

The background of the image is a dark, atmospheric scene. In the lower-left foreground, three lit candles are visible, their flames glowing and casting a soft light. The background is filled with dark, indistinct shapes that could be trees or rocks, all shrouded in a thick mist or fog. The overall mood is mysterious and eerie.

Scary Lectures to Tell in the Dark

By: Joseph Wonsil
October 14, 2022

What is Considered Horror



What **Makes Something Horror?**

Fear

Scare

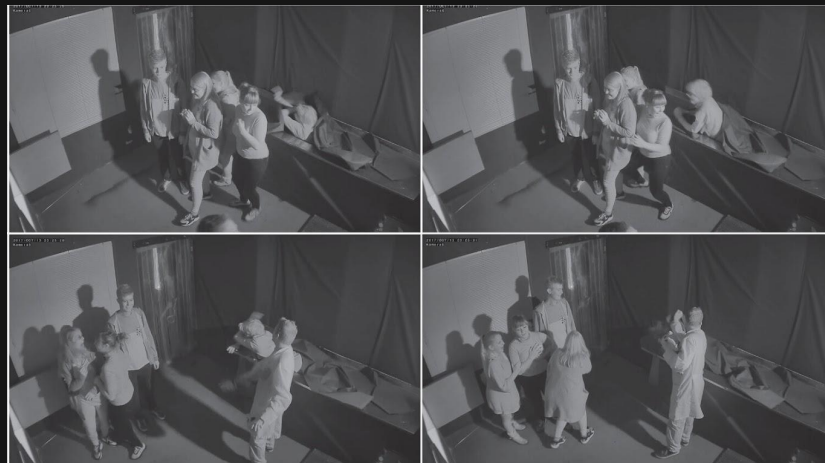
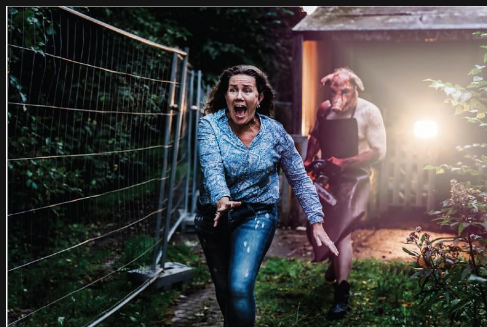


Dread

People Like Being Scared

When the conditions are *just right*

Anderson et al. in *Psychological Science* 2020



Where Do We Find Horror?

Film



Where Do We Find Horror?

Literature



Where Do We Find Horror?

Virtual
Realities



Where Do We Find Horror?

Interactive Experiences

- Delusion
- Great Horror Campout
- McKamey Manor



Subgenres of Horror



Slasher Horror

- Individual with a blade on a killing spree
- Origin of classic horror tropes
 - Targeting promiscuous teens
 - Campy murders
- Examples:
 - Halloween
 - Friday the 13th
 - Nightmare on Elm Street
 - Scream



Monster Horror

- Inhuman creature wreaking havoc
- Broad subgenre
 - Vampires
 - Werewolves
 - Aliens or dinosaurs
- Examples:
 - The Thing
 - Godzilla
 - Nosferatu
 - IT



Supernatural Horror

- Spirits, Ghosts, and Devils
- Often involve religion, the dead, another plane of existence, hauntings, and possessions

- Examples:
 - The Conjuring Universe
 - Phasmophobia
 - Poltergeist
 - The Exorcism



Gothic Horror

- “The battle between humanity and unnatural forces of evil (sometimes man-made, sometimes supernatural) within an oppressive, inescapable, and bleak landscape.”
- Often set in a house, or other small confined space
- Examples:
 - The Haunting of Hill House
 - Dracula
 - Frankenstein
 - Crimson Peak



Fantasy Horror

- Fantasy with horror
- Sometimes used to differentiate “real” horror from “fantastical” horror

- Examples:
 - Pan’s Labyrinth
 - The Dark Tower
 - Weaveworld



Sci-Fi Horror

- Sci-Fi with horror
- Examples:
 - Alien
 - The Thing
 - Jason X
 - Event Horizon



