



# LGBTQ+

history guide  
2024

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**LGBTQ+ History Month is an opportunity to learn about the history of lesbian, gay, bi and trans rights and to reflect on the progress that has been made from the denials of human rights that were not so long ago in the UK and that still continue in many countries around the world.**

It is also a chance to respect the work and bravery of the LGBTQ+ generations that have come before us, to acknowledge where we are and to look forward in continuing to fight for the humanity and safety of future LGBTQ+ generations.

This LGBTQ+ History Month, RPC's RAIN Community brings you our top recommendations for great LGBTQ+ content to watch, read, listen to and follow.

Each year LGBTQ+ History Month has a theme, the theme for this year is Medicine – #UnderTheScope and it celebrates LGBTQ+ peoples' contribution to the field of medicine and healthcare both historically and today.

We wanted to shed a light on the story of Sophia Jex-Blake, one of the first women to study medicine in the UK and the very first woman to practice medicine in Scotland. She was also the founder of two medical schools for women. Jex-Blake wanted to be a doctor in a time when it was unthinkable for a woman to be one. She wanted to change that and eventually, she did. In March 1869 after much internal strain, Edinburgh University approved Jex-Blake's application to study, but it was eventually rejected by the university court on the grounds the university could not make the necessary arrangements "in the interest of one lady". Undeterred by her latest setback, a campaign carried in The Scotsman newspaper called on more women to join her.

The story gathered attention and more women joined her cause, pushing to study medicine in Edinburgh. They became known as the Edinburgh seven and were the first women to enroll at a British university. The university charged them higher fees and they were forced to arrange lectures for themselves due to a loophole whereby university staff were permitted but not required to teach women. They faced a lot of hostility including what would be known as 'The Surgeon's Hall Riots' and were stopped from completing their degrees due to influential members from the medical school.

Many of the women went on to complete their studies at European universities, including Jex-Blake. Eventually Jex-Blake returned to Edinburgh – becoming Scotland's first practising female doctor. She went on to found the Edinburgh School of Medicine for Women and the Edinburgh Hospital and Dispensary for Women and Children – later Bruntsfield Hospital. Her political impact also continued as she supported the Enabling Bill, which allowed medical examination boards to have female candidates. In keeping with her life's work, she had campaigned for women's suffrage until her death in 1912. After her death her life partner, Scottish doctor Margaret Todd, put together her biography: *The life of Sophie Jex-Blake*. She is commemorated by a plaque at the main entrance of the university's medical school building – where women sit in classes that she was chased away from.



