Good morning! First of all, I would like to thank you for being here today. My name is Alba Chouza Cruces, and the title of my degree final project is Lesbian Relationships in U.S. Fiction of the 1980s.

To begin with, I am going to talk about the contents. First, I am going to speak about my motivations. Then I will explain the objective and also, I will describe the structure I used. I will end the presentation by explaining what I had to face and what I have learned.

(Motivations) As a defender of LGBTQ+ rights, I always look to highlight the experiences and **challenges** faced by the community, especially in lesbian relationships. I also wanted to increase their visibility and understanding. This is the reason why I chose two pretty well-known novels from the 80s like The Color Purple by Alice Walker and Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café by Fannie Flagg.

I would like to talk about the objective of the degree final project. The objective is to analyse the **portrayals** of lesbian relationships in both novels with a brief comparison between them. By examining the characters, their interactions, and the social context within each work, it aims to gain a deeper **understanding** of how lesbian love is depicted or challenged by prevailing social norms and prejudices. Furthermore, this research **intends** to shed light on the significance of such **representations** in queer literature, showing diverse identities and relationships.

Now I am going to talk about the structure. This project is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is a general **introduction**. The second chapter is an **introduction to queer studies.** For this introduction, I mainly used the book called *Queer: A Graphic History* by Baker and Scheele that I truly recommend if you are interested in this topic. In this introduction, it is explained the multidisciplinary and contextuality of queer studies and also some historical queer background. Chapter 3 is a brief historical contextualization of the **Jim Crow South**. The 4th and 5th chapters focus on the close reading and textual analysis of both novels. Chapter 4 provides some information about **Alice Walker and lesbianism in The Color Purple**. It explains Celie’s development from a submissive woman to an independent woman. In the analysis, it is reflected Celie’s need to eliminate both gender and patriarchal oppression within the African American community and the crucial role that sexuality has for her development as an independent woman (*How sexuality has a crucial role?*). This crucial role is represented by Shug who is introduced at the very beginning when Celie is surrounded by men who affirm power over her. Thanks to Shug, Celie experiences sexual attraction, pleasure and the deepest feeling of loving and being loved.

Chapter 5 starts with some information about **Fannie Flagg** and then it continues with an analysis of the butch-femme relationship between Idgie and Ruth making quick **comparisons with the Color Purple.** For example, one of these comparisons is the subtleness of Ruth and Idgie’s lesbian relationship, that it is practically based on displays of affection and sentimental and emotional gestures. This subtlety has even led some people to not even consider their relationship as anything more than a friendship, even though they work together at the Whistle Stop Café, they live together and they raised a child together, that would be their child. In Flagg’s novel, Idgie could be regarded as a “tomboy” at the beginning of the story, but when her sexual orientation comes out, “butch” would be the proper term. Tomboy refers to her behaviour and physical appearance, while butch adds her sexual orientation. Moreover, this relation is also characterised by its lack of physical contact that strongly differs from Shug and Celie’s relationship. The exploration of the relationship in Fried Green Tomatoes highlights the power of love and loyalty. The acceptance of their romantic relationship was postponed due to Frank Bennet because of Ruth’s choice influenced by compulsory heterosexuality where she chooses to be a wife and a mother instead of being with Idgie.

About my experience doing this degree final project, one of the biggest **difficulties** I had to face was the depth of the analysis of both couples which could lead to different interpretations depending on the person. Moreover, I believe it would have been interesting to also analyse the implications and problems of one of the members of each couple being bisexual.

Thanks to my research on gender roles, that I did not know how essential were in queer relationships, and their implications, I am now more aware of how all these affect people’s behaviour and their day-by-day interactions. I also learned numerous terms to explain different situations that I didn't know how to name.

Finally, I am proud that this project has **contributed** to queer studies providing an exploration of my perspective on both relationships and also contributing to the ongoing dialogue surrounding queer representation in North American literature. This is the end of my presentation thank you so much for your attention.