Cosmic Horror

- AKA: Lovecraftian horror after H.P. Lovecraft
 - H.P. Lovecraft was a horrible, hateful person
 - Let's call it Cosmic Horror
- Emphasizes the horror of the unknowable and incomprehensible

- Examples:
 - Cthulhu Mythos
 - Welcome to Nite Vale
 - The Color out of Space



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Comedy Horror

- Horror themes with comedic elements
- Examples:
 - Ghostbusters
 - Zombieland
 - Tucker and Dale vs. Evil



Psychological Horror

- “Exposing common or universal psychological and emotional vulnerabilities/fears and revealing the darker parts of the human psyche that most people may repress or deny”
- Examples:
 - The Shining
 - American Psycho
 - The Babadook
 - The Lighthouse
 - It Follows



Torture Horror

- Visual, graphic, violent murder and harm to individuals
- Gore for the sake of gore

- Examples:
 - Later Saw movies
 - I Spit on your Grave
 - Hostel
 - Human Centipede



Why do we like
to be scared?



Common Theories

- **The Beast Within**
 - Human civility is a thin veneer over a savage, beastly monster
 - Even with conscious disapproval, we deep down agree with the monster
 - If we could be monstrous, we would
- **Morbid Curiosity**
 - Why do we care about Ted Bundy or Jeffrey Dahmer so much?



It's not
so Simple



Three Reasons

Proposed by Dr. Glenn Walters
Journal of Media Psychology (2004)



Tension

Generated by suspense, mystery, terror, shock, and gore



Relevance

That may relate to personal relevance, cultural meaningfulness, the fear of death, etc.



Unrealism

The perception that what is viewed did not truly occur

Four Motivations

Proposed by Dr. Deirdre Johnston
Human Communication Research (1995)



Gore watching

Low empathy. High sensation seeking.
[Among males only] a strong
identification with the killer



Thrill watching

High empathy. Sensation seeking,
Identified with the victims. Liked the
suspense.



Independent watching

High empathy for the victim. High
positive effect for overcoming fear

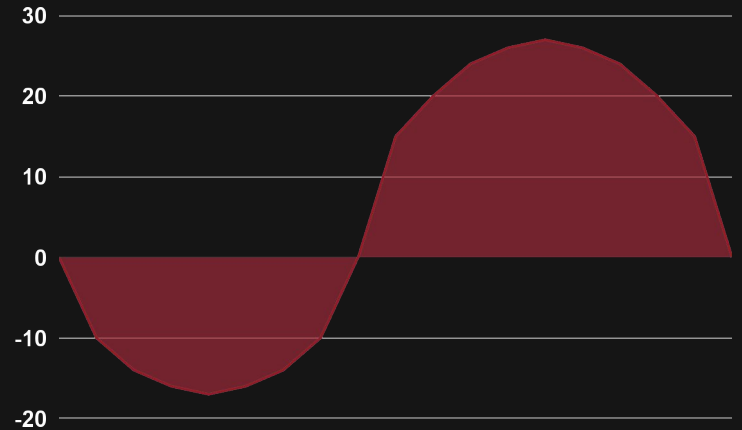


Problem watching

High empathy for the victim but
characterized by negative affect
(particularly a sense of helplessness)

Psychoanalytic Motivations

- Psychoanalyst Dr. Carl Jung believed horror films “tapped into primordial archetypes buried deep in our collective subconscious – images like shadow and mother play an important role in the horror genre”
- **Catharsis** - a way of purging negative emotions and/or as a way to relieve pent-up aggression
 - Excitation Transfer theory (ETT) - Negative feelings intensify positive feelings
 - However, some studies show greatest excitement at scariest moments
- **Dispositional Alignment Theory** - enjoy the punishment of norm-violating behavior
 - I.e. they deserve it



Dark Side of Human Nature

Dr. Stuart Fischhoff et al.

Imagination, Cognition and Personality (2003)

- Study asking 1,166 participants about their favorite monsters
- “monsters were particularly liked for their intelligence, superhuman powers, and their ability to (safely) show us the dark side of human nature.”