## Films

- **All of Us Strangers** – a screenwriter drawn back to his childhood home enters into a fledgling relationship with a mysterious neighbor as he then discovers his parents appear to be living just as they were on the day they died, 30 years before.
- **Bessie** – the story of legendary blues performer Bessie Smith, who rose to fame during the 1920s and 1930s. Bessie's struggles as a black female bisexual performer saw her clash with patriarchy and racism. Queen Latifah is excellent in her portrayal of a courageous star unwilling to compromise her integrity.
- **Boys In The Band** – a remake of a 1970's play about a group of gay men getting together for a birthday party and getting more than they bargained for...
- **Boys Don't Cry** – a romantic tragedy set in a Nebraska trailer park, based on the tragic true story of trans man Brandon Teena. A groundbreaking film for its time that contributed to Brandon's trans identity being recognised including when Hilary Swank (who portrayed Brandon) affirmed this by consistently referring to Brandon with he/him pronouns.
- **Dating Amber** – set in Ireland in the 1990s, this is a bittersweet but uplifting coming of age story about gay classmates that fake a straight relationship.
- **Dope Queens** – with incredible trans talent in front of and behind the camera, this milestone film follows three friends (Alexandra Grey, Pierson Fodé, Trace Lysette) through one wild night in San Francisco's historic Tenderloin district, based on true events. Plus, it features Drag Race All-Star winner Kylie Sonique Love!
- **Fin de siglo (End of the Century)** – a film about two men who meet in Barcelona and, after spending a day together, realise that they had already met twenty years ago.
- **Happiest Season** – this is a fun, heart-warming Christmas film that centres a lesbian couple with a wonderful speech from Dan Levy about the very personal nature of the process of coming out.
- **I am Michael** – a film based on the true story of Michael Glatze, a gay activist who rejected his homosexuality to become an anti-gay pastor.
- **Kinky Boots Musical** (available to stream online) – a movie that doesn't quite reach Sex the City heights of shoe obsession, it's an inspiring story about how important fashion is in helping feminine people express themselves.
- **Law of Desire** – a typically melodramatic dark comedy from director Pedro Almodóvar about passion and desire. Almodóvar has consistently cast trans characters and actors in his films and this film sees a trans actress cast in a cis role and a cis actress playing a trans female character.
- **Milk** – Milk is a 2008 American biographical film based on the life of gay rights activist and politician Harvey Milk, who was the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in California, as a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.
- **Moonlight** – a beautiful and heartwrenching story of a black gay man growing up in a poor neighbourhood of Miami, presented as three stages in his life played by three different actors and portraying the protagonist's struggles with his identity and self.
- **My Policeman** – based on the 2012 novel of the same name by Bethan Roberts, the film stars Harry Styles, Emma Corrin, Gina McKee, Linus Roache, David Dawson, and Rupert Everett. It is inspired by the relationship between the writer E.M. Forster and Bob Buckingham.
- **Pride** – a story set in the 1980s of gay activists who chose to support union miners in Thatcher's Britain.
- **Rustin** – prolific gay character actor Colman Domingo the lead role he's long deserved in this star-studded biopic of trailblazing gay civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, the man who organized the 1963 March on Washington.
- **Stories of Our Lives** – a brave project by the Nairobi-based Nest Collective which tells the personal stories of LGBTQ+ people in Kenya.
- **The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert** – a drag act go on tour in the Australian provinces and encounter adventures and more. Flamboyant, warm and funny whilst being a real portrayal of complex relationships.
- **To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar** – three drag queens embark on a formative road trip from New York to Hollywood. Starring Wesley Snipes and Patrick Swayze, along with cameos from established drag performers like RuPaul, Joey Arias and Lady Bunny.

## Podcasts

- **Bad Gays** – a podcast about evil and complicated queers in history. Why do we remember our heroes better than our villains? Hosted by Huw Lemmey and Ben Miller.
- **Getting Curious podcast**, Jonathan Van Ness, episode 198 – an episode addressing the puberty blockers decision handed down in the UK in December 2020 and asking Lui Asquith, director at Mermaids, how we can raise the bar on trans rights. History in our times.
- **Homo Sapiens podcast**, Alan Cumming and Chris Sweeney, episode 71 – a touching and open interview with Sex and the City star Cynthia Nixon about her experience of parenting her trans son.
- **Lesbian Lounge**, join Denise, an American lesbian living in London, England on 'The Lesbian Lounge', a raucous romp of a show – you'll hear LGBTQ+ News, celebrity interviews, hot topics, gossip, events, new music, cool LGBTQ+ projects, and much more.
- **Positively UK LGBT+ Podcast** – positively UK Gay Men's Project Coordinator Chris O'Hanlon hosts a series of HIV-related podcasts for LGBTQ+ communities where he talks to those at the forefront of HIV services. The episodes cover the topics of living with HIV about Covid-19, Chemsex, aging, accessing HIV services, welfare and finance, and managing isolation and wellbeing.
- **Simply Equality podcast**, Sarah Stephenson-Hunter – an open, honest and on occasions humorous exploration of the lived realities of disabled and LGBTQ+ people.
- **What The Trans!?** – a UK-based weekly podcast with news and interviews, made by and for transgender and non-binary people. We fact-check, raise voices from our community, and top it all off with a generous helping of snark. Our show began as a response to the never-ending anti-trans nonsense erupting all

