



23 PEOPLE WHO CHANGED THE WORLD

OFFICIAL READER'S GUIDE

[ITGETSBETTER.ORG/QUEERTHEREEVERYWHERE](https://ITGETSBETTER.ORG/QUEERTHEREEVERYWHERE)

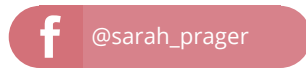
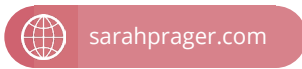
**IT GETS  
BETTER  
PROJECT**

# ABOUT

# QUEER, THERE, AND EVERYWHERE

## About the Author

Sarah Prager ([www.sarahprager.com](http://www.sarahprager.com)) is an activist, public speaker, and writer. She is the founder and director of Quist, a free mobile app that brings queer history to the world in an interesting and interactive way ([www.quistapp.com](http://www.quistapp.com)). She has written about LGBTQ history for the Huffington Post, the Advocate, and QED: A Journal of GLBTQ Worldmaking. She is available to speak at schools and to groups about LGBTQ history ([www.sarahprager.com/speaking](http://www.sarahprager.com/speaking)). She lives in Connecticut with her wife and their child.



## About It Gets Better®

This Discussion Guide was written by education staff at the It Gets Better Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, California. With affiliates operating on 4 different continents, the It Gets Better Project boasts a truly global operation. Together, they use the power of story - told through online videos, social media, films (like *Queer, There, and Everywhere*), books, and more - to inspire, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe. So far, over 60,000 It Gets Better® videos have been shared.



## About the Book

World history has been made by countless lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people - many you might not have ever heard of before. In *Queer, There, and Everywhere*, activist Sarah Prager gives voice to twenty-three people who invented and radicalized and trail-blazed. These astonishing true stories demonstrate how rich and varied gender and sexuality have always been in every culture, in every millennium. From the gender-ambiguous queen of Sweden to a transgender soldier who risked death fighting in the Civil War, queer people have not always existed: they have thrived.

**The following guide will walk you through each of the book's chapters, asking you to think critically about the lives and stories you read. It's intended for those in middle or high school, but can be adapted for other audiences, as well. Feel free to read the entire text, or just a few chapters. You can also do this on your own, in a reading club or GSA group, during family night, or in a classroom. The options are limitless! What will be your adventure?**

[WWW.ITGETSBETTER.ORG/QUEERTHEREEVERYWHERE](http://WWW.ITGETSBETTER.ORG/QUEERTHEREEVERYWHERE)

# QUESTIONS BY CHAPTER

## INTRODUCTION

“What assumptions are we making about the gender identities and sexualities of historical figures we think we know? How do these assumptions shape the way we see the past - and our present” (p. 1)?

The author states that “recognizing the world’s rich history of queerness would help reduce homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, and welcome queer identities to the mainstream with love and acceptance” (p. 2). How so?

In your own words, summarize the “story of worldwide queerness” from the section “There...,” or choose one continent to summarize (p. 6-17).

## ELAGABALUS

Why do you think the Roman government and public were unwilling to see Elagabalus as a woman? Why do you think many people are unwilling to recognize the identities of transgender people today? (p. 22)

With the rise of Christianity as the dominant ideology, Rome’s tolerance of bisexuality was diminished. But today, some Christian religions are accepting of LGBTQ people. What do you think is causing that change? (p. 23)

## JEANNE D’ARC (AKA JOAN OF ARC)

Many teenagers get frustrated when their parents make big decisions on their behalf, like Jeanne, who ran away after her parents arranged an engagement for her. Do you think you would have reacted similarly or differently? Why? (p. 30)

Jeanne dressed as a man after the voices told her to. Summarize some of the reasons a person assigned female at birth might dress as a man during Jeanne’s time. (p. 31-33)

## KRISTINA VASA (AKA CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN)

In this chapter, the author refers to Kristina as They/Them/Their, one of many sets of gender-neutral singular pronouns available in the English language. Why did the author make that choice? Why might pronouns like these be important to some queer and gender-nonconforming people? (p. 37-42)

Kristina had some pretty backwards thoughts about women, and “their feebleness of mind, body, and understanding.” Do you think that was impacted by their personal battle with gender norms at the time? How so? (p. 39)



KRISTINA VASA  
(AKA CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN)

## JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ

“The viceroy decided to take Sor Juana under his wing and treated her as an ally for the rest of her life.” Who are some of your personal allies? What qualities do they have that make them a good ally? (p. 47)

### BONUS

Sor Juana chose poetry as a means to express her deepest emotions about love and intimacy, but poetry can be used for many things. Write your own short poem about something you’ve been feeling lately. (p. 45, 48)

# QUESTIONS BY

## CHAPTER

### ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Many people are surprised to hear about Lincoln's "intimate friendships" with Joshua Fry Speed and David Derickson. How does hearing about these relationships impact the ways in which you think about the famous president of the United States and his legacy? (p. 53-55)

