

FANDOM FORWARD ▶

STEVEN STAR UNIVERSE™



Fandom Forward is an international non-profit that turns fans into heroes by making activism accessible through the power of story. This toolkit provides resources for fans of Pokémon to think more deeply about the social issues represented in the story and take action in our own world.

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#FFToolkit

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INTRODUCTION

“We are the Crystal Gems! We'll always save the day! And if you think we can't, we'll always find a way...”

Hi, welcome to The Crystal Toolkit! We're happy to have you here! Take a seat, eat a delicious Cookie Cat, and (most importantly) find a friend. New or old--human or alien--find someone to share this toolkit with. If Steven's taught us anything, it's that we're **stronger together**. Welcome to the Crystal Gems!

This toolkit is a guide for using Steven's totally awesome outlook on life to make our world better for *everyone*.

Steven shows us that **friendship, empathy, and love** are the strongest powers in the universe. No matter what, Steven shows compassion and respect to every living thing. Sometimes this can be difficult to live up to (even Garnet makes mistakes sometimes) but *don't worry!* I promise you'll be great.

In this toolkit, we'll go over how *Steven Universe* can help us better understand issues such as **being an ally, adoption and fostering, and immigration and refugees**. We hope that you can use this toolkit to better understand these issues and how to use love to make our world a better place

Remember--There are millions of possibilities for the future. But, it's up to you to choose which becomes reality.

Note on citations:

Throughout the toolkit, we'll use the following format to cite specific episodes:

S=Season

E=Episode

N=Number Overall

Thus the first episode would be cited as S1:E1:N1. You can find a full list of recommended episodes in the Resources section.

FACILITATOR TIPS

Social issues can be tough to talk about, and the issues in this toolkit are no exception. As a member of the Crystal Gems and therefore a respected leader in this community, it's important that you follow some basic guidelines when leading any group through this kit:

1. Protect Your Team

Before you start, make sure everyone on your team feels safe and included. You never know what a particular issue may mean personally to someone or how a discussion may impact them. A great way to start is to set some guidelines as a group for what is and is not acceptable on your team. If things start to get too uncomfortable, don't be afraid to end a line of discussion or steer it to another topic. Remember that not all of us are ready to go on this kind of journey – make sure you let your team know you'll be participating in a discussion or action beforehand so that everyone can choose whether or not to participate.

2. Listen to Each Other

Every member of the Crystal Gems has a unique viewpoint and things to share. These issues are complicated, and different viewpoints are okay – take time to listen, let everyone speak, and challenge each other without devaluing each other's opinions or resorting to personal attacks.

3. Talk First

It's important to discuss issues before immediately taking action. Use the Talk It Out sections to think about these issues before deciding how you want to tackle them.

4. Don't Jump to Conclusions

Don't assume you know everything about an issue, especially if there are people on your team who have personally experienced an issue or whose identity you are discussing. Allies are awesome, but it's more important for the voices of those who have lived these experiences to be heard. The best way to be an ally is to make sure those people have space to speak.

5. Take Action

When you and your team feel ready to jump in, use the Action suggestions to get started. If your team comes up with a different idea, that's awesome – don't be afraid to get creative!

6. Keep Learning

We've only begun to scratch the surface – like our world and bending itself, social issues are highly complex and constantly evolving. Take what you learn from this kit and continue to educate yourself on the issues.

Need Backup?

That's okay, there's a whole team of volunteers ready to help. Just send us an email at info@fandomforward.org – we're happy to answer questions or help you with facilitation or action items.

All Characters Are Flawed

We've done our best to represent the issues in this toolkit as accurately as possible, but because these issues are so complex there are bound to be things we missed or things you have different views on. If you find factual errors in this toolkit, please let us know!

REPRESENTATION

When we begin to look at issues in a story, we always start with talking about representation - how well is this story representing the true diversity of our world? Good news: Steven Universe does a pretty excellent job.

Rebecca Sugar, the show's creator, [set out to create a show](#) that tackled gender, in particular.

