

## FILL THE EVENTS

“Based on your health, based on your condition, based on all the evidence we have, we estimate you have 30 days left. Put your affairs in order.”



What do you think: What happens next? Fill the events into the timeline.



## WHAT IS HIV/ AIDS?

Research about the history of HIV/AIDS

AVERT (2014), History of HIV and AIDS.

Online: <http://www.avert.org/history-hiv-and-aids.htm>



## LIVING WITH HIV/ AIDS

Form groups of three and re-write and transform the screenplay in today's society.

What does it mean to be HIV-positive/ to have AIDS today?

Prepare to act out today's scene in front of the class, choose one person to be Dr. Saks, one to be Dr. Sevard and one to be Ron Woodroof. Also take costumes, make-up and body language into consideration.

Prepare to act out the scene in front of the class.



## THE REAL DALLAS BUYERS CLUB

Bill Minutaglio met Ron Woodroof in 1992 and wrote down his story which can be found online:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/02/real-dallas-buyers-club-matthew-mcconaughey-character>

When the movie was released in 2013, Minutaglio recaps the meeting in the newspaper The Guardian.



### **The real legacy of the real Dallas Buyers Club is that it didn't really have one**

I spent the brutally hot Texas summer of 1992 befriending an elfin-looking man in a white business shirt, carefully knotted tie and a Village People, disco-era moustache: Ron Woodroof, the head of The Dallas Buyers Club, and the subject of an Oscar-nominated movie by the same name. It took a few weeks for this man irascibly living with AIDS to trust a total stranger – and who could blame him?

Ron was one of hundreds of people around the United States, including many affiliated with much larger underground groups in San Francisco and New York, who were going to Mexico, Japan and beyond to smuggle in unlicensed drugs for AIDS patients. They were bringing back, illegally, all manner of unusual and even deadly substances to sell to frantic, desperately ill people. They didn't all get the Hollywood treatment. And they didn't ask for it. Often working in deep anonymity, the far-flung clubs were rolling the dice — offering dying people a chance to ingest or inject anything that might keep them alive for a few more days.

So why would Ron, or any of the many other people running those bigger-scale “buyers clubs” across the US, ever trust someone they didn't know?

What if the newcomer was an FBI agent? Or even a lawyer for one of the pharmaceutical companies that the club masterminds were working so secretly and aggressively to avoid?

Perhaps it was because he wanted the publicity, perhaps it was because he knew he was dying, but Ron finally let me into his little world in Dallas. He agreed to let me be the first person to write a long story, about a local operation that still prolonged dozens if not hundreds of lives, in the Sunday magazine of the Dallas Morning News.

It had the tales Ron told me about dressing as a priest, cramming his car trunk with pills bought in Mexico and smuggling them past a Texas checkpoint. About smuggling drugs from Japan and hustling through airports with “smoking” luggage because of the dry ice he had used to protect the drugs.

## THE REAL DALLAS BUYERS CLUB

Ron told me his mission – often more brutally pragmatic than it was clever, more AZT-averse than always-action-packed – was a matter of pure enlightened self-interest. He and others just wanted to live one more day, and they wanted the right to self-medicate with any damned thing they pleased. Ron did not trust many doctors. He would startle you by bellowing how he never, ever, trusted the government. But the most abruptly arresting thing about Ron Woodroof was that he looked so unlikely to be saying and doing the things he did.

Sitting behind a desk. Always by himself. No “customers” lined inside or outside the drab, low-slung office space in a row of buildings close to downtown Dallas. Just this little, well-groomed, cursing man who was shuffling papers, placing calls and working a calculator. The “cowboy drug smuggler” appeared more like an insurance salesman under fluorescent lights than an emaciated Matthew McConaughey on the big screen. Ron was never dressed in Wild West clothes. He never mentioned the rodeo. Too, he was very well aware that some of his customers in Dallas were gay. He never uttered anything homophobic to me.

His understandable wariness wore off over time – but not enough for him to tell me if his “girlfriend” was real, what her name was, and how he became HIV positive. I didn’t linger with those things, about whether he was gay or not. It was his work that was the real point – even if his work, while truly vital and courageous, was not at the scale seen elsewhere in the US.