How might we go about removing the taboos and restrictions placed on male friendships in today's world? (p. 58)

### ALBERT CASHIER

Like Albert, many transgender people choose to transition, that is, they take steps to align their gender expression (outward gestures of gender) with their gender identity (how they feel inside about their gender). This isn't always easy. Write down a few sentences about the challenges you imagine might be involved with transitioning. (p. 62-63)

Some people who cared for Albert late in life weren't comfortable with him identifying as a man. They refused to let him use the name and clothes he preferred. How does that make you feel? Add your thoughts to the sentences you wrote down for the previous question. (p. 66)



### GERTRUDE "MA" RAINEY

The author compares Ma, in her time, to Beyoncé, in ours. For example, both artists have used music as a way to open up conversations about being Black in America. In what other ways might Ma and Beyoncé (or another current artist) be similar? In what ways do they, or their music, differ? (p. 71)

Ma was a woman who clearly embraced her sexuality. Many at the time saw her behavior as immoral. How might it be viewed today? How have society's views on women and sexuality changed or stayed the same over time? (p. 72)



### LILI ELBE

Parts of Lili's story were adapted into a major motion picture in 2015 known as *The Danish Girl*. The role of Lili was given to a cisgender man, a casting choice many people felt was inappropriate. Do you agree or disagree? Why? (p. 77-82)

Imagine if Lili were alive today. How might something like the Internet (and platforms like Tumblr) help her as she grapples with her gender identity? (p. 79)

#### BONUS

Lili's autobiography - *Man Into Woman: The First Sex Change* - depicts her life quite differently from the fictionalized version shown in *The Danish Girl*. Research both online, and create a Venn diagram that displays their similarities and differences. (p. 77-82)

# QUESTIONS BY

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### FRIDA KAHLO

#### BONUS

Go online and check out some of Frida's most famous paintings, such as *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, *The Broken Column*, and *The Two Fridas*. Then, draw your own self-portrait mimicking her surrealist style. (p. 87)

Frida and Diego frequently slept with other people while they were married, which allowed Frida to explore her bisexuality with women. How does this compare with how you view marriage? (p. 90)

### MERCEDES DE ACOSTA

Mercedes' parents sent her to a convent because they worried about "their daughter's extreme tomboy tendencies." What could her parents have done instead to understand her unique gender expression? (p. 96)

In almost every part of the world today, women and queer people (like Mercedes) are still being policed for how they dress. How can we push back against those kinds of gender norms? (p. 97)

### ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

Political movements led by lesbians often embrace the ideals of feminism, but many feminists have not always advocated for lesbians. Why do you think that is? (p. 107)

As a feminist, Eleanor revolutionized what it meant to be the First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS). Which former FLOTUS do you admire? Give three reasons why. (p. 110-111)

### BAYARD RUSTIN

Jim Crow laws were those that enforced racial segregation in the Southern United States for nearly 90 years after slavery was abolished. In what ways do you think that history has impacted our world today? (p. 115-119)

As a Black man, Bayard always stood up for racial civil rights, but many of his fellow activists didn't stand up for his rights as a gay man. How do you think that inequality made Bayard feel? How do you think he dealt with those emotions? (p. 117)

### ALAN TURING

It's been over 60 years since Alan was alive, yet queer people in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) still lack visibility today. How would you go about changing that? (p. 123-124)

In 1962, Illinois became the first U.S. state to make it legal for people of the same gender to have sex with each other. That wasn't the case nationally until 2003 with the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*. Why do you think it took so long for that law to change nationally? (p. 127-128)



# QUESTIONS BY CHAPTER

## JOSEF KOHOUT

Many people have never heard about the 100,000 men who were arrested for homosexuality in Nazi Germany, or about the estimated 5,000 to 15,000 that eventually ended up in concentration camps, before reading this chapter. Why do you think that is? (p. 131-137)

Josef and the other Pink Triangle survivors have now all passed away, but imagine that you could write one of them a letter. What would you say? (p. 137)

## JOSÉ SARRIA

### BONUS

José and the other drag queens at the Black Cat bar came up with a clever way to avoid arrest. Using similar materials (like felt, glue, safety pins, and scissors), make your own identity and/or protest pins. (p. 141-142)

When someone “does drag,” they’re dressing up as a different gender in order to entertain. It’s a form of art that’s always been embraced by the queer community, but it’s becoming more and more mainstream (thanks in large part to *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, a popular reality TV show on VH1). How does that compare with how drag was treated in the 1950s? (p. 141-144)

## DEL MARTIN & PHYLLIS LYON

Imagine you were one of the early subscribers to *The Ladder*. How do you think you would have responded to the call to “come out of hiding”? What makes you think that? (p. 155)

Just five months after Del and Phyllis got married in 2008, Proposition 8 - a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages - was passed in California. It took the U.S. Supreme Court nearly five years to restore marriage equality to the Golden State. How do you think it would have felt to be a gay couple hoping to get married during that time? (p. 157)