## Documentaries

- **A Secret Love** – in telling one couple's story, A Secret Love pays understated yet powerful tribute to a lifetime of choices and sacrifices made in the name of enduring devotion. A former baseball player keeps her lesbian relationship a secret from her family for seven decades.
- **Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin** – this documentary tells the story of an openly and unashamedly gay man at a time when progressive activists of all colours were reflexively homophobic.
- **Circus of Books** – a woman's documentary on the gay pornography and adult goods shop her parents ran for three decades brims with remembrances by those who frequented it.
- **Disclosure** – a history of Hollywood's problematic transgender stereotypes explored in this eye-opening documentary.
- **How To Survive A Plague** – angry, powerful, and stirring, How to Survive a Plague is a brilliantly constructed documentary about the activists who pushed for action to combat the AIDS epidemic.
- **I Am Not Your Negro** – this documentary is based on the unfinished biographical book by James Baldwin, close adviser to Martin Luther King and one of the few openly gay figures in the civil rights movement.
- **Jamie: Drag Queen at 16** – this documentary follows a 16-year-old drag queen and was the inspiration for musical and film Everybody's Talking About Jamie.
- **Memories of a Penitent Heart** – twenty-five years after her uncle died of AIDS, a woman tracks down his lover and opens a Pandora's box of family drama.
- **Paris is Burning** – in this classic documentary about the voguing culture in New York City, the real-life stars pirouette past racism and homophobia.
- **Pretend it's a City** – humourist Fran Lebowitz, sits down with Martin Scorsese, to talk all things New York. "Nothing is better for a city than a dense population of angry homosexuals!"

over the United Kingdom. We started this with the goals of debunking media lies, reporting on the trans and non-binary community, and making as many silly jokes as we possibly can.

- **Whisper to a Roar** – a history project produced by Opening Doors London, which focuses on activism of women in the community – lesbian, bi and trans women. RPC RAIN are hoping to work with Opening Doors London in the future.
- **You're Wrong About podcast**, Michael Hobbes and Sarah Marshall, episode re-release on 4 June 2020, the Stonewall Riot – this well-researched deep dive podcast addresses how a turning point in the gay rights movement became an immediate controversy, a lasting inspiration and a never-ending debate.

- **Queer Japan** – trailblazing artists, activists, and everyday people from across the spectrum of gender and sexuality defy social norms and dare to shine in this kaleidoscopic view of LGBTQ+ culture in contemporary Japan
- **Rebel Dykes** – rousing and detailed documentary uncovering the unheard story of post-punk lesbian feminism in the 1980s, told through archive footage, interviews and animation.
- **The death and life of Marsha P Johnson** – this documentary explores the heroic life and tragic death of an often-forgotten but accomplished and inspirational leader of the gay rights movement.
- **The New Black** – filmmaker Yoruba Richen examines the reaction of the black community to the debate over legalizing gay marriage.
- **Transhood** – four kids and their families unmask the intimate realities of how gender fluidity is reshaping the family next door.

