
Analysis Of Stephen King's Essay "Why We Crave Horror Movies"

In "Why We Crave Horror Movies," Stephen King claims that everyone has monstrous inclinations, and horror movies allow viewers to purge the negativity without consequence. According to King, everyone has internal dark desires that should not be acted upon. Rarely are these urges as awful as the acts shown in horror movies, so seeing the ugliest urges acted out allows the viewer to purge his or her internal desire for evil. The pent-up thoughts and emotions are released harmlessly. Horror movies offer viewers catharsis for the emotions that are detrimental to civilized society.

Not only are negative emotions universal, but King argues that these emotions are good to experience. Negative feelings cannot be suppressed; they demand to be acknowledged. Recognizing that not all emotions are bad, King shows how society rewards the demonstration of civilized emotions. However, people learn from a young age to suppress destructive emotions, forcing the feelings to accumulate. A person who recognizes these feelings can process the negativity safely, such as by watching a horror movie. By acknowledging and releasing negative thoughts in a controlled environment, a person can maintain his or her emotional stability.

A final point that King makes is that horror movies give viewers a place to bond with others over shared humanity. An individual may feel ashamed of his or her evil inclinations, but watching a horror movie is comforting, because whatever urges he or she feels are not as awful as the terrors of the movie. It reassures the person that he or she is not among the worst of society. An individual's small bad habits seem small compared to the actions of the monsters on screen. King argues that horror movies make a person realize that his or her flaws are small, and he or she is not so different from everyone else.

Analysis

Steven King's essay "Why We Crave Horror Movies" is persuasive because of his inclusive language, his flattery of the audience, and his authority as a horror author. Although part of a longer book, this excerpt was specifically chosen for magazine publication for general American consumption, so King writes inclusively to embrace his broad audience. By the end of the excerpt, readers believe King's argument that horror movies perform a social service by allowing viewers to purge their malicious inclinations safely.

King's tone and examples in his essay invite the reader to see things from his perspective. He uses casual language, speaking directly to the reader.

King uses first and second-person pronouns more than 50 times in the excerpt. According to psychology researchers Tad Brunyé et al., using first-person pronouns makes the reader model the situation from a personal perspective, as if he or she is performing the action. King subtly forces readers to see from his perspective, making them more inclined to believe his argument.

In addition to inviting a reader in through word choice, King leaves a reader feeling good despite his or her bad characteristics. He makes exaggerated claims that everyone is mentally ill and potentially murderous. This shocks the reader into paying attention, stimulating the reader to find out why. Then, King soothes the reader. The reader is not a bad person, because having malicious thoughts is normal. Philosophy expert Melinda Hall also claims that King wants to make his readers feel included, despite any flaws, in her analysis of King's work from a perspective of disability and outsiders. She claims that readers are meant to empathize with King's monsters, supporting the idea that King wants his readers to accept that darkness only makes them human. Readers would be challenged to disagree with an argument that makes them feel good about themselves, and King's argument accomplishes just that.

Finally, King's expertise in horror is strong support for his claims. The essay's introduction names King as an influential author and reminds the reader of some of his most popular works. King proves his expertise by referencing both real and imagined monsters and demonstrating familiarity with the feelings that horror movies evoke. Hall's use of King as one of the primary authors studied in her research also supports the claim for King's expertise. Since King is successful as a horror author, he must understand what draws audiences to the genre.

King writes an effective essay that lures a reader in through its relatability and leaves the reader feeling good about his or her internal darkness. However, readers should be cautious of taking everything King writes at face value. As a prolific horror author, he earns more if more people, believing that horror stories are necessary to placate internal monsters, buy his books. Despite the potential for King's personal gain, his essay is persuasive and well suited to convince the average American for which it was written.