(Why) Do You Like Scary Movies? A Review of the Empirical Research on Psychological Responses to Horror Films

Dr. G Neil Martin

Frontiers in Psychology (2003)

- Low empathy and fearfulness
 - Specific dimensions of empathy are better predictors
- Sensation-seeking - but it's not consistent
- Men more than women
- As children age, fears become more realistic



Vicarious Experiences and Threat Mastery

Mathias Clasen et al.

Review of General Psychology (2012)

- For ancient humans, constant vigilance needed to avoid becoming prey
- “granted people a highly responsive, albeit mostly unconscious, threat detection system”
- “horror movies are a risk-free way to vicariously experience threats and rehearse one’s responses to those threats”
- Being unscathed post-movie leaves people with a feeling of mastery
 - *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences (2020)*



The Snuggle Theory

- Dolf Zillmann et al. proposed The Gender Socialization Theory
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology (1996)
- 36 male and 36 female undergraduates watched a horror movie in pairs
- Each participant expressed mastery, affective indifference, or distress
- TL;dr: There are some traditional societal expectations of men and women that affect enjoyment
- This study should be done with a more modern perspective



Reflection of Societal Fears

- Cultural historian David Skal argues horror comes from current societal issues
 - Like some haunted circus mirror reflecting our fears
 - “mutant monsters rising in 50s from our fear of the nuclear bogeyman”
 - “**Nightmare on Elm Street** as a mistrust in authority figures stemming from the Watergate scandals”
 - **Godzilla** from nuclear fears
 - **Get Out**
- But not always the case, and cross-cultural movies are still effective



Benefits of Enjoying Horror

- Fans of horror films exhibit less psychological distress during COVID-19.
 - Scrivner et al. in *Personality and Individual Differences* (2021)
- Anecdotally, folks report using horror to cope with anxiety
 - Scrivner and Christensenj appear to be investigating this, although no empirical studies exist yet



Alleged Horror Phenomenon



Pokemon Red & Green Lavender Town



- Original Pokemon Games contain Lavender Town
- *Lavender Town Sunday* is referred to a phenomenon originating from the song that is played in the area.
- Circle with a Pokemon graveyard where you fight the ghost of a dead Pokemon to get it to rest.
- The Japanese version of the song had harsh high-pitched noises
- These noises caused kids to go insane, Headache, feeling ill
- "Reports" suggested even self-harm to varying degrees
- Nintendo covered this up and changed the song up for global release



FALSE

Horror has been lethal, **twice**

- 9-year-old Utah boy passed away at the movies in October of 1956, while watching a double feature of the horror films *The Creeping Unknown* and *The Black Sheep*
 - Turns out he had unknown heart problems
- A student in India who died of shock while watching a quartet of horror films, including *Aliens*
- For context, at least 10 people have died of laughter



Bloody Mary

- Say her name three times into a mirror at night and she'll appear
- Interestingly, there is a phenomenon where people will hallucinate their face changing when looking at a mirror in dim lighting
 - Caputo, Strange-Face-in-the-Mirror Illusion in *Perception* (2010)



Japanese Urban Legends

- Slit-mouthed woman
- Teke Teke
- Hanako of the Toilet
 - summoned by going to the girl's bathroom on the third floor, knocking on the third stall three times, and saying, "Are you there Hanako-san?"
- Aka Manto
 - Ask "red paper or blue paper?"
 - Just decline...



McKamey Manor

- “Horror” Experience
- Lasts 8 to 10 hours, no guest has made it through
- Prize of \$20,000 for successful completion. McKamey deducts \$500 from the prize for every failed challenge or the use of profanity
- Apparently the entrance fee is dog food for his dogs
- Waiting list of over 24,000 people



Vancouver Urban Legends

- Lady in Red
 - appears on the 14th floor of the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver
- UBC Hitchhiker
 - Found on the road to UBC from Point Grey on rainy nights
 - Always a woman asking to go the library, she might even hand you a handwritten note and the disappear
- Feet are always washing up on shore



THANKS!

Enjoy the resort of your spooky season, and don't forget about the CSGSA Halloween Party with costume contest!

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