"My goal with the show was to really tear down and play with the semiotics of gender in cartoons for children because I think that's a really absurd idea that there would be something radically different about a show for little girls versus a show for little boys. It's exciting to me to play with a lot of that language, because everyone's very familiar with it but it really doesn't make much sense. I used to really enjoy shows that were aggressively targeted to boys when I was a little girl and I know the same can be true the other way around, so why not have something that everybody can watch? And at the same time, have something to say about the fact that that really is absurd."



Steven is certainly not a traditional male hero, and has no problem participating in activities that defy traditional gender norms (like rocking it out in a dress at the talent show (S2:E17:N69)). As a character, Steven is generally portrayed as caring and nurturing, traits that have been traditionally associated as "feminine" characteristics. In contrast, it's Connie who provides

the logic and battle skills, literally learning how to swordfight (S2:E6:N58) in order to help protect Steven. We see how much Steven's viewpoint defies traditions when he gets to see the Watermelon Island society; they were [created by Steven](#), so naturally it's the "female" watermelons who go off to fight while the "male" watermelon stays behind (S3:E1:N79).



Sugar has confirmed that while the gems use female pronouns, they are [canonically non-binary](#). Stevonnie, the fusion of Steven and Connie, "[challenges gender norms as an individual](#)" and is referred to in the show with they/them pronouns (S1:E37:N37, S2:E9:N61).

Connie Maheswaran herself is an awesome, capable, Indian-American heroine. Garnet, though not human and therefore not technically any human ethnicity, is coded quite clearly as black and voiced by a black actress. Many of the other voice actors, such as [Michaela Dietz](#) (Amethyst) and [Deedee Magno](#) (Pearl) are also voiced by women of color. Rebecca Sugar has spoken about the importance of diversity in both her stories and the production of Steven Universe.

Garnet also plays another important role in the diversity of Steven Universe: she's the fusion of gems Ruby and Sapphire, and the embodiment of their relationship and love for each other. The show not only shows that Ruby and Sapphire are in a committed and loving queer relationship, but they address the kind of prejudice an LGBTQIA+ couple might face in our world through Homeworld's rules against fusions between different gem types. This prejudice is part of the reason Garnet teams up with the Crystal Gems - they immediately accept her (and through her, Ruby and Sapphire) for who she is, and on Earth she can live as she wants to in freedom (S2:E22:N74). Rebecca Sugar also wrote a children's book "[The Answer](#)" about Ruby and Sapphire's relationship.

During the 2016 Steven Universe Comic Con panel, Sugar talked about how [her experiences with being a bisexual woman](#) influenced the show's commitment to LGBTQIA+ community. She stated:

.....
: "In large part it's based on my experience as a bisexual woman. I think that there are a lot of ways :
: that I — how do I put this? These themes have so much to do with who you are. There is an idea :
: that these are themes that should not be shared with kids but everyone shares stories about love :
: and attraction with kids. So many stories for kids are about love. It really makes a difference to :
: hear stories about how someone like you can be loved. And if you don't hear those stories, it will :
: change who you are. It's very important to me that we speak to kids about consent. That we speak :
: to kids about identity. There's so much I have to say about this. I want to feel like I exist and I want :
: everyone else who wants to feel that way to feel that way too."
:

The Crystal Gems teach Steven a lot about acceptance, but Steven also teaches them about seeing things from new perspectives and being a better ally!

