

Compare the treatment of the theme of fear in gothic literature essay sample

[Literature](#)



Fear is a distinctive characteristic of Gothic literature; there are many types of fear. The fear represented in *The Red Room* is terror, a fear of darkness and the unknown. In the story *The Terrible Old Man* the idea of 'the other' or 'the outsider' is used. In *One Summer Night* the type of fear represented in horror.

The fear in the story *The Red Room* is terror, the main character is afraid of the darkness of the room and what may be in it. The characters of the old people at the beginning add to the tension by expressing their horror at the thought of the main character staying in the room "This night of all nights!" this shows that they are afraid of what is in the room and leads the reader to believe that there is something terrible in the room. However, the characters are mysterious as to what is actually in the room "eight-and-twenty years you have lived and never seen the likes of this house," this lets the readers imagine what could be in the room, making it more terrifying than simply saying what it is that is there.

Despite the man insisting that he is unafraid, he seems nervous before going into the room, "a sudden twinge of apprehension" this shows that he is suddenly nervous but the word 'twinge' suggests he pushes the feeling aside and reassures himself. When in the room, the main character, although maintaining that he believes there is nothing there, seems to be somewhat afraid of what he can't see in the darkness "odd suggestion of a lurking of a lurking, living thing," this shows that he is slightly scared, but he keeps checking to reassure himself.

The man speaks aloud to himself “‘ By Jove!’ said I aloud ‘ that draught’s a strong one’” the fact that he says this aloud shows that he is trying to convince himself by saying it, he is also making reasonable explanations for what is happening. The main character appears to be scared of being scared by constantly having to check the darkness and reassure himself. He is also scared of what may or may not be in the darkness where he cannot see.

In the story One Summer Night, the fear represented is horror. The grave robbers expect to find dead bodies when they dig up the graves and are shocked when they find Henry, “ the men fled in terror” this shows they are scared because they make the assumption that Henry was dead when he was buried and has come back to life.

In The Terrible Old Man, the type of fear used is ‘ the other’, the fear of someone who is different and about who not a great deal is known. The old man is an outsider in his community “ dwells all alone” this makes him mysterious and seem strange to the townspeople. The townspeople therefore, are scared of him and talk about him “ say and think many a things” the speculation about the old man adds to his mysteriousness and makes people more afraid of him.

In Frankenstein, the monster is also feared because he is different from others and is rejected by many people. The writer’s use of language highlights how little is known about the old man “ believed to have been” the word ‘ believed’ shows that the people who talk about him know little about him and most of the gossip is just rumours heard from others. The writer also makes us feel kind of sorry for the old man “ lonely, unpopular old fellow”

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this is because he is rejected by everyone and is always alone. The idea of the outsider is also represented in the three robbers, who are new to the town and so have not heard the talk about the terrible old man "...merely a tottering, almost helpless..." this shows that they are outsiders because they do not fear the old man like the townspeople do.

The Victorians might have found *The Red Room* scarier than people nowadays because they didn't have electric lights and would have been able to empathise with the main character in this story. Whereas now, we have electric lights and rooms are hardly ever dark.

The story of *The Terrible Old Man* would have been more shocking in Victorian times because hardly anyone lived alone and didn't socialise. However now it is much more common for people to be recluses and be shut off from the outside world. The murder in the story would have the same reaction now as it would have then because murder was just as common then as it is now.

One Summer Night would have been scarier for the Victorians because most were terrified of being buried alive because it happened a lot more back then whereas now we have better medical knowledge and more advanced technology. Also grave robbing happens a lot less now.

In *The Red Room*, the writer uses lots of descriptive language to convey terror "lurking, living thing" this is the main character's feeling that there is something in the darkness, the word 'lurking' suggests he feels like there is another presence in the room, watching him. The writer personifies the

darkness “ returned, and crept up on me” this makes the situation scarier because it implies that there is something else there in the darkness.

Whereas, in One Summer Night the writer uses descriptive language to highlight the horror of the men “ inarticulate cries...fled in terror” this shows the shock the two men were in.

The writer also uses the weather to reflect the events in the story, “ a cracking shock of thunder” this is as Henry is revealed and it echoes the shock of seeing him sit up. In Terrible Old Man the writer uses language to get across how strange the old man is “ gnarled...aged and neglected” these words are used to describe his house which makes him seem more mysterious and odd, as if the state of his house reflects the old man himself.