Other underground pharmacies – a network of them, from Florida to New Jersey and beyond – were smuggling more drugs and serving more people than the Dallas Buyers Club. But Ron had intentionally built a reputation for being brash, daring, and even for deriding the competition. Ron yelled that other clubs were peddling fake drugs – and that his were truly lifesaving. The other clubs shot back, saying he had priced his drugs too high for sick people to afford them.

The definitive look at the unlicensed AIDS drug movement is a book called “Acceptable Risks” by Jonathan Kwitny. It tells the incredibly over-the-top but true adventures of two daring men in California who were, unequivocally, the unsung godfathers of the underground AIDS pharmacy – their sagas as exotic and dangerous as a James Bond movie, let alone a film up for six Academy Awards. The book outlines how two men forced politicians, pharmaceutical firms and doctors to examine how, and how quickly, the US approves drugs for dying people.

## THE REAL DALLAS BUYERS CLUB

Back in Dallas, I often wondered why Ron decided to share what turned out to be the last days of his life with me. Maybe it was an “acceptable risk”: at the minimum, by advertising himself as a swashbuckler who did anything to bring in drugs, he would get more customers. And Ron needed paying customers so he could purchase his own drugs to stay alive.

Very soon after my story was published, I got a call. One of his good friends said Ron had just died, almost six years after his diagnosis. His friend promised the club would live on – and, for a while, it did. The news hit me hard, and I quickly wrote another piece about Ron, the last one I wrote about him until now. A goodbye, a tribute. He really was an anti-establishment hero, a man worth knowing and remembering. Someone who was enigmatic. Desperate to live. And someone who was very angry – at the US government, at his own cruel fate, at people telling him lies about what could save him or not.

“I don’t buy anybody’s story,” Ron told me one day, when just the two of us were hanging around that dimly lit office in that block of forgettable-looking buildings in Dallas. Ron Woodroof really only trusted one person to deliver the truth, he said – and that person was himself.

## BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Read the text from The Guardian by Bill Minutaglio and research the internet for other articles about the background of the movie. Sum up the differences between the real story and the movie.



	REALITY	MOVIE
Ron's motif to start the Dallas Buyers Club		
Description of the Dallas Buyers Club		
Woodroof's appearance		
Woodroof's personality		
Rayon		

## INVESTIGATE IN GROUPS

In groups of four, think of reasons why the director Jean-Marc Vallée has changed some of the real facts or invented new storylines.

In your groups, develop interview questions from a journalist's point of view that deal with the differences between reality and fiction. Also, prepare answers given by Jean-Marc Vallée.

Prepare to perform your interview in front of the class.