STEVEN'S GUIDE TO BEING AN ALLY

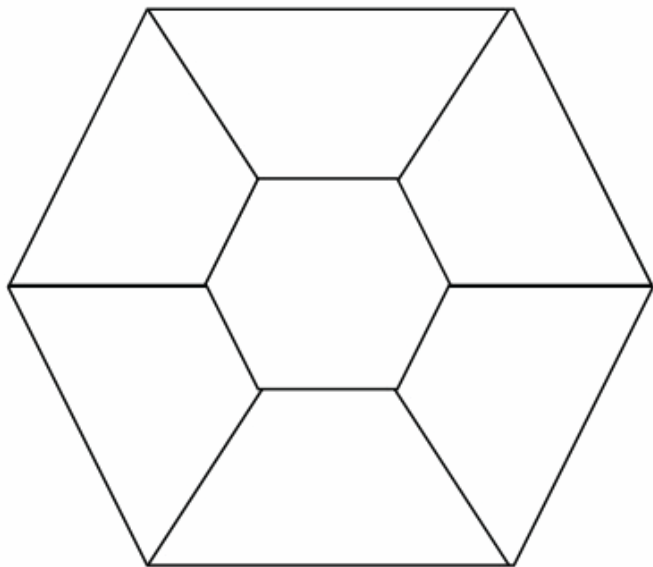
Steven is a Crystal Gem, but he wins most of his battles not with weapons, but with kindness and active listening. Steven can teach us a lot about how to be an effective **ally** - someone who uses their power to support and protect others.

1. **THINK** about what you believe about an issue already. What assumptions are you making? Where have you learned about the issue?
2. **LEARN** more about the issue. Read books and articles, especially those written by the people affected by the issue! Ask friends like Connie to help you find out all that you can.
3. **UNLEARN** things you used to think but now know differently. This can be really challenging, and it may take many years for you to unlearn some of the things you've been taught or assumed. Even though Steven has shown the Crystal Gems that many supposed enemies have the potential to be friends, they still have a hard time not jumping to conclusions. It's okay to make mistakes - rely on your friends to help remind each other about things you need to unlearn.
4. **ASK** people affected by the issue what they need. A lot of times when we want to help, we can make assumptions about what would be most helpful. Steven assumed that Lapis would want company because it's what he would want, but it turned out that what she really needed was her own space.
5. **LISTEN** to what those people say! Active listening is one of the most important parts of being a good ally. By listening to the Cluster and working to understand their perspective, Steven was able to effectively help them and the rest of the community.
6. **ACT** on everything you've learned. Once you know what a community needs, you can advocate for that community or issue the way that will help them the most.
7. **RECRUIT** other allies! When Steven learns something new or makes a new friend, he doesn't just keep it to himself; he encourages his other friends to become part of the work and does his best to share what he has learned. This way, the team of allies (or Crystal Gems) just keeps getting bigger.

TALK IT OUT

1. Can you think of a time when you have been an ally for someone or for a community? What did you do?
2. Can you think of a time when you haven't been a very good ally? Now that you've read Steven's guide, what do you think you could have done differently?
3. Why do you think allies are important?
4. Why do you think thinking, learning, and unlearning come first?
5. Why do you think unlearning is so difficult?
6. Do you think you can ever fully unlearn something? Why?
7. How can you help yourself or others in the process of learning and unlearning?
8. What are some communities or issues you believe need allies right now?
9. How do you think you could be an ally to those communities or issues?
10. What's an issue you'd like to learn more about? How will you take the time to do that?

MY IDENTITY GEM



If you were a Crystal Gem, what would your gem look like? On the left is a blank gem with seven parts. Think about each part like a part of your identity. These could be things like:

- ★ Your gender
- ★ Your sexual and/or romantic orientation
- ★ Your race and/or ethnicity
- ★ Your religion
- ★ Your education
- ★ Your ability
- ★ Where you live
- ★ Your family and traditions

Think about how these things shape who you are. How have they influenced your experiences and how you see the world? How has the way that the rest of the world perceives these identities had an impact on you? You can either write in the gem or color and decorate it to represent those different identities. If you feel comfortable, take some time to share your gem with someone else! Your gem (and identity) is something to be celebrated.

ADOPTION AND FOSTERING

Foster care is a way of providing a family life for children who cannot live with their own parents. The placement of children is normally arranged through the government or a social service agency.

Adoption is when the legal rights and responsibilities of parenting a child transfer from their biological parents to another parent or parents.

