

# Audience Guide

## Table of Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| ABOUT THE PLAY.....                              | 2 |
| Synopsis.....                                    | 2 |
| Characters.....                                  | 3 |
| Meet the Creative Team.....                      | 3 |
| Amanda McRaven, Director.....                    | 3 |
| Julie Granata Hunicutt, Movement Coach.....      | 3 |
| Maria Huber, Costume Designer.....               | 3 |
| Qui Nguyen, Playwright.....                      | 4 |
| Nerd Culture Then and Now.....                   | 4 |
| Dungeons & Dragons.....                          | 5 |
| Peek Inside a Typical D&D Game!.....             | 6 |
| <i>Community</i> Discovers Their Characters..... | 6 |
| What Character are You?.....                     | 6 |
| “Bury Your Gays”.....                            | 6 |
| Additional Resources.....                        | 7 |
| Campus.....                                      | 7 |
| Local.....                                       | 8 |
| National.....                                    | 8 |
| Discussion Questions/Activities.....             | 9 |
| Before You See the Show.....                     | 9 |
| After You See the Show.....                      | 9 |

## ABOUT THE PLAY

### Synopsis

Set in Ohio in the 1990s, *She Kills Monsters* tells the story of Agnes, a young woman who stumbles into a journey of action-packed adventure, twenty-sided dice, and revelatory self-discovery. After the sudden death of her estranged younger sister, Agnes must enter a fantastical world of fairies and ogres to discover her sister’s true self. Family expectations clash with broadswords and wizard staffs as Agnes dives deeper into her sister’s domain, putting her real-world relationships at risk.

## Characters

**Agnes:** average

**Tilly:** Agnes' little sister, awesome

**Chuck:** aka DM Biggs, Dungeon Master

**Miles:** Agnes' boyfriend, a fart-knocker

**Lilith:** a Demon Queen

**Kaliopé:** a Dark Elf

**Orcus:** (Former) Demon Overlord of the Underworld

**Steve:** an adventurer

**Vera:** Agnes' friend, a guidance counselor

**Farrah:** A nice, beautiful fairy

**Gabbi and Tina:** Cheerleaders, evil

**Narrators:** narrators

## Meet the Creative Team

Click the pictures to watch interviews with members of the creative team of *She Kills Monsters*.

Amanda McRaven, Director



Julie Granata Hunicutt, Movement Coach



Maria Huber, Costume Designer





### Qui Nguyen, Playwright

Originally from Arkansas, Qui Nguyen is a playwright, TV writer, and all around pop-culture nerd. When he's not geeking out to indie comics and early 90s hip-hop, he spends his time being the Co-Artistic Director of the OBIE Award-winning Vampire Cowboys. His work, known for its innovative use of pop-culture, stage violence, puppetry, and multimedia, has been praised as "Culturally Savvy Comedy" by *The New York Times* and "Tour De Force Theatre" by *Time Out New York*.

His company, Vampire Cowboys, often credited as the pioneers of "geek theatre", holds the unique distinction of being the first and currently only professional theatre organization to be officially sponsored by NY Comic Con. They've been praised by the Village Voice as "New York's Best Army of Geeks" and currently in-residence at The New Ohio Theater

and IRT. Bio and photo from <http://quinguyen.com>

## Nerd Culture Then and Now

Never before has the boundary between geek culture and mainstream culture been as porous as it is today. Whether it is a TV series like *The Big Bang Theory* and *Silicon Valley* or a top-grossing movie such as *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* or *Captain America: Civil War*, or a fantasy-based fiction like the *Game of Thrones* book series (and HBO show), once fringe, nerd-friendly obsessions like gadgets, comic books and fire-breathing dragons are increasingly everyone's obsessions.

"Becoming mainstream is the wrong word; the mainstream is catching up," said the actor Wil Wheaton, a self-described champion of nerd culture who wrote a memoir, *Just a Geek*, and appeared in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

An engineering degree is also no longer a requisite to using technology, as seemingly anyone today can install a printer or upload a video. Similarly, another signifier of nerd status — knowing obscure facts about favorite subjects — has also lost its currency. The total number of *Simpsons* characters or the name of a constellation is only a Wikipedia entry away.