## TV Shows

- **Brooklyn 99** – a joyful and hilarious US sitcom set in a New York police precinct with a team of diverse and loyal detectives led by an eccentric commanding officer. The many laughs are punctuated by heartwarming and progressive moments.
- **Brothers & Sisters** – a deft portrayal of the ups and downs of marital and family relationships.
- **Doctor Who** – the world's longest-running sci-fi series returned for its three part 60th anniversary Doctor Who special. Trans actress Yasmin Finney plays Rose, the daughter of one time Doctor Who companion Donna (played by Catherine Tate). Rose is a teenage trans girl, just as Finney was when they filmed the episodes.
- **Euphoria** – an American adaptation of an Israeli show, this is a glossy dark teen comedy following the troubled life of 17-year-old Rue, a drug addict fresh from rehab with no plans to stay clean, and her high school friends, all dealing with their own secrets and traumas.
- **Feel Good** – this series follows the struggles of Canadian comedian Mae in dealing with crippling addiction and a new intense romantic relationship. Achingly painful, sweet and funny, the show cuts to the core of complex feelings about sexuality and gender that weave their way through modern relationships.
- **Grace & Frankie** – Hollywood icons Jane Fonda and Lily Tomlin unite in Grace and Frankie as two unlikely friends who bond after their husbands leave them... for each other.
- **Hannah Gadsby – Douglas** – a follow up to Nanette, with a swaggering comedy set that blazes with well-earned confidence and a good needling of the patriarchy.
- **Hannah Gadsby – Nanette** – Hannah Gadsby is an Australian comedian, and Nanette reflects social commentary, passionate speeches punctuated with comedy and an emotive narrative.
- **Heartstopper** – following the love story between the openly gay overthinker Charlie Spring (Joe Locke) and buoyant rugby player Nick Nelson (Kit Connor), Heartstopper is a light and joyous watch.
- **I May Destroy You** – a chaotic, beautiful, uncomfortable and enthralling series exploring sex, consent, identity and trauma through the prism of the millennial experience. A work of art.
- **It's a Sin** – following a group of mainly gay friends in London at the height of the AIDS epidemic, this is a masterpiece of hedonistic joy, pain and shame. I can't put it better than Caitlin Moran who said that director Russell T Davies "does the lifeiness of life, and the deathiness of death, better than anyone."
- **Modern Family** – a perceptive and charming mockumentary-style sitcom chronicling the unusual kinship of the extended Pritchett clan.
- **Mr Loverman** – streaming on BBC1, this series sees Lennie James play an exuberant and dapper pensioner who's hiding a decades-long secret. Based on the bestselling novel Mr Loverman by Bernadine Evaristo, the eight-part series follows Antiguan-born Barrington Walker on his journey to make big choices that will rock his family to its foundations.
- **Pose** – described by critics as a theatrical sugar rush, this series claims the largest cast of black trans actors in TV history. It focuses on the voguing ball culture of 1980s New York and is an equally glorious and heartbreaking celebration of life.
- **Sex Education** – Asa Butterfield leads Sex Education as Otis Milburn, a teenager who lives with his sex therapist mother Jean (Gillian Anderson) while attempting to survive the perils of high school with his openly gay best friend Eric. Notable for tackling sensitive subjects related to sexual intimacy and for its authentic and diverse representation of the LGBTQ+ experience.
- **Schitt's Creek** – this follows the wealthy Rose family's steep fall from wealth and grace when they are forced to live in a backwater town that the father Johnny Rose once bought as a joke. This show starts a little slow but has some of the best character development I have ever seen, with the slow start making the later payoff all the sweeter.
- **The Bisexual** – the show explores the judgement that often still attaches to bisexuality and how difficult it is to come out as bisexual in the gay community, whilst exploring how anxiety and shame can manifest as cynicism and detachment.
- **The Long Call** – ITV crime drama gives LGBTQ+ viewers another first. The atmospheric coastal whodunnit follows Matthew, a gay detective who has recently moved back to his hometown in Devon.

## Instagram

Munroe Bergdorf (@munroebergdorf)  
 Kenny Ethan Jones (@kennyethanjones)  
 Alok Vaid-Menon (@alokvmenon)  
 Phyll Opoku-Gyimah (@ladyphyll)

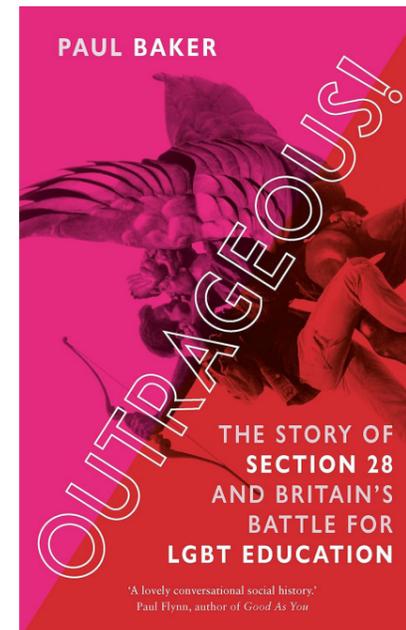
Where Love is Illegal (@whereloveisillegal)  
 Mermaids (@mermaidsgender)  
 UK Black Pride (@ukblackpride)

Gendered Intelligence (@genderedintelligence)  
 #blacktranslivesmatter  
 #transrightsarehumanrights