“The show was always very much about family, because Steven is based on my younger brother Steven Sugar, and I really wanted to get at the unconditional love and support I get from him and try to give to him and that we get from our parents, so that’s always been the foundation of the show! I don’t believe that those themes are exclusive to traditional families or heteronormative characters, and I’m very uninterested in trading on genericisms, or talking about what is or isn’t “normal”. I think so much entertainment deals in those terms that almost everyone is left feeling abnormal if there’s anything specific about their life at all. I hope to represent people who have felt a lack of representation, but I hope to also show people who have felt represented that they can also relate to characters that are not heteronormative and to families that are not traditional, maybe even more so than the more generic characters and families that they’ve been seeing on TV.”

-Rebecca Sugar [via io9](#)

Family plays an important role in Steven Universe. Steven is the son of Rose Quartz, a gem, and Greg Universe, a human. Sadly, Rose dies in the process of giving birth to Steven, leaving him with his biological father. But Steven lives primarily with the Crystal Gems - Garnet, Pearl, and Amethyst - after Greg decides that they can provide the best care for him. However, Steven maintains a close relationship with Greg and with the human side of his ancestry.

Maintaining a relationship with his biological father is an important aspect of Steven's life with the gems. While Steven knows that he lives with the gems because they can provide him with knowledge of his gem history, powers, and responsibilities--**that doesn't lessen the importance of his relationship with Greg.** In many cases of **foster care** and **adoption** children are placed with family members or members of the community. This doesn't necessarily mean that their parents are bad or unloving, nor does it mean that the child shouldn't maintain a loving relationship with their parents. The gems support Steven's relationship with Greg and encourage him to spend time with him.

Likewise, children with a mixed cultural background like Steven face additional struggles maintaining a connection with both sides of their parentage. **Steven knows he has a different background than the residents of Beach City but that doesn't less his love for them or their acceptance of him.** And while the gems usually only interact with humans alongside Steven, they understand the importance of Steven's relationships with other humans. The gems help Steven make friends (S1:E07:N07) and attend (and sometimes join) his various events and performances in Beach City (S1:E22:N22)!



Amethyst's journey to the Crystal Gems also closely mirrors a child's journey through adoption. Amethyst was born during the war and never knew Homeworld, the home of gems. Amethyst was adopted by Rose Quartz and has lived with the Crystal Gems on Earth ever since. While Amethyst loves

Earth, and the gems, she struggles with the circumstances of her birth (S1:E30:N30). The "kindergarten" where she was born was intended to mine the Earth in the process of destroying it, along with everything on it.



Types of Adoption

Domestic adoption is when parents choose to adopt a child in their own country.

International adoption is adopting a child, usually a baby or toddler, from another country. Often, but not always, people choose to adopt from countries that are poor, troubled by war, or where there are many, many children in need of care.

Open adoption is where the birth parents and adoptive parents agree to stay in touch after the adoption. The adoptive parents raise the child, but allow the birth mother or parents to be a part of the child's life through regular visits, letters and photos, or other forms of contact.

Closed adoption is where the birth parents give up all rights to the child, who then

Amethyst feels responsible for the actions of her people and guilty for not living up to the (sometimes untrue) expectations of the other gems. But, Pearl and the other gems assure Amethyst that they love her and accept her for who she is (S1:E30:N30). Pearl tells Amethyst that it doesn't matter how she was made, or by whom, she gets to decide who she is. **Just look at Garnet and Pearl--they were born on Homeworld and they're strong, compassionate, Earth-saving Crystal Gems!**

Steven's family is also a great example of a loving **nontraditional family**. A **traditional family** is a family that includes a husband and wife, plus their biological children (if they have any). Some examples of nontraditional families are **single-parent families, adoptive families, same-sex parent families,** and **extended family households** (where multiple generations of a family live together). Steven is primarily raised by his nonparent guardians--Garnet, Amethyst, and Pearl--due in part to only having one living parent. While Steven's family is far from traditional, his life with the gems is full of **love, support,** and **care** (not to mention magical adventures!).

