Petra & Pearl
Short Story from This Is Our Rainbow
Instructional Resource Guide

Suggested Grade Levels: 6-8
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User's Guide
Designed for use with middle school students, these writing prompts provide opportunities for students to develop a deeper understanding of the following topics/standards:

+ RL.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
+ RL.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
+ RL.3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
+ RL.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
+ SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
+ W.1 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
+ W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Important Note: Many of the prompts investigate the experiences of marginalized identities; therefore, offering students a choice of prompts allows them to select one that resonates with them the most.

About the Author
Lisa Bunker has written stories all her life. She lives in Sacramento, California with her wife. Between them they have three grown children. In 2018, Lisa was elected to represent her town in the New Hampshire House of Representatives, and was reelected in 2020. In her leisure time, she sings, plays bass, plays chess and studies languages.

About the Story
Through an online friendship, Petra and Pearl learn to support each other as they strive to live authentically. As they navigate school and family, they empower one another to share their true transgender identities with those they love.

Discussion Questions
+ After connecting online, Petra and Pearl’s connection and friendship developed into a bond that was above and beyond their other friendships. What makes an online friendship easier? What makes it more difficult? [Standards SL.1, RL.1 & RL.3]
+ ‘Transgender’ is the word Pearl and Petra use to describe a piece of their identity. What does it mean? Additionally, the story implies that the majority of the people in Pearl and Petra’s lives are ‘cisgender’. What does that word mean? [Standards SL.1, RL.4]
+ Bullying can force people to hide parts of their identity. Can the different social groups that exist at school play a part in bullying? If so, how? [Standard SL.1]
Writing Prompts

+ What do you think the author’s message is to the reader? Share evidence from the text to support your idea. (This might take the form of a book jacket blurb.) [Standards RL.1, RL.2 & W.2]

+ In the story, Pearl and Petra are both grappling with their transgender identities. What are some of the identities that you hold that have the greatest impact on your life at this time? (This might take the form of a journal entry.) [Standard W.1]

+ In the story, Pearl says to Petra, “I’ve got you. You are a true friend. So, thank you for being there when I needed someone.” (p. 84) What are some of the qualities that Petra portrayed that allowed her to support Pearl in her time of need? (This might take the form of a letter from one character to the other.) [Standards RL.3 & W.2]

+ What qualities do you possess that make you a good friend? Share examples of how these qualities, such as being a good listener, being honest, etc., can show up in your friendships. [Standard W.2]