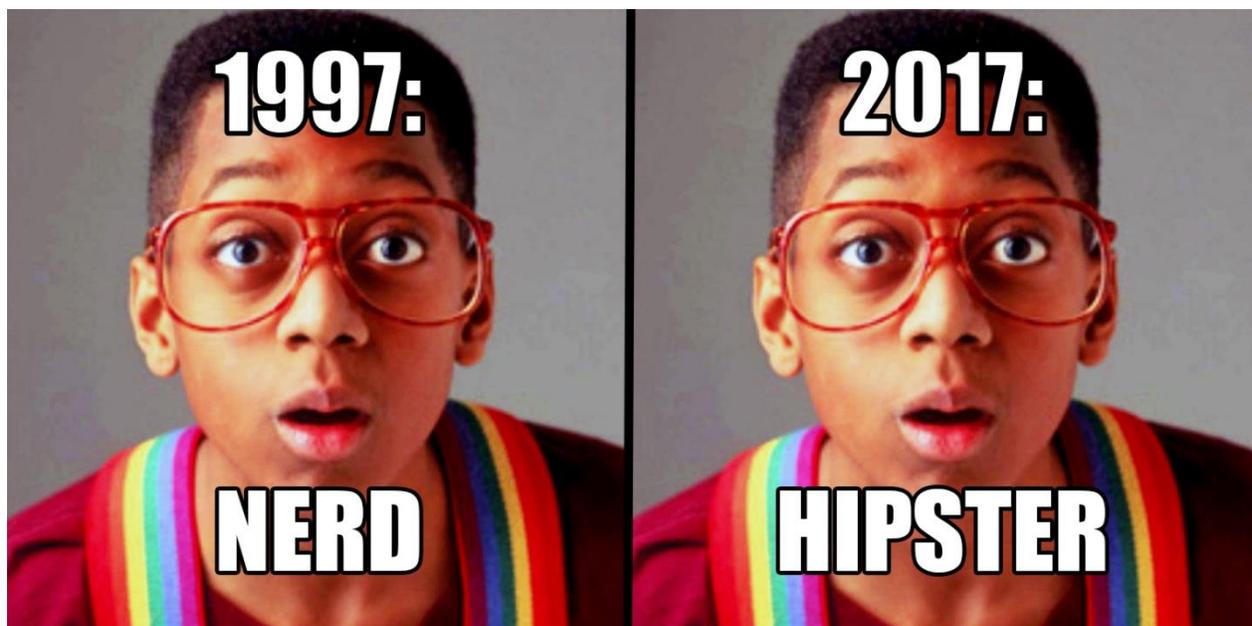
"Growing up, pre-Internet, possession of knowledge was such an identifier," said Dave Goetsch, a co-executive producer of *The Big Bang Theory*. "That is no longer true; the Internet flattens things out." (Noam Cohen, "We're All Nerds Now" *New York Times* 9/13/14.)

Whether you look for it at the movies, on TV, in fashion, or in everyday conversation, you can find geek culture everywhere. It's easy to see that "nerd" is no longer a dirty word, and passionate pursuit of what you think is interesting is the new "cool." But it's important to keep in mind that in the time this play is set (1990s Ohio), "geek chic" was almost 20 years in the future.

Geeky interests were still very separate from mainstream culture, and geeks – especially those in high school – often experienced punishment for pursuing their hobbies.

Explains reddit user u/foxden\_racing, “Gaming...not just tabletop, but also video gaming...was hugely taboo until the mid-90s.. The further back you go, the worse the treatment of geeks gets...I was stuffed into lockers, shamed, and left bruised; ten years earlier guys would get the daylights pounded out of them.

The internet boom, and video games garnering interest from non-gamers [really started with Playstation], as well as the card game *Magic the Gathering* tempered the poor treatment of geeks a good bit. You were still going to be ostracized, but at least you weren't as likely to get pummeled for it. By the early-mid 2000s, being a geek was no more of an offense than being a hockey fan in a room full of football junkies.” ([www.reddit.com/r/rpg](http://www.reddit.com/r/rpg))



## Dungeons & Dragons

About half of *She Kills Monsters* takes place in a fantasy world created by the characters playing *Dungeons & Dragons* (*D&D*). *D&D* was the first major fantasy roleplaying game, in which players are characters in an ongoing fantasy story. The core of *D&D* is storytelling. You and your friends tell a story together, guiding your heroes through quests for treasure, battles with deadly foes, daring rescues, courtly intrigue, and much more.

