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Dare to know

Horror Fiction

Fiction that is intended to shock or frighten by inducing feelings of revulsion, terror, or loathing. With roots in eighteenth century Gothic literature, this is a genre in which frightening narratives, themes, and situations are depicted in order to elicit an emotional, psychological, or physical response in a reader. Author H. P. Lovecraft once wrote, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown." A good horror story will seek to disturb, upset, or repulse in its exploration of the strange, and plot, characters, mood, and atmosphere are equally important to this end. The monster is typically portrayed as a creature with deformed features or terrifying qualities, and represents the range of wicked or negative human emotions: rage, anxieties, repressed lusts. Many times, the story will include a backstory as to why or how the monster came into existence. These antagonists may result from magic, ancient myths, or cultural tradition. They may be reanimated from death or be the product of a science experiment gone wrong.

Works written since the 1940s have presented more technological or scientifically driven explanations for occurrences once portrayed as supernatural. The vampires portrayed in this genre are seldom the sympathetic lovers of paranormal romance. Rather, they are decaying, grotesque creatures who feed on human blood. The genre also appeals to the fear of familiar animals turning on humanity. These creatures can come in the form of classic or mythological monsters, neo-monsters, giant monsters, wolves, sharks, birds, cats, dogs, and spiders. John William Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819), Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872), Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera* (1910), H. G. Well's *The Croquet Player* (1936), Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954), Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959), and Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967) are classic examples.

Common Elements

Eerie and frightening atmosphere	Sexual violence	Duality
	Gore	Zombies
Metaphors for larger societal fears	Torture	Golems
	Cannibalism	Vampires
Demons	Vicious animals	Werewolves

Emphasis on science Isolation and	loneliness Desolation	Sorrow

Benefits of Reading

Channels readers' fears by allowing them to safely experience fright	and social awareness
Allows readers to explore the unknown in a controlled setting free of actual danger	Develops new neural connections in readers' brains that aid in recollection, creativity, inspiration, and problem solving
Introduces readers to diverse viewpoints and belief systems	Encourages readers to be empathetic as characters suffer
Assists readers with cognitive growth	

Modern Literary Examples

The Beast Within (1981) by Edward Levy	Rice
Black Creek Crossing (2004) by John Saul	*Little Black Spots* (2018) by John F. D. Taff
Blue Bloods (2006) by Melissa de la Cruz	*The Manitou* (1976) by Graham Masterson
The Book of Renfield (2005) by Tim Lucas	*My Soul to Keep* (1997) by Tanarive Due
Book of the Dead (1989) by John Skipp and Craig Spector	*Necroscope* (1986) by Brian Lumley
Carrie (1974) by Stephen King	*The Rats* (1974) by James Herbert
Cujo (1981) by Stephen King	*The Rust Maidens* (2018) by Gwendolyn Kiste
Dread Nation (2018) by Justina Ireland	*Ring* (1991) by Koji Suzuki
The Exorcist (1971) by William Peter Blatty	*She Walks in Shadows* (2015) by Silvia Moreno-Garcia and Paula R. Stiles
Ghost Story (1979) by Peter Straub	*The Shuddering* (2013) by Ania Ahlborn
Golgotha Falls (1984) by Frank De Felitta	*The Stand* (1978) by Stephen King
Haunted (2005) by Chuck Palahniuk	*What Moves the Dead* (2022) by T. Kingfisher
The Hellbound Heart (1986) by Clive Barker	*The Winter People* (2014) by Jennifer McMahon
The Howling (1977) by Gary Brandner	*The Wolfen* (1978) by Whitley Strieber
House of Leaves (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski	*World War Z* (2006) by Max Brooks
Interview with the Vampire (1976) by Anne	