

Born This Way

**E**

To the Educator

Born This Way™, the Emmy Award-winning series on A&E, would be a great fit for a range of classes including social studies, media and current events. It would be useful to show or discuss during after-school programs and events. This series offers an excellent opportunity for students and general audiences to discuss and explore the lives of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Born This Way* is appropriate for upper middle school, high school and college students.

Pre-Viewing Activities

1

Watch the *Born This Way* trailer in preparation for watching the series.

2

Ask students to read the language guide on the next page. This will help explain Down syndrome as well as set a framework for understanding the experiences of the cast of *Born This Way* and others with developmental disabilities.

3

Discuss the ways labels can affect people. Why is it important to use language carefully when talking to anyone? Why is it important to use language carefully when talking to people with differing abilities, like those with Down syndrome?



**THE NDSS
PREFERRED
LANGUAGE
GUIDE**

Download
here for print
and distribution.
ndss.org



“These tips will help provide appropriate language choices when talking about people with Down syndrome.”

- THE NATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME SOCIETY (NDSS)

People with Down syndrome should always be referred to as people first.

Avoid using “a Down syndrome child”; instead, say “a child with Down syndrome.” Also avoid “Down’s child” and describing the condition as “Down’s,” as in, “He has Down’s.”

Down syndrome is a condition or a syndrome, not a disease.

People “have” Down syndrome, they do not “suffer from” it and are not “afflicted by” it.

“Typically developing” or “typical” is preferred over “normal.”

“Intellectual disability” or “cognitive disability” has replaced “mental retardation” as appropriate terms.

NDSS strongly condemns the use of the word “retarded” in any derogatory context. Using this word is hurtful and suggests that people with disabilities are not competent.

Down vs. Down’s

NDSS uses the preferred “Down syndrome,” rather than “Down’s syndrome.” The apostrophe s connotes ownership or possession.

Down syndrome is named for the English physician John Langdon Down, who characterized the condition, but did not have it.

While Down syndrome is listed in many dictionaries with both popular spellings (with or without an apostrophe s), the preferred usage in the United States is Down syndrome. The AP Stylebook recommends using Down syndrome, as well.

Discussion Questions

1

Each of the young adults in *Born This Way™* has goals and aspirations. What are some of their aspirations? How are they working to achieve them?

2

Megan states that she does not want limits placed upon her because she has Down syndrome. What are some of the actions she's taking to defy limits and exceed expectations?

3

In this series, we also hear a lot from the parents who talk about the joy their children bring to their lives. What are some of the notable comments shared by the parents?

4

Many people with Down syndrome want to live as independently as possible. Based on the series, what are some ways people with Down syndrome can be in control of their own lives?

5

What are some of the career goals of the cast members in *Born This Way*? In what ways can society support those with Down syndrome and other disabilities in their career paths?

6

What role do friendships play in the lives of those in *Born This Way*? Why are friendships so important in people's lives?

7

How do you think this series might change perceptions about people with Down syndrome? How did it change your own views?

8

In what ways has society become more inclusive of people with disabilities? In what areas could there be improvement?

9

What can you do now in your school and community to be more inclusive?

10

What surprised you the most about this series?

11

What are some of the challenges faced by the cast members in *Born This Way*? How are their challenges unique, and how are they similar to the challenges many young people face?

12

What do you feel is the most important takeaway from this series? What impact do you hope this series has on our society? What can you do to help?



ELENA

With a flair for the dramatic, this young woman embraces life. She loves to cook, dance and write poetry and takes great pride in her independence.



STEVEN

Working as a dishwasher at Angel Stadium and in customer service at a grocery store, Steven is a huge movie buff who knows the title and year of every Oscar®-winning film.



RACHEL

Rachel's the maid of honor at her brother's upcoming wedding. Though she'd love to get married herself, she has to find the right guy. She works in the mailroom of an insurance company.



CRISTINA

This loving and compassionate young adult works in a middle school. In her free time she loves talking on the phone with Angel, her boyfriend of four years and the man she plans to marry.



SEAN

An excellent golfer and avid sportsman, Sean is a self-professed ladies' man who is not shy about introducing himself to every eligible woman he meets.



JOHN

From a very young age, John made it clear to his parents that he craved the spotlight. A born entertainer, John is committed to his music and is pursuing a career in rap.

Meet the Cast

of Born This Way



MEGAN

Megan has created Megology, a clothing brand, while pursuing her dream of becoming a film producer. She's also committed to spreading the word that society shouldn't limit adults with disabilities.

Did You Know?

