



Spellcheck
for Bias™



Vampire Academy
“Pilot”

August, 2021

Overview

The purpose of this report is to identify opportunities for content creators to diversify character representations. This report measures representations of six identities in the script *Vampire Academy* for NBC Universal:

- [Gender](#)
- [Race/Ethnicity](#)
- [LGBTQIA+](#)
- [Disability](#)
- [Age \(50+\)](#)
- [Body Size](#)

Methodology

Spellcheck for Bias is a collaboration between the Institute and the University of Southern California's Signal Analysis and Interpretation Laboratory (SAIL) which analyzes scripts and manuscripts to create a breakdown of characters and dialogue. Spellcheck for Bias also incorporates Human Expert Coding to determine the representation of six identities (gender, race, LGBTQ+, Disabilities, Age 50+ and Body Size). Spellcheck for Bias also provides an analysis of Tropes and Stereotypes and attributes, as well as gender and racial injustice, violence, and discrimination. For this report, we analyze characters who spoke 1 line of text or more. In *Vampire Academy*, 27 characters met this criterion:

CHARACTER NAME	LINE COUNT
LISSA	174
ROSE	159
VICTOR	72
MIA	58
QUEEN	55
ANDRE	35
DIMITRI	32
CHRISTIAN	29
MASON	26
ALBERTA	22
MEREDITH	12
ALICE	10
MARIE CONTA	9
COORDINATOR	7
SONYA	5
LISSA'S DAD	5
GUARDIAN	4
MIKHAIL	4
TATIANA	3
HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA	3
FUSSY ROYAL	3
SEBASTIAN	2
JESSE	2
THE QUEENS ANCIENT HERALD	1
CROWD MEMBER	1
LISSA'S MOM	1
DOORMAN	1

Automated coding is combined with expert human coding to generate the quantitative and qualitative analysis below.

Gender Analysis

For comparison, women constitute 51% of the U.S. population and 50.8% of the Latinx population in the U.S. As a percentage of the total female population in the US, Latinas make up 18%.

- 44% of characters are specified as female.
- There are no characters specified as Latina.
- The co-leading characters are female (“Lissa” and “Rose”).
- The script contains 2 character opportunities to increase gender diversity.

Characters by Gender

LATINX FEMALE CHARACTER	FEMALE CHARACTER	MALE CHARACTER	GENDER UNSPECIFIED
	LISSA		
	ROSE		
		VICTOR	
	MIA		
	QUEEN		
		ANDRE	
		DIMITRI	
		CHRISTIAN	
		MASON	
	ALBERTA		
	MEREDITH		
	ALICE		
	MARIE CONTA		
		COORDINATOR	
	SONYA		
		LISSA'S DAD	
		GUARDIAN	
		MIKHAIL	
	TATIANA		

	HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA		
			FUSSY ROYAL
		SEBASTIAN	
		JESSE	
		THE QUEENS ANCIENT HERALD	
			CROWD MEMBER
	LISSA'S MOM		
		DOORMAN	

The See Jane Test

In order to pass the See Jane test, a script/manuscript must have:	
✓	At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) who is a woman who;
✓	Is not depicted with gender stereotypes or tropes.

Race/Ethnicity Analysis

For comparison, people of color constitute 38% of the U.S. population.

- 0 characters are specified as characters of color.
- The co-leading characters do not have a specified race or ethnicity.
- The script contains 27 character opportunities to increase racial/ethnic diversity.

Characters by Race/Ethnicity

CHARACTER OF COLOR	WHITE CHARACTER	RACE/ETHNICITY UNSPECIFIED
		LISSA
		ROSE
		VICTOR
		MIA
		QUEEN
		ANDRE
		DIMITRI
		CHRISTIAN
		MASON
		ALBERTA
		MEREDITH
		ALICE
		MARIE CONTA
		COORDINATOR
		SONYA
		LISSA'S DAD
		GUARDIAN
		MIKHAIL
		TATIANA
		HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA
		FUSSY ROYAL

		SEBASTIAN
		JESSE
		THE QUEENS ANCIENT HERALD
		CROWD MEMBER
		LISSA'S MOM
		DOORMAN

The Shonda Rhimes Test

In order to pass the Shonda Rhimes test, a script/manuscript must have:	
✗	At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) who is a character of color who;
✗	Is not depicted with race/ethnicity stereotypes or tropes.



