



***The Lesbiana's Guide to Catholic School:* A GLSEN Discussion Guide for Students and Youth Groups**

William C. Morris Debut Award Finalist, National Book Award Finalist, Pura Belpré Honor Book, Lambda Literary Award for Young Adult Literature Winner, & National Bestseller

Learn more about author, Sonora Reyes, [here](#)!

The story follows Yami, a queer Mexican American teen, who transfers to a predominantly white and wealthy Catholic school, as she struggles with her identity, family expectations, and the fear of being outed, while finding a sense of community and belonging with her new friends.

HOW TO UTILIZE THE LESBIANA'S GUIDE TO CREATE DISCUSSION

The Lesbiana's Guide to Catholic School is an award-winning, hilarious, devastating, and fiercely witty novel about the power of friendship, culture, family, religion, life, and more. Host a book club for your GSA, diversity group, leadership program, book club, or other youth group, using this document to help guide a productive conversation.

FRAMING THE CONVERSATION

- Preview this guide before using, selecting questions that are most relevant for your group, keeping in mind the identities, experiences, and comfort levels of those in the discussion circle.
- Before starting discussion, go over group norms and guidelines to ensure every student feels their voice is heard and valued.
- Keep track of time so you can ask questions from a variety of themes and be able to reflect on group ideas at the end!
- Check out our resource on [Guidelines for Respectful GSA Spaces](#).

ANGER, AGENCY, AND SELF-EXPRESSION

Yamilet often expresses frustration through humor, sarcasm, or even physical reactions, like hitting a vanity on page 1. Her anger becomes both a shield and a mechanism for surviving spaces that don't see her whole self. Beneath that anger lies grief, fear, and the loss of control that came when others decided her story for her. Through Yamilet's journey of self-acceptance, readers should consider how self-expression—especially for queer youth of color—can take many complicated forms.

1. How does Yamilet express and manage her anger? Why might anger feel like the easiest or safest emotion for her to show?
 - How do you deal with anger?
2. After being outed by her best friend at Rover, Yamilet struggles with trust and control. Why is agency, the ability to choose when and how to come out, so important for queer people?
3. How does Yamilet's bilingual narration (switching between English and Spanish) express her authentic identity and emotions?

EDUCATION, EQUITY, AND BELONGING

The world of Slayton Catholic reflects common inequities: resources are unequally distributed, whiteness dominates the classroom, and students of color often feel hypervisible and scrutinized, yet unheard.

1. Slayton is described as a “better education” school on the north side of town. How does this contrast with Yamilet's old school, and what does it say about educational inequity?
2. Yamilet feels “visible” as one of few Brown students at her new school but also “invisible” and ignored in conversation. How can a person feel both seen and unseen in a space?
 - How do we create “safe spaces” where people feel uplifted, but not a spectacle?
3. When Slayton bans Bo and Yamilet from going together to prom, how does this reflect how schools can mistreat LGBTQ+ students?
 - What actions can students and allies take to create change?

FAMILY, CULTURE, AND CONNECTION

The novel celebrates family in all its forms—biological, chosen, cultural, and spiritual. Yamilet's story reflects the realities of deportation, language, and cultural loss while also highlighting how love can persist through all barriers. Her reconnection to baile folklórico and her relationship with Doña Violeta show how pride and belonging can be rebuilt.

1. Yamilet's father's deportation to Mexico drastically changes her family dynamic. What do diverse family structures look like, and how do they challenge traditional ideas of family?
2. Yamilet feels disconnected from her Indigenous ancestry after her father's deportation. How can people maintain or rediscover cultural connections when separated from family or homeland?
 - Which cultures are you connected to and how do you maintain that bond?
3. What does baile folklórico mean to Yamilet, and how does it become an expression of cultural pride?
4. How do characters like Doña Violeta and Bo's family represent chosen family and community care?
 - How does your community support you? What does your chosen family look like?
5. Bo tells her parents, "Intentions don't change the impact." What does this mean, and how can we apply it to being thoughtful allies?

RELIGION, IDENTITY, AND ACCEPTANCE

For Yamilet, faith is both a comfort and a conflict. Her Catholic upbringing offers community, but also shame and guilt about her sexuality. Through conversations with Bo, her brother, and eventually her mother, the story begins to imagine versions of faith rooted in love rather than exclusion.

1. How does Yamilet deal with religious guilt, and what does this reveal about her relationship with faith?
2. Bo helps Yamilet question religious hypocrisy by exposing the convenient ways their school brings up the Bible in some situations, but ignores others. How can someone balance faith and identity without giving up either?
3. Near the end of the novel, Yamilet's mother says she still loves her children while staying connected to her faith. How can people hold both religious beliefs and full acceptance of LGBTQ+ loved ones?

