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## Why Modern Horror Books Are Highly Valued

Horror is a genre that has startled our psychological thoughts and frightened us for centuries. The author allows the readers to embrace themselves in another reality with a horrific twist to leave the readers trembling with fear. Like a lot of other genres, the author attempts to draw the reader in, but in horror there is an intense feeling wickedness and suspense that leaves Goosebumps on the reader. Horror is deemed like a common, overused genre with just gore and monsters, but in fact, it actually revolves around the description, plot, specks of different elements and the senses (of fear). That is what makes each and every horror story at least a little different from each other. Horror stories are adored worldwide for its unique characteristics which allow the reader to be engulfed into the story and experience the terror for themselves.

A true horror story has a variety of complex elements that help produce horrifying story for the reader. It remains popular because “it allows readers to confront their own interior ‘evil’ in a safe, socially acceptable manner.”(Brackett, p.1) A horror story should allow the reader to experience the story themselves and face the evil part of themselves. Many horror stories find their basis in different topics such a tales, ancient myths, but whatever it is, it must use “suspense to frighten and repulse, playing upon human fears, the most common one being isolation leading to death.” (Brackett, p.1) Without the element of suspense, a story will have nothing to build up and therefore nothing to terrify with. In addition, horror stories should be in a way realistic, but may contain aspects of fantasy, but only to the point where the reader can still put themselves in book. For instance, in Emily Bronte’s book *Wuthering Heights*, an unpleasant ghost haunts loved ones for deep purposes. In this book it contains a realistic realm with an odd twist of fantasy—or in this case the ghost. Traditionally, authors wrote about variety of different creatures, a lot of it pertaining to the time period the author lived in. In early folklore, authors wrote about humans encountering ghosts, poltergeists, vampires, voodoo,werewolves, and witchcraft; in medieval times, authors wrote about vampirism and non-human creatures and now a lot of books between the 19th and 21th century are based on either scientific experiments gone wrong or psychological insanity.

In all cultures, myths are full of demons and darkness, and early Abrahamic and Egyptian mythology “resounds with tales of a world beyond the physical, a realm of spirits, to be revered and feared.” (Horror Film History) Horror has been around for a long time and was first introduced in tales of mythology. Although introduced very early, it was not until the Medieval Ages that horror became very well liked and a subject of interest. In classic mythology, there are an abundance of monsters such as “Cereberus, the Minotaur, Medusa, the Hydra, the Sirens, Cyclops, Scylla and Charybdis” (Horror Film History) Ancient horror stories are based off of monsters and the dead trying to kill and destroy people. It is unknown what the first horror book was, but the term “horror” was first used in Horace Wapole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, a novel that was written a couple centuries after the Medieval Times. Although the term “horror” was used in this book, there were plenty of other horror books in Medieval Times such as Dante’s *Inferno* or *The Canterbury Tales*. Although we still refer to it as horror, horror has changed significantly throughout the centuries. Before it was mostly based on monsters terrorizing people, but now it has become more about realistic people or things causing mayhem to the people around them except this time with a purpose. There is usually a psychological problem where the character faces internal conflicts and there is much more gore and violence involved.

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Thanks to modern authors, horror has truly evolved into a more complex yet satisfying genre.

There have been tons of authors who have done their part toward the horror genre. Although there are so many authors, authors like Edgar Allan Poe, Stephen King and Richard Matheson have made significant progress to the horror genre. Edgar Allan Poe, most likely the most recognized horror writer in the world, really changed the ball for horror. He introduced a modern, psychological aspect of horror like in "The Tell Tale Heart". It really brought out the insane side of the reader as it focused on the insanity of a man who murdered the person closest to him because of his eye. It is strange because the so called monster in this story is the man himself. Stephen King, likewise, is extremely popular in the horror genre. His writing influences realistic features of life and gruesome images of scenes that can happen in real life. For instance, in his popular novel *Carrie*, an unpopular girl with strange powers kills people after a prom prank. This novel freaked many readers because it was very realistic and took place in a regular event. The thought of a murderous rampage happening at a regular school event is purely terrifying since most horror novels were mostly reflected around monsters. In addition to King's inspiring work, Richard Matheson made many accomplishments in horror fiction. He is a very popular character who most people value for his novel *I am Legend*. This vampire novel sets a unique thrill for the reader and its contrast from most *Dracula* or vampire books places Matheson as an honored horror writer,

To further continue, H.P. Lovecraft was an influential horror fiction writer who was recognized for his many novels and short stories. Lovecraft was born in Providence, Rhode Island on August 20, 1890. He faced a rough childhood with many tragedies. His father developed a mental disorder from syphilis when Lovecraft was three so he didn't have much of a father figure. He spent much of his school years at home, but was still interested in the work of Edgar Allan Poe and in astronomy. He started out as a journalist, but later in 1917 he focused on writing stories. The horror magazine *Weird Tales* bought some of Lovecraft's stories in 1923 and marked the beginning of Lovecraft's future success. Lovecraft introduced supernatural beings into his horror stories and later started to combine his philosophical ideas with his horror stories. Sadly, this mastermind died of cancer on March 15, 1937. He had released over 60 short stories and a few novels and novellas, his most famous one being "The Call of Cthulhu" Lovecraft received greater acclaim after his death and his novels served as inspiration for several films such as *Cthulhu* and *Hunters of the Dark*. His novels and stories inspired many modern authors like Stephen King and will continue to inspire authors to-be.

In H.P. Lovecraft's "The Tomb", the story follows the elements of a classic horror story. There is an odd sense of fear in the story which really riles up suspense. In the story, Jervas is interested in a tomb that belonged to his family. While exploring it, he grows emotionally attached to it and feels the need to sleep in it. On the tomb, his name is inscribed and while sleeping, he grows afraid of lightning and fire. While approaching his tomb one day, he sees the old mansion that had burned down before and inside was a party in a progress. As he enters in the middle of the party, the mansion is struck by lightning and burns down. Jervas imagined himself burning down and ends up waking up in front of his father who puts him in an asylum. Jervas (in the asylum) asks his servant Hiram to explore the tomb. Hiram finds a plate that says "Jervas" on it so Jervas states he has been promised burial in that coffin when he dies. This story contains suspense and engulfs the reader into it. The realistic feel to it makes it even more frightening especially with the vivid descriptions. For example, in the story Jervas finds a tomb next to a burned down family mansion. Those two items are very realistic and could be linked to each other in a real life crisis. Although this story follows many elements of the story, it strays

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from the monster idea. It is more of psychological problem than an actual monster. There are some supernatural parts such as when the mansion got struck by lightning and burned down, but otherwise, Jervas was really facing himself.

Horror is a complicated genre that has changed over the course of many centuries. It gives the reader a sense of freedom of evil where they can imagine the most gruesome things. Horror became so popular because it gives readers a sense of thrill and is different from common fiction. The realistic touch allows the reader to be a part of the story. The author creates an imaginary yet realistic realm for the reader to explore and that is why modern horror books are highly valued. The unique twists and turns of a horror novel set a path for the reader to embark on and although ideas and plots of horror books have changed, the purpose hasn't—to scare the reader.

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