Steven's friends and residents of Beach City respect his family, even Connie who was afraid her parents wouldn't approve at first (S1:E32:N32). Like Connie and her family, it's important to respect people with nontraditional families--even if you don't understand them at first. Some [examples of ways to show respect for nontraditional families](#) include using **inclusive language** (like saying 'parent' or 'guardian' instead of assuming 'mother'), **avoiding assumptions** (like that everyone has a traditional family), and **learning more** (asking questions if you have them--remember to be respectful and accepting of the answers).

grows up only knowing their adoptive parents. Information about the child's birth parents is "sealed", and usually not even the adoptive parents know these details. Sometimes important information, like a birth parent's medical history, is given to the adoptive family so they have it if they need it.

Semi-open adoption is when the birth parents and the adoptive parents agree to have some contact or exchange just a little information.

Foster care adoption is when a family decides to adopt a child that they (or another family) have cared for as part of a state or national foster care program. Sometimes the child is a baby, but more likely they are an older kid. For more about this, see this page on [Foster Families](#).

Stepfamily adoption usually occurs when a child's mother or father gets remarried, and their new stepparent decides to become a legal parent by adopting.

Kinship Adoption: This is when a relative adopts a child who was put into the foster care system.

Some types of nontraditional families, like families with LGBTQIA+ parents, are still struggling for equal rights. It wasn't until 2016 that [same-sex couples had the legal right to adopt](#) in all 50 American states. However, even with this advancement LGBTQIA+ families still face [many types of obstacles](#), such as workplace discrimination and varying hate crime laws. LGBTQIA+ families in different parts of the world face similar, and often harsher, discrimination. We suggest you look into protections for LGBTQIA+ families in your city, state, country, or planet to learn more!



Family is important. The families we're born into and the families we make throughout our lives. The Crystal Gems are as much a part of Steven's family as Greg--and vice versa! It doesn't matter if you've known someone your whole life or you just met them last week, it's important to respect and care about them! You never know who's going to become an important part of your team! ;)

TALK IT OUT

1. What does the word “family” mean to you?
2. What is your personal experience with foster care and adoption?
3. Would you consider fostering or adopting a child? Why or why not?
4. What is the difference between your background and your identity? Why is this distinction important?
5. Were any of the reasons for adoption you learned from this toolkit new to you? If so, which ones?
6. What do you think about the adoption system in your country?
7. How or should the adoptive parents maintain the adopted child's cultural identity?

TAKE ACTION

- ★ Start a night light drive - many children and youth are afraid of the dark following physical and/or sexual abuse. This is often an item new parents don't think about getting, and can be a super helpful welcome gift. Run a drive for night lights to donate to your local foster agency. If you're not sure how to find an agency, contact Transfiguring Adoption at darren@transfiguringadoption.com (add HPA Night Lights in the subject line)
- ★ Your local agencies often need many other resources as well - reach out and ask them how you can help.
- ★ Contact your representatives and tell them that you support adoption tax credit, which is designed to supplement the income of parents adopting children.
- ★ Collect books for the children and youth at your local fostering agency - there's a great list of some particularly relevant ones [here](#)
- ★ Join Transfiguring Adoption's [Elf Squad](#) to stay involved in the issue and hear about more ways to take action.

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEES

An **immigrant** is a person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country.

A **refugee** is a person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

The Crystal Gems came to Earth as a part of an invading force of beings known as Gems. They came from their home world to the Earth to colonize it with their own kind and eliminate all humans. A small group of Gems, part of the invading force, became disillusioned with the invasion and turned on their fellow Gems and defended the Earth. A small group of Gems that survived the invasion and fighting stayed behind on Earth to protect it. Those protectors are the Crystal Gems. The Crystal Gems are a lot like immigrants! They contribute really good stuff to the community and consider Earth their home even though they're not from there originally.

In many ways, the Crystal Gems are just like immigrants here on Earth. They left their homes, often without a choice, before settling into beautiful Beach City. And even though the Gems aren't native to Earth, they consider it their home and contribute really good stuff to the community. They fight to keep the Earth safe from alien invaders and definitely keep Beach City *weird*.

