

**Title:** The Phenomenon of Queer Death in Media: Faux-Wokeness, Bury Your Gays, Queerbaiting, and the Influence of Fan Spaces

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As many as 2 million LGBTQ+ American teenagers consider suicide each year as a result of the social stigma and rejection they face, according to a 2016 survey by the CDC Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (CDC). This issue extends beyond the real world into television representations, with data showing that, since 1970, only 10% of queer female characters have received happy endings on TV (Cameron). For a community already surrounded by deadly real-life narratives, fictional representations of queer characters that end with their tragic demise are harmful to the creation of positive identities for LGBTQ+ people. Labeled by queer activists as the “Bury Your Gays” phenomenon, this trend is frequently justified through an overarching framework of “faux-wokeness,” or the illusion of progressive inclusion in TV depictions of LGBTQ+ characters while still retrenching old stereotypes (Johnson). These queerbaiting narratives benefit media corporations while dissuading young gender-variant people from believing they will ever find happy endings of their own. However, fan communities surrounding queer characters have created a safe space for young individuals to express their identities and developed a set of industry guidelines for the ethical and equitable treatment of queer characters. Susan Driver, Professor of Social Sciences at York University and author of *Queer Girls and Popular Culture: Reading, Resisting, and Creating Media* notes, “[I]n the face of social invisibility and silence, after years of being dismissed as strange, immature, deviant, and confused, many youth are pleased to have their words recognized as valuable and publicly meaningful” (180).

## Works Cited

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