## Books

- **Ace: What Asexuality Reveals About Desire, Society, and the Meaning of Sex, Angela Chen** – an insightful exploration of an oft-overlooked and misunderstood part of the LGBTQ+ community.
- **A History of Women in Men's Clothes: From Cross-Dressing to Empowerment, Norena Shopland** – for the first time, A History of Women in Men's Clothes looks at those thousands of individuals who broke conventions in the only way they could, by disguising themselves either for a brief moment or a whole life. Daring and bold, this is the story of the women who defied social convention to live their lives as they chose, from simply wanting more independence to move and live freely, to transgender and homosexual women cross-dressing to express themselves, this is women's fight to wear trousers.
- **A lesbian history of Britain: Love and sex between women since 1500, Rebecca Jennings** – this book explores cultural representations of and changing attitudes towards, female same-sex desire in Britain.
- **A Little Life, Hanya Yanagihara** – the million-copy bestseller, A Little Life by Hanya Yanagihara is an immensely powerful and heart-breaking novel of brotherly love and the limits of human endurance. Also being adapted for the west end in 2023.
- **A working class family ages badly, Juno Roche** – a memoir about growing trans and destitute in South London is an incredibly honest tale of survival, escape and resilience. The book is a charming, unflinchingly honest guide on a journey that's as funny as it is heart breaking.
- **Bad Gays: A Homosexual History, Huw Lemmey and Ben Miller** – part revisionist history, part historical biography and based on the hugely popular podcast series, Bad Gays subverts the notion of gay icons and queer heroes and asks what we can learn about LGBTQ+ history, sexuality and identity through its villains and baddies. From the Emperor Hadrian to notorious gangster Ronnie Kray, the authors excavate the buried history of queer lives.
- **Black on both sides: a racial history of trans identity, C Riley Snorton** – the story of Christine Jorgensen, America's first prominent transgender woman, which narrates trans embodiment in the post-war era.
- **Blackouts, Justin Torres** – lucid dream-like and intimate exploration of queer culture and history told through the prism of a heavily-redacted 1920/30s "Sex Variants" book and conversations in the room of a desiccating mansion in an American town.
- **Beyond the Gender Binary, Alok Vaid-Menon** – a gender non-conforming writer and performance artist. Their creative challenge to the gender binary has been celebrated around the world.
- **Cleanness, Garth Greenwell** – written in precise, elegant prose, set in Sofia, Bulgaria, about a man whose life, like so many, has been transformed by the discovery and loss of love.
- **Dancer from the Dance, Andrew Holleran** – A biopic of the life of one gay man, almost frozen in time, in the second person, set in the early 1970s in a stunning vignette of pre-AIDs gay New York.
- **David Bowie Made Me Gay: 100 Years of LGBT Music, Darryl W. Bullock** – LGBTQ+ musicians have shaped the development of music over the last century, with a sexually progressive soundtrack in the background of the gay community's struggle for acceptance. With the advent of recording technology, LGBTQ+ messages were for the first time brought to the forefront of popular music. David Bowie Made Me Gay is the first book to cover the breadth of history of recorded music by and for the LGBTQ+ community and how those records influenced the evolution of the music we listen to today.
- **In Memoriam, Alice Winn** – in 1914, war feels far away to Henry Gaunt and Sidney Ellwood. They're too young to enlist, and anyway, Gaunt is fighting his own private battle – an all-consuming infatuation with the dreamy, poetic Ellwood – not having a clue that his best friend is in love with him, always has been.
- **Karma: My Autobiography, Boy George** – the official story of a musical icon = told in full for the first time in his own words.
- **Learned by Heart, Emma Donoghue** – in 1805 14-year-old Eliza Raine is a school girl at the Manor School for Young Ladies in York. The daughter of an Indian mother and a British father, Eliza was banished to this unfamiliar country as a little girl. She spends her days avoiding the attention of her fellow pupils until, one day, a fearless and charismatic new student arrives at the school. The two girls are immediately thrown together and soon Eliza's life is turned inside out by this strange and curious young woman.
- **Life as a Unicorn: A Journey from Shame to Pride and Everything in Between, Amrou Al-Kadhi** – a heart-breaking and hilarious memoir about the non-binary author's fight to be true to themselves.
- **Modern Nature, Derek Jarman** – in 1986 Derek Jarman discovered he was HIV positive and decided to make a garden at his cottage on the barren coast of Dungeness. Modern Nature is both a diary of the garden and a meditation by Jarman on his own life: his childhood, his time as a young gay man in the 1960s, his renowned career as an artist, writer and film-maker.
- **Mr Loverman, Bernadine Evaristo** – Barrington Jedidiah Walker is 74 and leads a double life. Born and bred in Antigua, he's lived in Hackney since the 1960s. A flamboyant, wise-cracking local character with a dapper taste in retro suits and a fondness for quoting Shakespeare, Barrington is a husband, father, and grandfather – but he is also secretly homosexual, lovers with his great childhood friend, Morris. His deeply religious and disappointed wife, Carmel, thinks he sleeps with other women. Mr Loverman is a ground-breaking exploration of Britain's older Caribbean community, which explodes cultural myths and fallacies and shows the extent of what can happen when people fear the consequences of being true to themselves.