Latinx Analysis

For comparison, Latinx people constitute 18.4% of the U.S. population.

- 0 characters are specified as Latinx.
- The co-leading characters do not have a specified race or ethnicity.
- The script contains 27 character opportunities to increase Latinx Representation.

Characters by Race/Ethnicity

Latinx Character	Non-Latinx Character	RACE/ETHNICITY UNSPECIFIED
		LISSA
		ROSE
		VICTOR
		MIA
		QUEEN
		ANDRE
		DIMITRI
		CHRISTIAN
		MASON
		ALBERTA
		MEREDITH
		ALICE
		MARIE CONTA
		COORDINATOR
		SONYA
		LISSA'S DAD
		GUARDIAN
		MIKHAIL
		TATIANA
		HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA
		FUSSY ROYAL

		SEBASTIAN
		JESSE
		THE QUEENS ANCIENT HERALD
		CROWD MEMBER
		LISSA'S MOM
		DOORMAN

The Salma Hayek Test

In order to pass the Salma Hayek test, a script/manuscript must have:	
X	At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) who is Latinx who;
X	Is not depicted with race/ethnicity stereotypes or tropes.

LGBTQIA+ Analysis

For comparison, LGBTQIA+ people comprise 5.6% of the U.S. population.

- 11% of characters are specified as LGBTQIA+.
- A co-leading character is specified as LGBTQIA+ (“Lissa”).
- The script contains 17 character opportunities to increase LGBTQIA+ diversity.

Characters by LGBTQIA+ Status

LATINX LGBTQIA+ CHARACTER	LGBTQIA+ CHARACTER	HETEROSEXUAL CHARACTER	SEXUALITY UNSPECIFIED
	LISSA		
		ROSE	
			VICTOR
	MIA		
			QUEEN
		ANDRE	
			DIMITRI
		CHRISTIAN	
		MASON	
			ALBERTA
	MEREDITH		
			ALICE
			MARIE CONTA
			COORDINATOR
			SONYA
		LISSA'S DAD	
			GUARDIAN
			MIKHAIL
		TATIANA	
			HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA

			FUSSY ROYAL
			SEBASTIAN
			JESSE
			THE QUEENS ANCIENT HERALD
			CROWD MEMBER
		LISSA'S MOM	
			DOORMAN

The Vito-Russo Test

In order to pass the Vito-Russo test, a script/manuscript must:	
✓	Contain a character that is identifiably lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual.
✓	That character must not be solely or predominantly defined by their sexual orientation or gender identity (i.e. they are comprised of the same sort of unique character traits commonly used to differentiate straight/non-transgender characters from one another).
✓	The LGBTQIA+ character must be tied into the plot in such a way that their removal would have a significant effect, meaning they are not there to simply provide colorful commentary, paint urban authenticity, or (perhaps most commonly) set up a punchline.



Disability Analysis

For comparison, people with disabilities constitute 19% of the U.S. population.

- 4% of characters are specified as having a physical, cognitive, mental health, or communication disability.
- 0 Latinx characters are specified as having a physical, cognitive, mental health, or communication disability.
- A co-leading character has a mental health disability (“Lissa”).
- The script contains 26 character opportunities to increase disability diversity.

Characters by Disability Status

LATINX CHARACTER WITH DISABILITY	CHARACTER WITH DISABILITY	CHARACTER WITHOUT DISABILITY	DISABILITY STATUS UNSPECIFIED
	LISSA		
			ROSE
			VICTOR
			MIA
			QUEEN
			ANDRE
			DIMITRI
			CHRISTIAN
			MASON
			ALBERTA
			MEREDITH
			ALICE
			MARIE CONTA
			COORDINATOR
			SONYA
			LISSA'S DAD
			GUARDIAN
			MIKHAIL

			TATIANA
			HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA
			FUSSY ROYAL
			SEBASTIAN
			JESSE
			THE QUEENS ANCIENT HERALD
			CROWD MEMBER
			LISSA'S MOM
			DOORMAN

The Marlee Matlin Test

In order to pass the Marlee Matlin test, a script/manuscript must have:	
✓	At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) with a physical, cognitive, or communication disability who;
✓	Is not depicted with disability stereotypes or tropes.