## SYLVIA RIVERA

Several terms were used in this chapter to describe sex work with which you might not have been familiar. For example, “turning tricks” means to perform sex acts for money, and a “john” is a customer. Why do you think such slang expressions came to be? (p. 163-164)

When asked what the difference is between a drag queen and a trans woman, activist Monica Beverly Hillz put it this way: “Drag is what I do; trans is who I am.” Can you, in your own words, describe how the two identities are different? Explain. (p. 166-168)

## RENÉE RICHARDS

Renée viewed her male identity (a.k.a. Dick Raskind) as a totally separate and distinct person from who she was as Renée. This was similar to the way Lili Elbe (who you read about in an earlier chapter) understood her identity. How would you compare and contrast their experiences? (p. 172)

The experience of coming out isn’t always easy for celebrities like Renée. Oftentimes, their fame invites intense scrutiny. What do you think are some of the pros and cons of coming out for celebrities? (p. 175)

## HARVEY MILK

### BONUS

It was Harvey Milk that first challenged artist Gilbert Baker to design a flag for the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade in 1978. Today, the rainbow flag is recognized as a symbol of queer communities around the world. Design or draw a flag that represents a community you are a part of. (p. 179-180)

Harvey isn’t just remembered for what he did for gay people, but for what he did on behalf of all marginalized communities in San Francisco. He was a true ally. Which communities are you an ally for? What motivates you to be their ally? (p. 181-182)

# QUESTIONS BY

## CHAPTER

### GLENN BURKE

The author states that “Glenn knew he would have to be an above-and-beyond ball player as a kind of insurance.” What do you think that means? How did being both Black and gay impact the way Glenn played baseball? (p. 190)

The “high five” has become a symbol of congratulations or celebration around the world, at least when it comes to sports. But how do you think some people would respond to its gay origins? How would you challenge any negative reactions? (p. 193)



### GEORGE TAKEI

Today, George frequently talks of his experience in the Japanese internment camps during World War II, and compares the experience to the persecution queer communities face today. How are those two experiences similar? How do they differ? (p. 208-209)

Why was having George play Sulu in the popular *Star Trek* series such a big deal for Asian Americans in the 1960s? How have things changed (or not) since then? (p. 210-211)

### MYCHAL JUDGE

Father Mike self-identified as omnisexual, meaning he was attracted to all types of people regardless of their gender. How does that differ from being gay, straight, or bi? (p. 200)

We can assume that Father Mike didn't always agree with some of the Catholic Church's stances on queer issues. How do you think he reconciled those differences with his work as a priest? (p. 200-201)

### LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

“Diversity is one of the only constants that queerness has always had.” In your own words, summarize the diversity you've seen throughout this book. What does reading about this kind of diversity mean to you? (p. 213)

“We know achieving queer rights is possible because history shows us how it's been done before.” Identify at least one method of activism displayed in this book. How would you repurpose that method to champion the issues you care about today? (p. 215)

### GLOSSARY

Point out three words in the book's glossary that you were unfamiliar with before reading this book. Can you now explain those terms in your own words? Give it a try.

There are many more words out there that represent the vast diversity of the queer community that aren't included in this glossary. What are two words you would add? How would you define them?

# ACTIVITIES | FOR THE READER

Reading is only half the fun! Go online to [www.sarahprager.com/queerthere/readers](http://www.sarahprager.com/queerthere/readers). There you'll find videos, links, photos, and more to find out more about the incredible lives of the historical figures featured in the book. You can also choose one of the following activities to take your learning one step farther.

## ACT

Choose your favorite icon from *Queer, There, and Everywhere*, and dress up as you think they would have. Next, video record yourself summarizing that icon's history as if you were them (like if they were making their own It Gets Better video®). Share the video on social media, and tag the It Gets Better Project.

## DRAW

The illustrations in this guide were created by London-based artist Zoë More O'Ferrall. The images reflect her own interpretations of some of these incredible icons' most famous looks. Now you get to do the same. Pick 5 of your favorite characters from the book, and draw your own versions of how they looked. Share your illustrations on social media, and tag the author and the illustrator.

## WRITE

Write down your own history as if you were a character in *Queer, There, and Everywhere*. What's in your future? What will you accomplish? Who or what will you champion? You can do this in essay form, or even as a poem. Share what you've written with a close ally or friend, or even email it to the It Gets Better Project at [stories@itgetsbetter.org](mailto:stories@itgetsbetter.org).

## SHARE

Make an It Gets Better® video that includes your personal story - the real one, as it is now. Tell the world who you are, why queer history matters to you, and what message of support you'd like to share to an LGBTQ young person having a tough time. Upload the video to your YouTube channel, and submit the link to [www.itgetsbetter.org/SubmitVideo](http://www.itgetsbetter.org/SubmitVideo).