Each of these adventures is called a “campaign,” and players can choose to use a pre-written module (in which the plot of the story is laid out ahead of time) or play a less-structured campaign. In either event, the Dungeon Master (DM) is the only player who knows what’s going to happen next. While some players like to start each campaign with a new character, others use the same character throughout all of their gaming. In *She Kills Monsters*, Agnes’ sister Tilly wrote a module based on her experiences in high school, to play with her friends. It is this campaign, discovered by Agnes, that launches us into Tilly’s fantasy world.

Peek Inside a Typical D&D Game!



Community Discovers Their Characters



Click to watch!

What Character are You?

[Take this fun quiz](#) to see what sort of character you would be in the world of *Dungeons and Dragons*!

“Bury Your Gays”

Why Are So Many Lesbian TV Characters Dying Off?

by Alamin Yohannes, NBCNews.com

GLAAD released its annual "Where We Are on TV" report in November 2016, and the main headline was a positive one for the community: "LGBTQ Characters at All Time High on U.S. Television." However, the report, which analyzes LGBTQ representation on television, wasn't all rosy -- particularly when it comes to queer women.

According to GLAAD's analysis, "25 lesbian and bisexual female-identifying characters have died on scripted broadcast and cable television and streaming series since the beginning of 2016."

"Most of these deaths served no other purpose than to further the narrative of a more central (and often straight, cisgender) character. When there are so few lesbian and bisexual women on television, the decision to kill these characters in droves sends a toxic message about the worth of queer female stories," GLAAD President & CEO Sarah Kate Ellis was quoted saying in the report.

"When the most repeated ending for a queer woman is violent death, producers must do better to question the reason for a character's demise and what they are really communicating to the audience," Ellis added.

For close followers of the 2016 television landscape, the findings in GLAAD's report did not come as a surprise. In fact, the conversation surrounding this trope started back in March following the death of a lesbian character on CW's *The 100*. Shortly thereafter, a number deaths

of other queer women characters on shows including *The Vampire Diaries* and *Blindspot* spawned the hashtag #BuryYourGays.

"While TV creators are more aware of this trope now, we still need to see positive change followed through on screen," Megan Townsend, an entertainment and media strategist at GLAAD told NBC OUT. "There have been more than 25 lesbian and bisexual female characters who have died since the beginning of the year, but several of those deaths happened over the summer and even into the fall season after this trope came to national attention."

Sarah Kate Ellis of GLAAD is calling on broadcast, cable and streaming networks to not only include LGBTQ characters but to put them in significant roles.

"This means having the same opportunities for romance, nuanced motivation, developed backstory, and the same odds of death."

## Additional Resources

We hope that your visit to the theatre is the start of a conversation with your family, friends, and classmates. If you would like to extend those conversations beyond this experience, here is a list of resources that may be useful.

### Campus

**College of Health and Human Services: Safe Zone** includes a database of on-campus allies that have completed Safe Zone Training, and a comprehensive list of resources available to CSULB community members.

- <http://web.csulb.edu/colleges/chhs/safe-zone/index.html>

**Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** assists students meet the personal challenges associated with identifying and accomplishing academic, career, and life goals

- 562-985-4001
- <http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/caps>

**African Student Association Center** provides a facility for African students and staff in a secure, supportive, well maintained, functional, and African centered environment.

- 562-985-5471
- [http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/sld/student\\_resource\\_centers/asac](http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/sld/student_resource_centers/asac)

**Asian Pacific Student Resource Center** provides a facility for Asian Pacific student organization and Asian Pacific students and staff. Educates and informs the campus wide community of Asian Pacific culture, history, and social issues.