- **My Policeman, Bethan Roberts** – in 1950s Brighton Marion first catches sight of the handsome and enigmatic Tom. He teaches her to swim in the shadow of the pier and Marion is smitten – determined her love will be enough for them both. A few years later in Brighton Museum Patrick meets Tom. Patrick is besotted with Tom and opens his eyes to a glamorous, sophisticated new world. Tom is their policeman, and in this age it is safer for him to marry Marion. The two lovers must share him, until one of them breaks and three lives are destroyed.
- **None of the above, Travis Albanza** – a poignant memoir about living one's life beyond the gender binary, but with the expectations and restrictions attached, not only to that binary, but that come with being a person of colour growing up in poverty in London.
- **Pride: The Story of the LGBTQ Equality Movement, Matthew Todd** – a beautiful coffee table book looking at LGBTQ+ culture and history featuring The Stonewall Riots, the first London Pride, Aids epidemic and same sex marriage. This book is a unique celebration of LGBTQ+ culture facing the community, and a testament to the equal rights that have been won for many.
- **The Color Purple, Alice Walker** – a novel that presents the plight of a voiceless and disenfranchised African-American bisexual woman in the south before the civil rights movement.
- **The Hidden Case of Ewan Forbes: The Transgender Trial that Threatened to Upend the British Establishment, Zoe Playdon** – the never-before-told story of Ewan Forbes and the landmark case that rocked British society and transformed transgender experience to this day draws on the fields of law, medicine, psychology and biology to reveal a remarkable hidden history, uncovering for the first time records that were considered so threatening that they had been removed from view for decades.
- **The Mayor of Castro Street: The life and times of Harvey Milk, Randy Shilts** – this book is account of the life and times of Harvey Milk, whose life ended in cold-blooded assassination reflected by the emergence of the LGBTQ+ community as political power in 1970s America.
- **The New Life, Tom Crewe** – set in Victorian London, this novel about two writers exploring "sexual inversion" from a literary and scientific perspective offers a beautiful, harrowing portrait of gay and lesbian life at the time of the trial and conviction of Oscar Wilde.
- **The Transgender Issue, Shon Faye** – a landmark work that signals the beginning of a new, healthier conversation about trans life. It is a manifesto for change, and a call for justice and solidarity between all marginalized people and minorities.
- **To Be a Gay Man, Will Young** – Will speaks out about gay shame, revealing the impact it had on his own life, how he learned to deal with it, and how he can now truthfully say he is gay and happy.
- **Transitional: In One Way or Another, We All Transition, Munroe Bergdorf** – in this life-affirming, heartfelt and intimate book, activist, and model Munroe Bergdorf shares reflections from her own life to illustrate how transitioning is an essential part of all our lives. Through the story of one woman's extraordinary mission to live with authenticity, Transitional shows us how to heal, how to build a stronger community and how to evolve as a society out of shame and into pride.
- **Trans Like Me, CN Lester** – a personal and culture driven exploration of the pressing questions faced by the trans community today.
- **Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the politics of visibility, edited by Reina Gossett, Eric A Stanley and Johanna Burton** – a book of essays, conversations and dossiers surrounding themes of beauty, performativity, activism and police brutality.
- **Young Mungo, Douglas Stewart** – a beautiful, if incredibly difficult, story of a young gay boy growing up in the East End of Glasgow in the 80s.
- **Queens' English, Chloe Davis** – a comprehensive guide to modern gay slang, queer theory terms, and playful colloquialisms that define and celebrate LGBTQ+ culture; at once an education and a celebration of queer history, identity and the limitless imagination of the LGBTQ+ community.
- **Shuggie Bain, Douglas Stewart** – tells the story of a queer youth living with his alcoholic mother in 1980s Glasgow.



- **Outrageous!, Paul Baker** – a brilliantly accessible and comprehensive book about Section 28.

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