

POPSUGAR Entertainment Stranger Things Dungeons & Dragons Theory About Stranger Things

Stranger Things: This Theory Could Explain Will's Weird Finale Behavior

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One of the most endearing things about the young protagonists on '80s-inspired masterpiece [Stranger Things](#) is their passion for tabletop role-playing games, more specifically the original [1983 version of Dungeons & Dragons](#). While there were plenty of outright references to D&D throughout the Netflix show — the "Demogorgon" monster and "The Upside Down" shadow vale, to name a few — the show's directors may have also used the game to shape the plot of the show itself.

Considering the fact that the Dungeons & Dragons gameplay scene was [the first one that the Duffer brothers wrote and directed](#), it's clear that the game is central to the show. After all, the directors' passion for D&D isn't exactly subtle, even prompting an '80s Dungeons & Dragons game designer to [reach out about playing a campaign with the show's cast](#).



When viewing **Stranger Things** through the veil of D&D, plenty of formerly mysterious things begin to make sense. One specific head-scratcher that can be explained by the game is Will Byers's creepy behavior in the finale episode. Will, who behaves normally around his mom and brother in the seemingly picture-perfect holiday dinner scene, excuses himself to go to the restroom, where he flickers in and out of "The Upside Down" and coughs a monstrous larvae into the sink. Disturbing!

The Theory

This final scene is perhaps the most hotly debated among **Stranger Things** fans; was this a PTSD-induced flashback, or was the slug-like creature real? Avid D&D players have a different explanation for Will's unusual experience, grounded in the fantasy gaming lore that is so vital to the show's plot.

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I'm looking at it through the filter of D&D. The characters that can cast shadow walk in D&D (stepping into planes of existence similar to the vale of shadows) are warlocks...who, unlike sorcerers or wizards, don't have innate magical ability, but have their ability channeled through corruption of their souls by demons or demonic exposure.

So, maybe he's just been so corrupted by spending ALL THAT TIME in the upside down that he is now shadow walking, and phasing between dimensions.

Or, I don't know, it could be a flashback - El had plenty of flashbacks.

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I made some Stranger Things cupcakes

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Warlocks in D&D gain their magical abilities from exposure to (and pacts with) dark powers, such as demons. These pacts are not always willfully entered into, as they can be passed on through family lines or made under circumstances of coercion. Will, like a D&D warlock, was exposed to a terrifying demonic force for an extended period of time, ultimately forming a physical connection with the "Demogorgon" monster when it attached him to its creepy nest and shoved a tentacular appendage down his throat.

The D&D theory argues that Will, through his lengthy exposure to the shadowy dimension and physical corruption by the Demogorgon, gained supernatural abilities much like one of the game's warlocks would. Those flashes of "The Upside Down" that Will saw during his trip to the bathroom were the real thing, as he is bridging the gap between dimensions much like Eleven does. And that squirmy larvae that he coughs into the sink? Also real.

As someone who can exist simultaneously between planes of reality, Will is also able to act as a channel from one realm to the other, which means that when he was virtually impregnated (through the weird tentacle in his throat) by the Demogorgon but quickly brought back to the "real world," he was still able to serve as a gestational vessel for baby Demogorgons. Suffice it to say, that larvae is bad news for Will and his friends because it won't stay a baby for long.

Good thing we've got a second season to look forward to!