It's not always easy living far away from home, even if you aren't planning on going back. Throughout the series we see the Gems struggle with different issues associated with immigration to Earth. Pearl struggles with living on Earth without the possibility of returning to Homeworld, even going as far as to try to fly an unsafe spaceship from Earth (S1:E28:N28). Amethyst wrestles with accepting that while she was born on Earth, her heritage comes from a place she's never been (S2:E40:N40). Peridot grapples with betraying her own people and learning to understand Earth culture (S2:E20:N72).

Garnet, Amethyst, and Pearl have all lived on Earth for hundreds of years, so it's often through new Gems (like Peridot and Lapis) that we learn about how immigrating to a new place can be confusing and challenging. Peridot is shown clearly having a hard time trying to figure out her new home, but Steven takes the time to listen, explain, and try to understand her thoughts and feelings.



For example, when Peridot found Steven's videotape of a TV show and watched the same episode over and over again (S2:E26:N78). Steven noticed her doing so and nicely explained to her that there is more than one episode of the tv show that she can watch. As someone new to tv she had no idea that there was more than one episode of a show or that Steven would have more than one videotape.

Steven also gave Peridot a tape recorder to make up for the Gems destroying her logs of her life (S2:E26:N78). Peridot uses the tape recorder as a coping mechanism by recording her thoughts. She lets Steven listen to some of her recorded thoughts and that helps him to understand her more.

Lapis and Peridot both have to get used to the Earth as their new home and both have trouble adjusting. When Lapis and Peridot move in together (S3:E4:N82), Peridot tells Lapis that she understands that she's scared and unsure. Peridot also can't return home and feels like Earth still doesn't feel like home. Having a fellow immigrant to talk to is a good coping mechanism for Peridot and Lapis. Although they don't get along very well, they have their newness to Earth, their longing for home and familiarity, and their struggle to adjust to Earth culture in common.

Benefits of Immigration

How do immigrants help the countries they move to?(x)

1. Immigrants start businesses, which create jobs (for themselves and others!)
2. Immigrants are our engineers, scientists, innovators, artists!
3. Immigrants are important parts of local communities
4. Immigrants bring different cultural perspectives

Challenges of Immigration

Here are a few things you may not have considered that are challenges to [new immigrants](#)

1. Adjusting to a New Culture :

Being away from **family, friends, culture** can take a huge toll on folks who have immigrated

2. Discrimination

Immigrants often face discrimination in their new countries. There are many different forms of discrimination that immigrants may face, including discrimination based on things such as **ethnicity, race, socio-economic class, immigration status, language, etc.**

3. Accessing medical and social services

Immigrants may have to overcome a language barrier, as well as social barriers, in order to access **mental or physical health care, social services (such as food-assistance programs), and education.**

TALK IT OUT

There are many myths around immigrants, particularly those in the country illegally, such as they are stealing jobs from Americans. What is the truth? Turns out immigrants, whether they entered the U.S. legally or illegally, contribute a great deal to the economy. Learn more about their economic impact on our country as well as the answers to many other important immigrant-related questions [here](#).

1. What reasons might make you leave your country?
2. What kind of barriers prevent people from leaving their home countries?
3. What do you think would be the hardest part about moving to a new country?
4. What can local communities do to help and welcome refugees?
5. How does the refugee crisis affect you and the local community?
6. Do you have any friends or family members that are immigrants or refugees? How have you learned from their journeys?
7. What comes to mind when you hear the word 'refugee'?
8. Do you think the image of refugees has changed over the years?

TAKE ACTION

- ★ Contact your elected officials and representatives at every level. Tell them how you feel about the plight of immigrants and refugees and ask them to help. Not sure how to contact your reps? Check out a this [Fandom Forward Video](#) and learn how!
- ★ You can find your state representatives in the House of Representatives [HERE](#) and your Senators [HERE](#)
- ★ If you want to help new immigrants to your country, consider donating your time, money, or material items to one of the many organizations dedicated to helping new immigrants get settled. There are legal, community/social, and religious organizations in many towns that work to help immigrants. Find information through organizations like the [International Rescue Committee](#), the [United Nations Refugee Agency](#), and [Immigrant Hope](#).

