

# FIRST DAY

Epic Films Kojo Entertainment/ Julie Kalceff, 2020.

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**Synopsis:** Hannah Bradford is a 12 year old transgender girl starting at a new school. She is nervous about people finding out she is trans and making new friends. Throughout the four episodes, Hannah navigates feeling left out, making friends, bullying, and sharing her experience as a trans person.

**Run Time:** 4 episodes; approximately 25 minutes each

- Episode 1, 24:21
- Episode 2, 22:41
- Episode 3, 22:53
- Episode 4, 21:37

**Suggested Grades:** Grades 6+

## The Takeaway/ Learning Objectives:

- Trans students are welcome in our schools, sleepovers, and activities
- Trans people get to decide if they want to share they are trans with other people. If so, they get to decide where and when to do so
- Trans people have many important parts of their lives beyond being trans
- There are lots of different ways to support trans people

## Keywords:

Trans, transgender, allyship, middle school, friendships, social media

## BC Curriculum Links: Core Competencies

- [Personal and Social](#)
  - The miniseries shows many relationships that develop over the four episodes, along with each character's sense of personal and social awareness and responsibility. Hannah interacts with her family, teachers, and friends throughout

the miniseries in caring and respectful ways, even when she encounters challenges. The activities in this resource offer some questions to explore these two sub-competencies in greater depth.

- **Personal Awareness and Responsibility:** Hannah shows great personal awareness and responsibility throughout the miniseries as she navigates her new school and friendships. She advocates for her rights and uses a variety of strategies to manage stress and regulate her emotions.
- **Social Awareness and Responsibility:** Many characters in the series work towards creating a welcoming environment for trans students, including Hannah herself.

### What to know before watching these episodes:

This series only tells the story of one trans youth, Hannah, and focuses on the social aspects of Hannah's life as a trans youth. It does not address medical aspects of Hannah's affirmation and transition care. TransCareBC has more information about [medical affirmation and transition](#) that you may wish to provide for students who have additional questions. One key message to highlight is that trans people do not need to share any aspects of their medical care with other people.

It is important to remember that Hannah's experiences may be very similar or very different from youth in your school community. Here are some topics in the episodes that may require specific support for students in your classroom:

- **Misgendering<sup>1</sup>:** In the first episode, Hannah's principal says some people may be upset to have a boy in the girls washroom. In this scene, the principal misgenders Hannah by calling her a boy, which she is not. Misgendering can happen on purpose or accidentally. In both cases, misgendering is harmful and it is important to prevent it from happening.
- **Dead naming<sup>2</sup>:** The principal mentions Hannah's dead name. A student who bullies Hannah taunts her with her dead name.
- **Bullying:** A student who bullied Hannah at her old school also starts at Hannah's new school, and bullies Hannah throughout most of the episodes. The bullying is not physical.

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<sup>1</sup> Intentionally and unintentionally getting a person's gender wrong, whether by using the wrong pronoun, gender label, or language.

<sup>2</sup> 'Dead naming' occurs when someone uses the name a trans person was given before they came to their current gender identity.

- **Social media disclosures (episode 3 only):** Someone shares that Hannah was born a boy on social media. Hannah's close friends and classmates then learn about this part of her life which she had not previously shared.
- **Potential physical abuse (episode 1 only):** A character named Isabella, portrayed as the bully, has a wrist injury that she intentionally covers up. In interviews, the actor who plays the main character shares Isabella does not have a supportive home life.
- **Getting a period for the first time (episode 4 only):** A character gets her period for the first time on a class trip to a camp and turns to her friends for menstrual products.

## Discussion Questions

Use as many or as few questions as you would like from this list. When choosing questions, keep in mind the experiences of all learners, and consider what is needed to create as much safety as possible when exploring these topics.

