

Characteristics of a Monster

Creative Writing II

The Horror Monster



- Since this is a horror/monster unit, we are not really thinking about characters like the Cookie Monster or The Count from *Sesame Street*.
- Though these characters are monster-like, they are designed to educate and to appeal to a young audience.
- Horror monsters, on the other hand, are characterized by their strange or grotesque appearance. Thus, classifying them as “other” and something to be feared.

Characteristics of a Monster



- Physical Characteristics

- Your monster design should make sense with the background you've created.
- Monsters are not decorative—if they have wings, they should use them to fly.
- They're reflections of peoples' fears—sharp teeth, rough claws, tentacles, red eyes, etc.

- Psychological Characteristics

- Monsters can scare us when they play into phobias.
- They can be visible through much of a story, or...
- Sometimes monsters don't need to interact with the characters at all—the characters can build a fear of what is out there without having to see it.
- This can amplify the fear for both character and reader alike.

Characteristics of a Monster



- **Who It Targets**

- Knowing what motivates your monster is key to figuring out why it behaves the way it does—this creates an understanding for your audience.
- So, what triggers your monster? Is it attracted to fear? Does it get violent at the scent of blood? Does it attack when it feels threatened?

- **What's Its Weakness**

- Is there anything that can vanquish your monster?
- Giving your monster its own rules and limits can help establish a believable creature.

Writing Your Monster



- Provide A Little Background
 - Where did the monster come from? Why does it look the way it does? Is it man-made or a natural creature?
 - You don't have to answer everything, but your audience needs enough background to get a full enough picture
- Leave Space for the Imagination
 - Yes, you want the audience to have a clear picture of your monster, but...
 - A reader's imagination can always be scarier than anything you could create.
 - Leave room for your reader to fill in the gaps—it could create a fear worse than you had intended.

Writing Your Monster



- Give It A Name
 - Personifying a monster brings it a little closer to real-life.
 - Giving something a name makes it feel more tangible.
- Make It Hard To Kill
 - Monsters that cannot be defeated easily create big moments of tension for the audience.
 - Let's face it, the harder to kill, the scarier they become.