of individuals, families and society.

Geography

Standard 9: Understands the nature, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.

Language Arts

Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

Standard 5: Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process.

Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

Working With Others

Standard 4: Displays effective interpersonal communication skills.