- [http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/sld/student\\_resource\\_centers/apsrc](http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/sld/student_resource_centers/apsrc)

**Center for Latino Community Health Evaluation & Leadership Training** improves, promotes, and advocates for the health, culture, and well-being of diverse Latino/Hispanic communities

- 562-985-5312
- <https://web.csulb.edu/centers/latinohealth>

**Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Resource Center** promotes full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transexual, intersex, and queer identified individuals and their allies at CSULB.

- 562-985-4585
- [http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/sld/student\\_resource\\_centers/lgbtc](http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/sld/student_resource_centers/lgbtc)

**Women's & Gender Equity Center** is a safe, comfortable, supportive and inclusive environment that offers services, support, and resources for students.

- 562-985-8687

<http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/wrc>

### Local

**The LGBTQ Center of Long Beach** engages, empowers and advocates to achieve a more equitable society and fosters an ever-improving quality of life for the LGBTQ community

- 2017 E. 4th St. Long Beach, CA 90814
- 562-434-4455
- <https://www.centerlb.org>

**Los Angeles LGBT Center** offers the following services: free HIV/AIDS care and medications for those most in need; housing, food, clothing and support for the homeless, support and advocacy services.

- 1625 N. Schrader Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90028
- 323-993-7400
- <https://lalgbtcenter.org>

**Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) Long Beach** Unite people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) with families, friends, and allies, PFLAG is committed to advancing to advancing equality through its mission of support, education and advocacy.

- 269 Loma Ave Long Beach, CA 90803
- 562-248-6010
- <http://lbpflag.org>

**Women Shelter of Long Beach** assists victims and their children by providing shelter and supportive services, 24-hour crisis hotline, counseling, social services support, legal and health advocacy, and more.

- 562-437-7233
- <http://www.womenshelterlb.org>

### National

**The Trevor Project** is the nation's only 24/7 crisis intervention and suicide prevention lifeline for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning young people ages 13-24

- <http://www.thetrevorproject.org>

**It Gets Better Project** communicates to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth around the world that it gets better, and to create and inspire the changes needed to make it better for them.

- <http://www.itgetsbetter.org>

**The Gay and Lesbian National Hotline** is a non-profit, tax exempt organization dedicated to meeting the needs of the LGBT community and those questioning their sexual orientation or identity. The Hotline offers free and confidential peer-counseling, information, and local resources for cities and town throughout the Unites States.

- 1-888-THE-GLNH
- <http://www.glnh.org/index.html>

**RAINN** provides confidential, one-on-one crisis support for women.

- 1-800-656-HOPE
- <https://hotline.rainn.org/online/terms-of-service.jsp>

**The Good Men Project** explores the world of men and manhood, tackling the issues and questions that are most relevant to men's lives: fatherhood, family, sex, ethics, war, gender, politics, sports, pornography, and aging.

- <https://goodmenproject.com/>

## Discussion Questions/Activities

### Before You See the Show

1. Remember playing imagination-based games like “Floor is Lava” and “Cops and Robbers” on the playground? Play one of those games again! What makes these games fun, or not fun?
2. Why are imagination-based games such as *Dungeons & Dragons* and other role-playing games, in which players assume new identities, so appealin?
3. Share a time that you tried a new hobby or experience because a family member asked you to, that you wouldn’t have tried for anyone else.
4. Several of the characters in *She Kills Monsters* hide parts of themselves from their family or friends. What can make it hard for someone to be true to themselves?
5. Ask a friend or classmate about a time they didn’t feel they could be themselves. Write down their response to share with the class anonymously.
  - a. BONUS: Turn your friend’s experience into a short scene, and change the ending so that they can truly be themselves.

### After You See the Show

1. Do the queer characters in *She Kills Monsters* follow the “Bury Your Gays” trend identified in current television programming? How does the playwright enforce or subvert this trend? Why is it important to be aware of this trend?
2. What made it hard for Tilly to be her true self?
3. If Agnes’ house was on fire and she could only save three things, what do you think they would be? If *your* house was on fire and *you* could only save three things, what would they be?

4. Both games like *Dungeons and Dragons* and live theatre require imagination and commitment from the players. What else do these games have in common with theatre? What are some differences?
5. Think about the entire production – the lights, costumes, blocking. How did these elements help tell the story? When did you have to use your imagination to fill in the gaps? If you could change something about the production, what would it be? Why?