LEAVING HOMEWORLD

Purpose:

In this activity, participants explore the importance of maintaining personal items during a refugee or immigration crisis.

Materials:

3x5 cards or paper
Pens or pencils

Instructions:

[5 mins] Explain: All of the Crystal Gems had different journeys that led them to Earth, Beach City, and Steven. Ruby and Sapphire were running from persecution. Pearl joined the fight to save Earth with Rose Quartz. Peridot became stranded on Earth and decided to remain, even though her entire life was on Homeworld. Now, imagine for a moment that you have to leave your home, never to return. You can only bring what you can carry in a backpack (a cheeseburger backpack, perhaps) because your only way to escape is by traveling hundreds of miles.

[5 mins] Decide what 10 items would you bring with you? Write them down.

[10-20 mins] Discuss: Why did you choose those items? What makes them important to you?

[5 mins] Explain: Because you have limited space and energy to continue carrying your items, you have to leave five items behind. You only have 1 minute to decide what to keep.

[1-2 mins] Decide what 5 items to leave. Cross them off your list. What's left in your bag?

[10-20 mins] Discuss: Discuss with the group what types of items they decided to keep. Ask the group how they decided what was most important to bring with them. Did you choose sentimental items or practical items? What items do you think the Gems would choose now if they had to leave their home in Beach City?

[5-10 mins] Last, get together as a group or as individuals and play the [Impossible Choices](#) game. This simulates some of the difficult decisions that refugees have to make. As you play through the Impossible Choices journey, think about when and why you would have to leave items behind.

RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED EPISODES

Season One

[Season One, Episode 7 - Bubble Buddies](#)

[Season One, Episode 18- Beach Party](#)

[Season One, Episode 22 - Steven and the Stevens](#)

[Season One, Episode 28 - Space Race](#)

[Season One, Episode 32 - Fusion Cuisine](#)

[Season One, Episode 37 - Alone Together](#)

[Season One, Episode 38 - The Test](#)

[Season One, Episode 50- Political Power](#)

[Season One, Episode 40 - On The Run](#)

Season Two

[Season Two, Episode 1 - Full Disclosure](#)

[Season Two, Episode 6 - Sworn to the Sword](#)

[Season Two, Episode 9 - We Need to Talk](#)

[Season Two, Episode 19- When It Rains](#)

[Season Two, Episode 17- Sadie's Song](#)

[Season Two, Episode 20- Back to the Barn](#)

[Season Two, Episode 22-The Answer](#)

[Season Two, Episode 26- Log Date 7 15 2](#)

[Season Two, Episode 40 - On the Run](#)

Season Three

[Season Three, Episode 1- Super Watermelon Island](#)

[Season Three, Episode 2- Gem Drill](#)

[Season Three, Episode 4- Barn Mates](#)

Allyship

[Close-Reads: Watermelon Civilisation](#) via poetofthepiano.tumblr.com

[“Gems are gems” Rebecca Sugar Confirms Gems are Non-Binary](#) via <http://crystal-gems.tumblr.com/>

[Steven Universe Creator Rebecca Sugar on Growing up, Gender Politics and Her Brother](#) by Nia Howe-Smith via Entertainment Weekly

[Steven Universe Guidebook Spills The Secrets Of The Crystal Gems](#) via i09

Adoption and Fostering

[3 Ways to Talk About Nontraditional Family Structures Appropriately](#) via Everyday Feminism

[Adoption: The Basics](#) via PBS Kids

[DEBUNKING THE MYTHS: Facts About Foster Care Adoption](#) via National Adoption Day

[Family: Offline Activities](#) via PBS Kids

[Foster Care Reform](#) via Children’s Rights

[Get Informed](#) via Family Equality Council

[Helping Children Aging Out of Foster Care Prepare for Independence](#) via the Annie E. Casey Foundation

[Resources for Youth](#) via U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

[Same-Sex Couples Can Now Adopt Children In All 50 States](#) via Huffington Post

[State-by-state Legislation Won by Foster Youth-Led Groups](#) via Foster Youth in Action