According to the U.S. Census, nearly one in five Americans have a disability. Currently 70 percent of working-age people with disabilities are not working — even though most of them want jobs and independence. The numbers are even worse for people with Down syndrome. Many studies have shown that people with disabilities, including those with Down syndrome, can work successfully and live relatively independently. *Born This Way*™ highlights the career hopes and dreams of seven young adults with Down syndrome.

The Institute for Corporate Productivity has created a research report about the capabilities of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Visit cec-como.org to download the report.



Spotlight on Best Buddies®

A&E® is pleased to join with Best Buddies® to share information about their organization.

Best Buddies® is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and

developmental disabilities. Two cast members, Rachel and Sean, have been involved in Best Buddies® friendship programs which partner peers — with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities — in one-on-one friendships.

Founded in 1989 by Anthony K. Shriver, Best Buddies® is a vibrant organization that has grown from one original chapter to more than 1,900 chapters worldwide. Today, Best Buddies® eight formal programs — Middle Schools, High Schools, Colleges, Citizens, e-Buddies®, Jobs, Ambassadors and Promoters — engage participants in each of the 50 states and in over 50 countries, positively affecting the lives of more than 900,000 people with and without disabilities around the world. In many cases, as a result of their involvement with Best Buddies®, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities secure rewarding jobs, live on their own, become inspirational leaders and make lifelong friendships.

For more information, please visit bestbuddies.org, and follow them on Facebook and Twitter.



Recommended Reading

FOR CHILDREN

In My World: Down Syndrome (AuthorHouse, 2013) by Gabriella Llano and Tiziana Vazquez. With the support of her family, a girl with Down syndrome lives her life and learns to accept herself. Elementary-school age.

My Brother Charlie (Scholastic Press, 2010) by Holly Robinson Peete and Ryan Elizabeth Peete. Story told from the point of view of the twin sister of a boy on the autism spectrum. Grades K–2.

My Friend Isabelle (Woodbine House, 2003) by Eliza Woloson. The story of a friendship when one of the friends has Down syndrome. Grades K–2.

My Sister, Alicia May (Pleasant St. Press, 2009) by Nancy Tupper Ling. What it's like to grow up with a sister with Down syndrome. Grades 1–3.

Popping Wheelies Coloring Book, Volume 1 (Popping Wheelies LLC, 2014) by Susan K. Nuenke. Coloring book featuring drawings of kids with disabilities. Elementary-school age.

Sophie's Tales: Overcoming Obstacles (Sophie's Tales, 2012) by Melanie Patino. A dog with a cochlear implant meets Champ, another dog who wears glasses, and they talk about disability. Ages 3 to 10.

Taking Down Syndrome to School (Special Kids in School) (JayJo Books, 2002) by Jenna Glatzer. Picture book about what it is like to have Down syndrome in school. Elementary-school age.

We'll Paint the Octopus Red (Woodbine House, 1998) by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen. A six-year-old girl learns how to be a good big sister to a baby brother with Down syndrome. Grades K–3.

Wonder (Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2012) by R.J. Palacio. A story about a boy born with facial defects. Ages 8 to 12.

FOR ADULTS

Enabling Acts: The Hidden Story of How the Americans with Disabilities Act Gave the Largest US Minority Its Rights (Beacon Press, 2015) by Lennard J. Davis. A gripping and nuanced telling of the behind-the-scenes efforts to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Far from the Tree: Parents, Children and the Search for Identity (Scribner, 2012) by Andrew Solomon. A deeply touching look at how parents and children can learn to accept and embrace differences. The people featured demonstrate how lives with extreme challenges also have extreme value.

No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement (Broadway Books, 1994) by Joseph P. Shapiro. A historical, in-depth look at people with disabilities as well as the advocacy efforts that led to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act.



EXPLORE

Visit the *Born This Way*™ website to follow this series.

BORN THIS WAY – EDUCATION VERSION

You can purchase the classroom edition of *Born This Way* on Amazon.com.

BEST BUDDIES®
bestbuddies.org/

SPECIAL OLYMPICS
specialolympics.org/

GLOBAL DOWN SYNDROME FOUNDATION
globaldownsyndrome.org/

RESPECTABILITY USA
RespectAbility's website offers lesson plans and classroom explorations related to disability. respectabilityusa.com/

DOWN SYNDROME DIAGNOSIS NETWORK
dsdiagnosisnetwork.org

RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES EXPECTING OR RAISING A CHILD WITH DOWN SYNDROME

The Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky offers excellent publications for families who are expecting or raising a child with Down Syndrome. Visit lettercase.hdi.uky.edu to explore and learn how you can order these publications.

#BornThisWay

facebook.com/AETV

@AETV

youtube.com/watch?v=v7zIJAPFgOM&feature=youtu.be