

# BARTON

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*Dare to Know*

### Horror Comics

*Comics that are intended to shock or frighten by inducing feelings of revulsion, terror, or loathing.* A genre in which frightening narratives, themes, and situations are depicted in order to elicit an emotional, psychological, or physical response in a reader. 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 imagery, plot, characters, mood, and atmosphere are equally important to this end. As a visual medium, horror comics are ideal for visceral stories of terror. More than prose novels, they can depict the ghastliness and fear of characters. 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.

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. Horror comics were extremely popular in the 1940s through the mid-1950s. When the comic book industry agreed to self-censor with the imposition of the Comics Code Authority in 1954, many titles ended their runs or altered their content to stories that were derivative of monster films. In the 1960s, existing publishers began circumventing the Code by publishing black-and-white magazines that did not require approval. Many of the Code’s stringent requirements were relaxed in 1971. Dick Briefer’s *The New Adventures of Frankenstein* (1940); Avon Publications’ *Eerie* (1947-1954); American Comics Group’s *Adventures into the Unknown* (1948-1967); EC Comics’ *The Haunt of Fear* (1950-1954), *Tales from the Crypt* (1950-1955), and *The Vault of Horror* (1950-1955); Fawcett Comics/Charlton Comics’ *This Magazine is Haunted* (1951-1958) and *Strange Suspense Stories* (1952-1969); Atlas Comics/Marvel Comics’ *Strange Tales* (1951-1968); Steve Ditko’s *The Thing!* (1952-1954); DC Comics’ *House of Mystery* (1950-1983), *Tales of the Unexpected* (1956-1968), *The House of Secrets* (1956-1966), *The Witching Hour* (1969-1978), and *The Unexpected* (1968-1982); Warren Publishing’s *Creepy* (1964-1983), *Eerie* (1966-1983), and *Vampirella* (1969-1983); and Charlton Comics’ *Ghostly Tales* (1966-1984), *The Many Ghosts of Doctor Graves* (1967-1968), and *Ghost Manor* (1968-1984) are early examples.

### Common Elements

Eerie and frightening atmosphere
Metaphors for larger societal fears
Demons

Sexual violence
Gore
Torture

Cannibalism
Vicious animals
Duality
Emphasis on science

Isolation and loneliness
Desolation
Sorrow

### Graphic Novel Examples

<i>American Vampire Omnibus Volume 1</i> (2018) by Scott Snyder, Stephen King, and Rafael Albuquerque	<i>Moonshine Volume 1</i> (2017) by Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso
<i>Dead Mail</i> (2023) by Adam Cesare and David Stoll	<i>Nailbiter: The Murder Edition</i> (2018) by Josh Williamson, Adam Guzowski, and Mike Henderson
<i>Dracula: Vlad the Impaler</i> (2021) by Roy Thomas and Esteban Maroto	<i>The Night Eternal</i> (2016) by Guillermo del Toro, Chuck Hogan, David Lapham, and Mike Huddleston
<i>Flora and Fauna</i> (2014) by Chris Dingess and Matthew Roberts	<i>Outcast: Volume 1 – A Darkness Surrounds Him</i> (2015) by Robert Kirkman and Paul Azaceta
<i>Frankenstein: The Graphic Novel</i> (2009) by Mary Shelley	<i>Revival – Volume 1: You’re Among Friends</i> (2012) by Tim Seeley and Mike Norton
<i>Grendel Omnibus Volume 1: Hunter Rose</i> (2022) by Matt Wagner et al.	<i>Scarlett Hart: Monster Hunter</i> (2018) by Marcus Sedgwick and Thomas Taylor
<i>Gris Grimly’s Frankenstein</i> (2013) by Mary Shelley and Gris Grimly	<i>Shirley Jackson’s The Lottery: The Authorized Graphic Adaptation</i> (2016) by Miles Hyman
<i>Hellboy: The Chained Coffin and Others</i> (1998) by Mike Mignola	<i>The Swamp Thing Volume 3: The Parliament of Gears</i> (2023) by Ram V and Mike Perkins
<i>John Constantine, Hellblazer Volume 1: Original Sins</i> (2011) by Jamie Delano et al.	<i>Survival</i> (2024) by Sean Lewis and Bryndon Everett
<i>Journey into Mystery: The Complete Collection Volume 1</i> (2008) by Kieron Gillen	<i>Through the Woods</i> (2014) by Emily Carroll
<i>Locke &amp; Key: Welcome to Lovecraft</i> (2008) by Joe Hill and Gabriel Rodriguez	<i>Weird Detective</i> (2016) by Fred Van Lente and Guiu Vilanova
<i>The Lonesome Hunters</i> (2023) by Tyler Crook	
<i>Longhorns</i> (2019) by Donny Cates and Lisandro Estherren	