[State Maps](#) via The Human Rights Campaign

[What is Foster Care?](#) via International Foster Care Organisation

Immigration and Refugees

[Find Your Representative](#) via the United States House of Representatives

[Find Your Senator](#) via the United States Senate

[Giving the Facts a Fighting Chance: Addressing Common Questions on Immigration](#) via American Immigration Council

[Helping new Americans find their way](#) by Tori DeAngelis via American Psychological Services

[How Does Immigration Benefit The UK?](#) via Immigrations Advice Services

[How Can I Help Immigrants](#) via Immigrant Hope

[How to help refugees](#) via International Refugee Committee

[How to Send Your Owls to Congress](#) by Fandom Forward on YouTube

[Impossible Choices Game](#) via impossiblechoices.org

[Ten Ways Immigrants Help Build and Strengthen Our Economy](#) via WhiteHouse.gov

[UNHCR: Get Involved](#) via the United Nations Refugee Center

Other

['Steven Universe's' Rebecca Sugar Shares Why LGBTQ Representation Is Personal](#) via Los Angeles Times

[Rebecca Sugar is Bisexual: "Steven Universe" Creator Comes Out at Comic-Con](#) via Autostraddle

UNEXPLORED THEMES

As much as we'd like to, we can't possibly cover all of the incredible themes in Steven Universe within a single toolkit! We encourage you to think about other connections we may not have addressed – here are some of the things we noticed, and we're sure there are plenty more as well.

Altruism

- ★ Steven leads emotionally and practically with altruism always—even against his enemies
- ★ Steven also extends this altruism to known enemies such as the shards and other dark creatures he and the Gems encounter. Sometimes Garnet, Pearl, or Amethyst convince him that it is hopeless, but they've also learned to trust Steven's altruism as an alternate way to "win". We also see it in the way that Steven deals with Onion and others in his town. This seems to be a quality he gets from both of his parents.

Gender Roles

- ★ How do the characters skew traditional gender roles?
 - ★ How does Connie break gender roles?
 - ★ How does Steven break gender roles?
- ★ Most of the families in the show have parents with nontraditional roles (Sadie has a single mom, Sour Cream's mom remarried, Connie's parents have gender nonconforming jobs)
- ★ The gems are agender but present as feminine, how does this affect the show?

Feminism

- ★ How does the production of Steven Universe incorporate feminist values (ie female showrunner, diverse staff, etc)?
- ★ Do you consider the show to be a feminist TV show?

Grief

- ★ One of the central themes of the show deals with the Crystal Gems, Steven, and Greg learning to navigate a world without Rose. Each deals with the loss of Rose differently, and each honors her memory in their own unique way

Environmental Conservation

- ★ Amethyst wouldn't exist without Homeworld having destroyed part of the Earth to make the Kindergarten. Our lives as they are now can't exist without the products (computers,

smartphones, cars, airplanes, industrialized agriculture, etc) that destroy the environment. Amethyst lives with this, and uses it to motivate her to create a better version of the gems (by being a Crystal Gem), and we can do the same by inventing and applying better ways of doing....well, just about everything.

- ★ The Homeworld Gems are incredibly destructive to other worlds, seeing them only as sources of raw materials to make more gems. Evidence of this destruction on Earth can be seen in the Kindergarten and the Cluster. Rose and the Crystal Gems are great examples of conservationists who realize that their past actions have severe impacts on the planet.

Incarceration

- ★ How do Lapis Lazuli's experiences reflect an unjust criminal justice system?

Abusive Relationships

- ★ Jasper and Lapis Lazuli have a very unhealthy relationship and fusion, how does the show address this as an abusive relationship?

Consent

- ★ How does the show promote (physical/sexual/emotional) consent?
- ★ Why do you think Rebecca Sugar has spoken about the importance of teaching children consent at a young age? Have you learned about consent at school? From your parents? Peers? The Internet?

War

- ★ How does the show depict war? What are the shown consequences?

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THANKS!

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The Adoption and Fostering section of this toolkit was written with help from our friends at Transfiguring Adoption.



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