

TEEN READ MONTH • 2012

Lesson #2

IT CAME FROM THE LIBRARY!

LESSON TWO: CALLING ALL MONSTERS!

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

According to *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, a **monster** is “an imaginary creature that is typically large, ugly, and frightening.” The word derives from the Latin word *monere* (warn), which evolved to *monstrum* (an omen or an unnatural portent). This makes perfect sense. Whenever a character in a novel or movie comes upon a monster, it usually portends (warns) something bad is about to happen!

WHY ARE WE FASCINATED WITH MONSTERS?

Myths from different cultures throughout the world include tales of monsters. Did this originally come from our fear of the real predators that threatened our ancestors? (Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!) What roles do monster stories play in our culture today? See what the following articles have to say...

Salon.com—*Why we invented monsters*: www.salon.com/2011/12/03/the_evolution_of_monsters/print

The Chronicle of Higher Education—*Monsters and the Moral Imagination*: chronicle.com/article/Monstersthe-Moral/48886

Weird Fiction Review—*A Brief History of Monsters*: weirdfictionreview.com/2012/03/a-brief-history-of-monsters

LITERARY MONSTERS

Medusa. Cyclops. Goliath. Frankenstein's monster. Count Dracula. Mr. Hyde. Zombies. The classic monsters of myth, literature and pop culture continue to scare new generations. Follow the links below to view two top ten lists of literary monsters.

Listverse—*Top Ten Horrifying Monsters in Literature*: listverse.com/2011/07/05/top-10-horrifying-monsters-in-literature

Top Tens—*The Top Ten Terrifying Literary Monsters*: www.toptens.com/top-ten-terrifying-literary-monsters

How many monsters on the above lists were new to you? How are the histories and motivations of the various monsters different? Which are the scariest monsters to you and why?

Now make your own top ten list of most terrifying literary monsters. Compare with a friend's list. Defend your monsters and their rankings during the discussion.

WRITE A CHARACTER PROFILE FOR YOUR OWN LITERARY MONSTER

Authors often write profiles of main characters to help them create the characters, and to help with continuity issues in the story. Take a look at these *Questionnaires for Writing Character Profiles* (www.creative-writing-now.com/writing-character-profiles.html). Such questionnaires are obviously for creating human character profiles, but could they help you write a monster character? Here are some additional questions you would have to answer when writing a monster profile:

- **What kind of monster is your character?** (Human/animal hybrid, ghost, undead, undiscovered species, alien, other?)
- **Why is your character a monster?** (From a long line of monsters, mutant human, supernatural spell?)
- **What is the history of your monster?** (Is it ancient? Was it once human? Has it had prior contact with humanity?)
- **Why do people fear the monster?** (It'll eat you? It'll change you into a monster? It'll take over your body? It's just the ugliest thing anyone's ever seen?)
- **What is your monster's personality?** (Is it a mindless mess or is there intelligence in there? Is it all bad, or does it have redeeming qualities?)

You get the idea. Answering these questions will lead to additional questions about your character, and even about the kind of story you could create around the monster. Whatever kind of monster character profile you create, don't forget to have fun!



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