### Pre-viewing Questions:

- How does it feel to start at a new school?
- Why might someone bully another student?
  - Students sometimes bully a person for being different. That may be because of the clothes they wear, the food they eat, their culture, or their sexual or gender identity.
- What types of life transitions happen in our childhood?
  - Starting a new school, moving to a new home or community, changes to our family structure (changes to our caregivers, loss of a caregiver, divorce, new caregivers, new siblings), identity transitions (e.g. 'coming out'), developing a new interest.

### Post-Viewing Questions:

- Hannah meets another student who is new to her school at the beginning of the series. They briefly share some first day jitters. **What experiences might be the same for both cisgender and transgender students starting at a new school? What experiences might a transgender student be worried about that a cisgender student might not?**
  - Trans students might be excited for no one to know any past names they may have used, concerned about what washrooms to use, if they will be divided into girls and boys groups for sports, group activities, classes, or washrooms, if they can find clothes that they are comfortable in, if their peers will find out they are trans, and whether or not to tell new friends they are trans.

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- All students might be excited about some parts of a new school, as well as be concerned about knowing where to go, if they will make new friends, if they will find activities they like, how to get to and from their new school, or if there are bullies.
- Throughout the series, Hannah makes friends. **What are some examples in the series of how we can be good friends, whether we are trans or cis?**
  - **Hannah** is a good friend by apologizing to Isabella, a character who has been bullying her (episode 3), congratulating Jazzie for becoming class captain (episode 3), offering to befriend Jazzie (episode 4), and reassuring another student who shares their gender identity (episode 4).
  - **Natalie and Olivia** are good friends by: introducing Hannah to her other friends from primary schools (episode 1), sending Hannah only the nice comments about her on social media, going to check on Hannah when she stays home from school, asking if Hannah wants to go back to the dorm when someone asks her boy name (episode 4), and standing up to Isabella (episode 4).

## Additional Activities

### Coming Out

Adapted from the [First Day Teaching Toolkit Series](#), created by the Australian Children's Television Foundation

*Based on episode 2, 14:52 - 18:57*

The day after a sleepover party, Hannah decides to tell Olivia that she is trans. Some people and cultures refer to this process of sharing sexual or gender identity as 'coming out'. Some cultures have their own words and practices that may be similar or different from this English approach.

Ask students to consider what it would be like to be Hannah or Olivia during this scene, and consider what either character might be feeling, thinking, saying or doing. Students may want to write down their ideas during the clip (episode 2, 14:52 - 18:57).

After watching, have a class discussion using a chart that compares what Olivia and Hannah might have felt and thought, and what they were saying and doing.

Here are some additional discussion questions:

- How did Hannah prepare to share the news?
  - **Letting her mom know ahead of time**
  - **Choosing a place where she felt comfortable and there would not be interruptions**
- What did Olivia say and do to express her support for Hannah?

### “Vito Russo Test” Media Scan

Teachers may want to invite students to do this activity, called a media scan. This activity can happen after any episode or after watching the full series.

The [Vito Russo Test](#), inspired by the Bechdel Test, asks three questions about 2SLGBTQIA+ characters in media to understand how these characters are represented and understand what stories are being told about 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

1. Is the character identifiably 2SLGBTQIA+?
2. Is the character predominantly or solely defined by their sexuality or gender?
3. Would removing the character significantly alter the plot?

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1) Is the character identifiably 2SLGBTQIA+?

- Hannah self-identifies as trans throughout the episodes
- There are two other characters who are identifiably part of trans communities: a YouTube vlogger, and another student who asks Hannah for advice about their own gender journey

2) Is the character predominantly or solely defined by their sexuality or gender?

- No - Hannah has many parts of her identity that are explored in the show. For example, Hannah participates in taekwondo, enjoys video games, is part of her family, is identified by one teacher as a candidate for class captain, and participates in many activities and friendships that are not about being transgender. See Episode 2, from 3:31-5:23.

3) Would removing the character significantly alter the plot?

- Yes. Without Hannah, the plot would be very different.