

# BAD GUYS IN NETFLIX'S 'STRANGER THINGS' WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT

Sarah Skwire

Over at FEE.org, I recently wrote about the new Netflix show *Stranger Things* and the nostalgia it inspired in me for certain cultural touchstones of the 1980s. From the soundtrack, to the fashion, to the school supplies and the hairdos, the series is as satisfying a recreation of a very specific time and place as it is an homage to '80s science fiction and horror films.

But this morning it occurred to me that *Stranger Things* is nostalgic in another way.

**Honey, we have to trust them, okay? This is our government. They're on our side.**

The bad guys in *Stranger Things* work for the government.

More specifically, the bad guys in *Stranger Things* work for a mysterious unnamed government

agency that does creepy experiments involving psychoactive drugs, alternate realities and minor children. Indeed, one of the biggest laugh lines in a series that expertly uses comedy to heighten the narrative tension comes from the hapless parent of a missing child. Faced with instructions to stay inside and let the government fix the monsters and missing children problem currently plaguing their town, he turns to his wife and notes, "Honey, we have to trust them, okay? This is our government. They're on our side."

Meanwhile, when Joyce Byers needs a little credit extended to her while she searches for her missing son, she visits her boss at the local convenience store. Reminding him of her excellent work record, her willingness to work holidays, and her dire need at the moment, she persuades him to give her an advance on her salary and extend her credit for the Christmas tree



lights and telephones that become a crucial part of her attempts to find and save her son. He's not excited about doing it. He's not even particularly friendly, but he does listen to Joyce's arguments and respond helpfully—which is a lot more than most of the other adults do in the face of her crisis.

Stranger Things isn't laden with deep political or economic content. But everyone is watching it. And given the perennial complaints about the negative portrayal of businessmen in films and fiction, I always like to get a little celebratory when someone else gets to be the bad guy. The monsters in Stranger Things may be faceless slimy creatures from an alternate reality.

But the people responsible for their presence in Indiana?

Those are faceless slimy creatures from the government. And they're not here to help. 



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*Sarah Skwire is a Fellow at Liberty Fund, Inc., a non-profit educational foundation and the author of the college writing textbook, Writing with a Thesis.*