

All the Mother-Daughter Relationships in ‘Gilmore Girls,’ Ranked From Best to Worst

No one can top Lorelai and Rory.

By Rebecca Carlyle | Last modified: December 8, 2023



“Gilmore Girls” explores mother-daughter relationships in nuanced ways. (Image: Warner Bros. Television)

I’ve loved “Gilmore Girls” since day one. I developed a kinship with book-loving Rory (**Alexis Bledel**) and obsessed over everything to do with Stars Hollow. Like most fans, Rory’s relationship with her mother, Lorelai (**Lauren Graham**), holds a special place in my heart. Upon reflection, though, the show features many mother-daughter relationships and ruminates on all the shapes and dynamics they come in. I took it upon myself to personally rank which mother-daughter duos I found heartwarming to outright shameful.

Lorelai and Rory



Rory and Lorelai’s mother-daughter relationship is also a friendship. (Image: Warner Bros. Television)

Lorelai raises Rory as a single mother without financial aid from her wealthy parents until she needs help to pay for Rory’s private school. Although she’s a powerhouse businesswoman (seriously, she opens and runs a successful inn!), she takes an interesting approach to motherhood. Of course, she keeps Rory housed, fed, and clothed, but she’s also her daughter’s friend. This keeps a direct line of communication open between the two girls, making the more delicate conversations less awkward. Even though they have their ups and downs, Lorelai and Rory are without a doubt the best mother-daughter pairing in “Gilmore Girls.”

Emily and Lorelai



Initially frosty, this mother-daughter relationship inspires hope. (Image: Warner Bros. Television)

Lorelai didn’t learn her parenting skills from her parents. Instead, it’s quite clear it’s the opposite. Family matriarch Emily (**Kelly Bishop**) resents that her relationship with Lorelai is duty-bound but relishes having her and Rory over for dinner every Friday. The elder Gilmore woman holds herself and others to upper-class primness and proper manners. Lorelai views this world as cold and ridiculous, which often puts the two women at odds with each other. However, this difference in views fades throughout the seasons, and the Gilmore women eventually bond in a way they never could when Lorelai was younger.

Mrs. Kim and Lane



Most mother-daughter relationships in “Gilmore Girls” are fractured, at least initially. (Image: Warner Bros. Television)

Rory’s best friend, Lane (**Keiko Agena**), is a second-generation Korean girl. For most of the series, Mrs. Kim (**Emily Kuroda**) is a very strict and very Catholic mother. She’s overprotective of her daughter, with so many rules in place that Lane feels she can’t show her true self. Lane hides her rock-music-loving, boy-obsessed personality from her mother. When Mrs. Kim is confronted with her daughter’s true interests, she doesn’t handle it well. However, after a long time and several appeals by Lorelai, Mrs. Kim embraces Lane’s lifestyle and choices. Together, they learn how to be a respectful part of each other’s lives.

Mia and Lorelai



Not all familial bonds are blood-related. (Image: Warner Bros. Television)

After leaving home as a pregnant teenager, Lorelai landed in Stars Hollow. She found a job at the local inn, but that wasn’t all she found. After losing her relationship with Emily, she found a substitute with Mia (**Kathy Baker**). Mia looked after Lorelai until she was solidly on her feet; even Rory had a close relationship with her. Many years later, Mia asks her surrogate daughter to attend her wedding as a special guest. Emily comes along and is disturbed by feeling left out of her daughter’s life.

Nanny and Paris



Paris’s nanny raised her and brought depth to her character that she otherwise would’ve lacked. (Image: Warner Bros. Television)

Rory’s enemy-turned-friend Paris (**Liza Weil**) is from a well-off family, thus attending the expensive school, Chilton, with ease. Paris’s parents are never around, and their divorce leaves her lashing out at school. All of Paris’s happy memories from home feature her nanny (yes, even at 17 years old, she still has a nanny). Her nanny attends her high school graduation and even comes to her aid in college when Paris’s boyfriend is ill. While this relationship humanizes Paris, it also forces the audience to realize how absent her birth mother is.

Anna and April



Rory isn’t the only one raised by a single mother. (Image: Warner Bros. Television)

First off, I think most of us “Gilmore Girls” lovers can agree that the whole April (**Vanessa Marano**) and Anna Nardini (**Sherilyn Fenn**) saga just sucked. It was utterly unfair how Anna kept April a secret from her father, Luke (**Scott Patterson**). Putting that issue aside, this mother-daughter relationship gave audiences a very different single-mother parenting style to consider. Anna often came off as aggressive and angry, but clearly didn’t understand her daughter very well. She claims to put April’s needs first, but if that were true, she wouldn’t have kept Luke from her and moved April across the country mid-school year.

Shira and Honor



Having a mother and father doesn’t guarantee a happy family. (Image: Warner Bros. Television)

This mother and daughter didn’t have much screen time and certainly not together. The purpose of the Huntzberger family was to show that leaving a traditional family unit doesn’t mean it’ll be happy — in fact, it can be downright dysfunctional. Sure, mother and father are still married, but Shira (**Leann Hunley**) loathes her husband Mitchum (**Gregg Henry**) and spends most days in intoxicated and absent. Meanwhile, her daughter, Honor (**Devon Sorvari**), is disappointed in her mother’s passive attitude regarding Mitchum’s control over the family. The two Huntzberger women rarely even see each other.

Sherry and Gigi



Some women don’t know they don’t want kids until it’s too late. (Image: Warner Bros. Television)

The last mother and daughter on this list are the absolute worst. Sherry (**Mädchen Amick**) is Rory’s stepmother, and it takes a long time for Rory to decide not to hate her. It isn’t until Sherry is pregnant and Rory comes to the baby shower that she starts to like her. However, Sherry is a workaholic and a terrible mother. She quickly decides to desert her family, move to Paris, and leave her daughter Gigi (**Nicolette Collier**) with her dad. Sherry puts down roots with Christopher (David Sutcliffe) and then ditches him — who does that?! Turns out Rory’s first impression of Sherry was right.

You can watch “Gilmore Girls” with a Netflix subscription.

Do you agree with my best-to-worst ranking of the mother-daughter relationships on “Gilmore Girls”? Sound off in the comments below!

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