Age (50+) Analysis

*For comparison, people ages 50+ constitute 34% of the U.S. population.
People ages 65+ constitute 16.5% of the Latinx population.*

- 19% of characters are specified as ages 50+.
- 0 Latinx characters are specified as ages 50+.
- The co-leading characters are under 50 (“Lissa” and “Rose”).
- The script contains X character opportunities to increase age diversity.

Characters by Age

LATINX CHARACTER 50+	CHARACTER 50+	CHARACTER UNDER 50	AGE UNSPECIFIED
		LISSA	
		ROSE	
	VICTOR		
		MIA	
	QUEEN		
		ANDRE	
		DIMITRI	
		CHRISTIAN	
		MASON	
		ALBERTA	
		MEREDITH	
	ALICE		
			MARIE CONTA
			COORDINATOR
		SONYA	
			LISSA'S DAD
			GUARDIAN
		MIKHAIL	
		TATIANA	
	HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA		



			FUSSY ROYAL
		SEBASTIAN	
		JESSE	
	THE QUEENS ANCIENT HERALD		
			CROWD MEMBER
			LISSA'S MOM
			DOORMAN

The Betty White Test

In order to pass the Betty White test, a script/manuscript must have:	
✓	At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) who is 50+ who;
✓	Is not depicted with age stereotypes or tropes.



Body Size Analysis

For comparison, people with large body types constitute 39% of the U.S. population.



- 0 characters are specified as having a large body type.
- 0 Latinx characters are specified as having a large body type.
- A co-leading character has a specified small/medium body type (“Rose”), while the other co-leading character has an unspecified body type (“Lissa”).
- The script contains 25 character opportunities to increase body type diversity.

Characters by Body Size

LATINX CHARACTER WITH LARGE BODY TYPE	CHARACTER WITH LARGE BODY TYPE	CHARACTER WITH SMALL/MEDIUM BODY TYPE	BODY SIZE UNSPECIFIED
			LISSA
		ROSE	
			VICTOR
			MIA
			QUEEN
			ANDRE
			DIMITRI
			CHRISTIAN
		MASON	
			ALBERTA
			MEREDITH
			ALICE
			MARIE CONTA
			COORDINATOR
			SONYA
			LISSA'S DAD
			GUARDIAN
			MIKHAIL

			TATIANA
			HIGH PRIESTESS IRENA
			FUSSY ROYAL
			SEBASTIAN
			JESSE
			THE QUEENS ANCIENT HERALD
			CROWD MEMBER
			LISSA'S MOM
			DOORMAN

The Lizzo Test

In order to pass the Lizzo test, a script/manuscript must have:	
	At least one prominent character (leading, co-leading, supporting character) with a large body type who;
	Is not depicted with size stereotypes or tropes.

Intersectional Analysis

	Female Character	Character of Color	LGBTQIA+ Character	Character with a Disability	Character 50+	Large Body Type
Female Character		NO	YES	YES	YES	NO
Character of Color	NO		NO	NO	NO	NO
LGBTQIA+ Character	YES	NO		YES	NO	NO
Character with a Disability	YES	NO	YES		NO	NO
Character 50+	YES	NO	NO	NO		NO
Large Body Type	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	

Latinx Intersectional Analysis

	Female Character	LGBTQIA+ Character	Character with a Disability	Character 50+	Character with Large Body Type
Female Character		NO	NO	NO	NO
LGBTQIA+ Character	NO		NO	NO	NO
Character with a Disability	NO	NO		NO	NO
Character 50+	NO	NO	NO		NO
Character with Large Body Type	NO	NO	NO	NO	

Positive Aspects

- Positive depiction of female friendship, based on mutual respect and care.
- Mia, a supporting character, is written with depth and complexity so that she does not fit the 'lovesick lady' or 'mean girl' tropes.
- Healthy depiction of masculinity
 - Mason provides emotional support to Rose and sincerely listens to her problems.

Potential Pitfalls

- **Potential Sexism:**
 - Deference to masculine traits in leadership roles
 - While the script identifies Marie as a 'frontrunner,' only male pronouns are used to refer to frontrunners for political office when characters speak about them, which leaves the audience with the impression that all the 'frontrunners' to rule the kingdom are male.
 - "We'll still need to vote to approve him" (pp. 56).