RACE, LANGUAGE, AND OPPRESSION

Language, race, and power are inseparable, and is echoed in Yami's experiences. The casual racism she encounters reveals how prejudice hides in everyday interactions. Her experiences with law enforcement and deportation add another layer, reflecting how systemic racism impacts both personal and collective safety.

1. Yamilet's experiences with police are shaped by her identity and her family's history. What does the book show about race and law enforcement?
2. When Yamilet's classmate calls her "ghetto," why does this word feel so hurtful to Yamilet? What does it show about how language can carry racialized meanings?

MENTAL HEALTH, GUILT, AND HEALING

The book treats mental health with honesty, highlighting how stigma, family pressure, and systemic injustice can deepen isolation. When Cesar experiences suicidal thoughts, the story models how reaching out for help can be an act of bravery and self-love.

1. When Cesar struggles with suicidal thoughts, the characters call a hotline and seek support. What does this moment teach about the importance of mental health resources and asking for help?
2. How does Yamilet process her guilt around missing signs of César's pain? Is guilt ever useful in healing?
3. What role do compassion and community play in healing, both for Yamilet and for readers?

QUEERNESS, SOLIDARITY, AND SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Yamilet's path toward self-acceptance is supported by others who reflect her truth back to her, including her brother César, her friend Bo, and the broader queer community. Through them, she learns that queerness is more than just an identity, but a shared understanding of resilience, joy, and solidarity.

1. Yamilet compares her mom's strictness to Bo's parents' acceptance. How do different families show or struggle with love and support for queer children?
2. How do Yamilet's relationships with her brother Cesar and Bo help her understand and accept her own queerness through solidarity?
3. On page 237, Yamilet admits, "I wish there was nothing for me to be unapologetic about." What does this line mean to you?
 - What would a world look like where everyone could be fully themselves?

GLSEN'S RAINBOW LIBRARY COLLECTION

***The Lesbiana's Guide to Surviving Catholic School* was recently honored with inclusion in GLSEN's 2025 Rainbow Library reading list!**

The Rainbow Library centers intersectional literacy and learning. The program includes diverse book lists for grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12, lesson plans, resources for inclusive literary learning, and more. The national initiative has reached over 6 million students nationwide and spans across 32 states. The Rainbow Library is founded on the belief that representation matters deeply. Fewer than 1 in 5 students report ever being taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, history, or events in school. Programs like the Rainbow Library help fill those gaps, fostering belonging, empathy, and possibility.

Explore the other 2025-2026 Rainbow Library selections [here!](#)

TIPS FOR CLOSING THE CONVERSATION

Part of discussing complex literature is dealing with the potential that some students may get uncomfortable. While balancing the desire to create a safe space, club leaders and educators should learn to lean into those feelings, as discomfort is where real growth and understanding happens. This guide might lead to difficult conversations and emotional discussion. Here are some tips to recognize the weight of the responses and making sure everyone feels their voice was heard and respected.

- **Honor vulnerability.** Thank participants for showing care while discussing tender themes.
- **Make space for big feelings.** Acknowledge that conversations about belonging, safety, and coming out can bring up complex emotions.
- **Reassure students of support.** Remind participants that questioning identity or navigating family and cultural expectations is valid, and that supportive adults and resources are available.
- **End with affirmation.** Close with a message centering joy, highlighting the strength of a community that feels comfortable working through difficult conversations together.

SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES

Coming Out

Here, we've compiled a list of resources that might be helpful for the complex journey of coming out. Everyone's story is unique-- feel free to use the resources that feel relevant for you.

Starting a GSA

If you want to make your community a more inclusive place, consider starting a GSA for queer students to develop community and discuss important topics related to LGBTQ+ life. Explore these resources to help with planning and running this project.

OTHER MEDIA DISCUSSION GUIDES

If you enjoyed this book discussion activity, consider making readings or film screenings and discussions a recurring event! Here you can find some other queer-themed book/ movie/ TV discussion guides for your youth group.

[Love, Simon \(2018\)](#)

[Heartstopper \(2024\)](#)

[Aristotle & Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe \(2023\)](#)

[The Prom \(2020\)](#)

Waiting on more queer-themed book/movie/TV discussion guide curricula? Learn more about GLSEN and stay up-to-date on our work by following us on social media: @GLSEN on Facebook and Instagram, and @GLSEN_National on TikTok!

Suggestions for books to design around? Send any recommendations to students@glsen.org.