**THE GENDERBREAD**

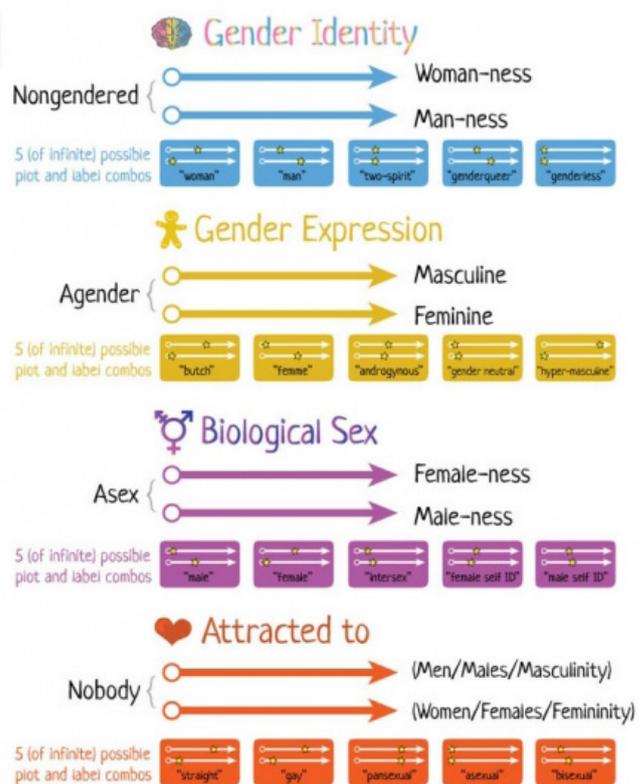
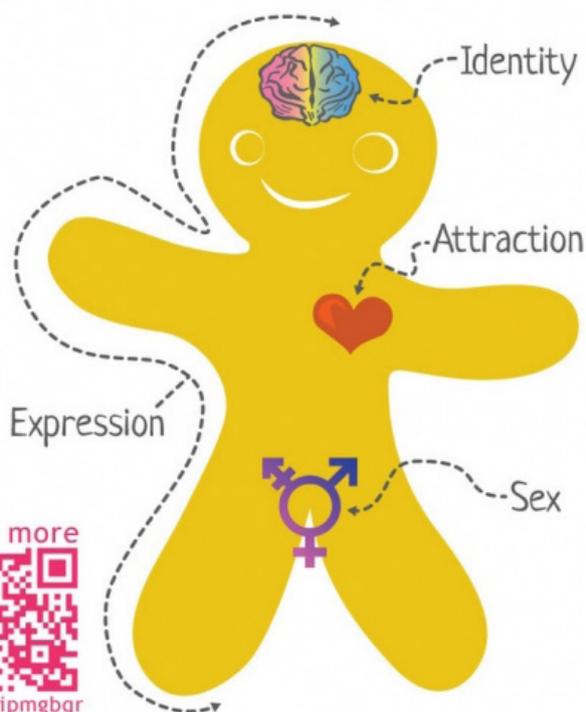
How would you describe Rayon's gender with regards to the Genderbread Person?



# The Genderbread Person v2.0

by its pronounced **METROsexual**.com

Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but most people don't. Like *Inception*. Gender isn't binary. It's not either/or. In many cases it's both/and. A bit of this, a dash of that. This tasty little guide is meant to be an appetizer for understanding. It's okay if you're hungry for more.

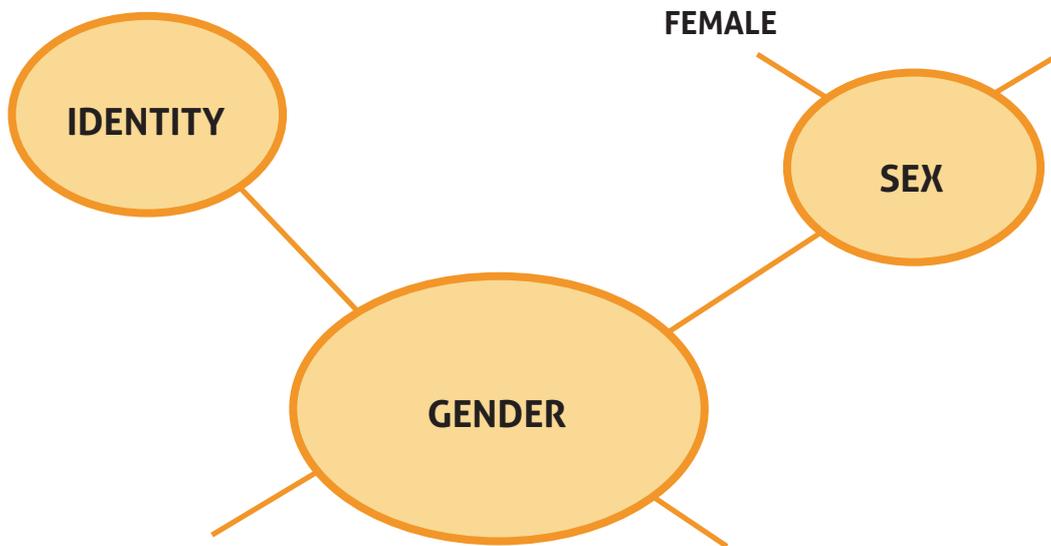


## WHAT IS GENDER?

What does **gender** mean? Brainstorm!

You may use the attached example of a mindmap to get started.

