

Eight Points to Building a Horror Story

Creative Writing II

What is the Horror genre?



- Horror uses fear and anxiety as a means of making an emotional connection with the audience.
- These stories are designed to frighten the audience
- Tends to use suspense, fear, and shocking scenarios to keep the audience engaged.
- Horror stories can be ghost, monster, slasher, or psychological stories (and more)

Point 1



- Know your audience for your story
- If you are writing for an adult audience, you can use more graphic images and language
- If you are writing for children/young adults, you need to limit the level of violence, images, and language
- It's all about scaring people. Make sure the fears or anxieties you tap into are ones that will resonate with your target audience.

Point 2



- Horror, like all fiction, needs an emotional core
- Your emotional core can be based on any number of fears or anxieties, but it needs to be something you are passionate about.
- If you don't care about the story's emotional core, the audience won't either.
- So, remember to ask yourself what kind of message are you trying to convey and what emotional journey are the characters taking

Point 3



- Make the stakes obvious
- The audience needs to be aware of the risks the characters are taking.
- Make sure you are explicit about the danger your characters are in. Also, make sure to mention the consequences if the characters are not successful.

Point 4



- Don't forget the psychological aspect
- Pay attention to the human mind and how a character undergoes disturbing changes.
- Horror stories are a way for writers to explore the dark side of human nature.

Point 5



- Write from your own fears, experiences and observations
- Incorporate any experience you have had that falls under the horror umbrella.
- Think about observations you have made about the world you live in.
- Drawing on personal fears will make the story feel more real to an audience

Point 6



- If you are using a trope, do something different with it
- Ho hum, you are using a haunted house, serial killer, werewolves, vampires, etc.
- We've seen them all before, so instead pick new themes that offer twists to the original designs.
- Incorporate new and unexpected elements into your horror story to offer something unusual and different

Point 7



- Horror is internal rather than external
- Horror is supposed to be scary—and the best way to make them truly horrifying is the fear of the unknown and dark aspects of human nature that are hidden from view.
- Remember, it's not what is happening, but what might happen that causes the pulse to race.
- Develop those internal fears in your characters. People can relate to these.

Point 8



- Don't forget the basics
- It may be horror, but it still needs the standard elements.
- You need a strong plot, well-developed characters and an interesting setting.
- It isn't just about scares; it's also about telling a great story
- Remember, if you creep yourself while writing it, then it means you must be doing something right.