- Co-leading character Lissa is presented as ‘naive’, outside politics, passive, fragile, and pure.
 - “She doesn’t have a political bone in her body” (pp. 54)
 - “She is untainted, able to see the good in all people” (pp. 54)
- Suggestion: Establish qualifications for political office outside of naivete and purity, which suggests feminine attributes are incongruent with political office.
- *Hypermasculinity in typically male-dominated professions*:
 - While Rose is the top of her Guardian class, the script presents Guardians as distinctly hyper-masculine and militaristic; as written, the presumption is that Rose and Alberta are the sole prominent female members of the Guardians. Rose is the only student in her Guardian class identified as female.
 - Suggestion: De-gender or defy gender stereotypes within the military/Guardian force by introducing ‘soft skills’ appropriate for the setting (e.g., translating languages, de-coding, strategy) and include more female characters in the Guardian scenes (particularly ones that are stereotypically male [e.g., combat training]).
- *Female Gender Tropes and Stereotypes*:
 - The women over 30 (Marie Conta and Alberta) are nagging, and sclerotic, a common trope known as **The Shrew**.
 - Lissa’s storyline contains elements of the **Damsel in Distress** trope. She is *often in situations that require her to be rescued by other characters*. Sometimes, this is Rose, but as the story progresses, male characters increasingly come to her aid:
 - Christian saves her from embarrassment when she needs to read something in Old Moiri
 - Victor directs her as she navigates the political aspects of her new position as head of household
 - Dimitri takes over her security, saving her and Rose when they’re attacked.
 - Suggestion: The Damsel in Distress trope reinforces stereotypes that women are weak or frail and in need of rescue. Lissa’s character arc as she comes into power should not be overly dependent on male characters.

- **Exclusive standards of beauty (age, body size, race):**
 - Despite being a non-human community, the script defines beauty in stereotypical ways: youthful and slim.
 - “I’ve been working in the non-royal feeding chamber. I think I aged out. But one of the skinny hot feeders fainted and here I am” (pp. 35)
 - All characters that are sexually desirable or romantically involved are under 25.
 - Opportunities: Given the number of characters described as ‘attractive’ and that are the objects of the viewer’s or other character’s desire, the script has many opportunities to celebrate beauty that does not fit conventional standards. This includes persons with larger body types, darker skinned People of Color, People of Color with natural hair, persons with disabilities, and persons over 50.
- **Potential Ableism:**
 - *Stigmatizes taking medication for mental health*
 - The script refers to Lissa as a “pill popping princess”, equating taking prescriptions for mental health with addictive behavior (pp. 31).
 - Opportunity: Introduce healthy ways of coping with loss, depression, and seeking professional help, and destigmatize medication for mental illness.
- **Potential Ageism:**
 - No character over 25 is described as attractive or an object of sexual desire despite most scenes conveying sexual tension between characters. This plot choice reinforces the stereotype that persons over 50 are **Aromantic** and no longer sexually desirable.
 - The Queen, a character over 50, describes herself as “haggard” and “cynical” (pp. 54), consistent with age and gender based stereotypes around appearance and temperament.
- **Opportunities to Increase Representation and Potential Pitfalls- BIPOC/Latinx:**
 - Given that Lissa is a ‘fresh faced’ symbol of purity to be protected, consider casting her as nonwhite.
 - Consider class hierarchy when casting; avoid casting BIPOC characters solely as Guardians, non-Royals, feeders, or event staff.
 - A common stereotype for characters played by women of color is “hypersexuality.” As written, Tatiana is more hypersexual (a character described as “all lips and legs”) than the other characters. Avoid solely casting BIPOC/Latina women as the hypersexual characters to avoid reinforcing stereotypes about “hypersexuality” among women of color.

- Consider casting women in positions of authority as non-white (e.g., Queen, Alberta, Marie, High Priestess, Dorm Matron).
- Avoid stereotypes when depicting the “Martial Arts” elements of the Guardians training scenes (e.g., pp. 38)
- **Potential Cultural Insensitivity:**
 - The Queen’s appeal to centrism with respect to the role of the Guardians may be interpreted as a reductive allusion to contemporary debates on policing and crime in the US. For example, “We already live our lives in quiet dread, but with the Strigoi getting bolder *those lunatics on the right* will legislate the very air we breathe in the name of keeping us safe...While the *pie-eyed dreamers on the left* whisper about releasing the Guardians from their service, threatening the very protections our species needs to survive [emphasis added]” (pp. 54). If this is a metaphor for debates about policing in the US, the Strigoi as literal violent monsters dehumanizes the incarcerated they represent in the metaphor.¹

¹ Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The New Press, 2010.