You can also use the genderbread person as a reference.



## WRITE TO RAYON



**Imagine Rayon's father writes a letter to Rayon after his son has visited him at work.**

PERSON 1: Take a blank piece of paper. Write down two sentences, also add first words (greetings etc.), then fold the sheet after the first sentence so that the person next to you can only see the second sentence. Pass it on to your neighbour.

PERSON 2: Do not unfold the paper, only read the second sentence from the previous person. Write down two sentences that refer to the previous sentence, then fold the sheet after the first sentence so that the person next to you can only see the second sentence. Pass it on to your neighbour.

PERSON 3: Do not unfold the paper, only read the second sentence from the previous person. Write down two sentences that refer to the previous sentence, then fold the sheet after the first sentence so that the person next to you can only see the second sentence. Pass it on to your neighbour.

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LAST PERSON: Do not unfold the paper, only read the second sentence from the previous person. Write down two sentences that refer to the previous sentence, also add last words (greetings etc.). Read out the whole letter to the class.

Sentence 1 (Greetings)	 fold and pass on
Sentence 2	 fold and pass on
Sentence 3	
Sentence 4	
Sentence 5	
Sentence 6	
Sentence 7	
Sentence 8	
Sentence 9	
Sentence 10	
Sentence 11	
Sentence 12	
Sentence 13	
Sentence 14	
Sentence 15	
Sentence 16	
Sentence 17	
Sentence 18	
Sentence 19	
Sentence 20	
Sentence 21	
Sentence 22	
Sentence 23	
Sentence 24 (Greetings)	

**WRITE TO YOUR FATHER**

**Imagine Rayon writes a letter to her/his father after visiting him at work.**

PERSON 1: Take a blank piece of paper. Write down two sentences, also add first words (greetings etc.), then fold the sheet after the first sentence so that the person next to you can only see the second sentence. Pass it on to your neighbour.

PERSON 2: Do not unfold the paper, only read the second sentence from the previous person. Write down two sentences that refer to the previous sentence, then fold the sheet after the first sentence so that the person next to you can only see the second sentence. Pass it on to your neighbour.

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Sentence 11	
Sentence 12	
Sentence 13	
Sentence 14	
Sentence 15	
Sentence 16	
Sentence 17	
Sentence 18	
Sentence 19	
Sentence 20	
Sentence 21	
Sentence 22	
Sentence 23	
Sentence 24 (Greetings)	

## RE-WATCH AND COMPARE

Re-watch and compare the three most important scenes referring to the relation between Ron and Rayon.



	<b>SCENE 1: FIRST MEETING IN THE HOSPITAL</b>	<b>SCENE 2: SECOND MEETING ON THE STREETS</b>	<b>SCENE 3: RON DEFENDS RAYON IN THE SUPERMARKET</b>
<b>Ron</b>			
<b>Rayon</b>			
<b>Relationship between Ron and Rayon</b>			
<b>Filmaesthetic Aspects (Mise-en-scène Cinematography, Editing, Sound)</b>			

## PRE VIEWING ACTIVITY



What could the term „white trash“ mean?

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Find endings for the sentences:

You might be „white trash“ if...

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You might be „white trash“ if...

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You might be „white trash“ if...

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## POST VIEWING ACTIVITY



*The offensive term white trash depicts “the stereotypes of rural poor whites as incestuous and sexually promiscuous, violent, alcoholic, lazy and stupid”.*

(Newitz, Annalee & Wray, Matt (1997), Introduction. In: Newitz, Annalee & Wray, Matt (eds.) (1997), White Trash. Race and Class in America. London: Routledge, 2)

1. Compare your results from the first work sheet with this definition. What are similarities, what are the differences?
2. Come up with your own definition. Work together with your neighbour.

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3. How is ‘white trash’ described in Dallas Buyers Club with regards to mise-en-scène?

'WHITE TRASH': MISE-EN-SCÈNE	SCENE	WHO IS SHOWN? WHAT IS SHOWN? (PEOPLE, OBJECTS, SETTING)	EFFECT
light			
setting			
costumes / make-up			