

# Literature and the supernatural

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Literature has been used as a way of voicing thoughts or beliefs about the supernatural and its relation to the human mind.

Throughout time, people have tried to put their thoughts down into something more concrete, into something that others would be able to either relate to, or which would create the basis of thought. The use of supernatural themes has enabled others to create a reality for their thoughts, fears and beliefs of both the world and the human mind. These themes have been able to give a new light on the meaning of reality. It seems that society feels the need to create a reasonable explanation for things, in order to protect what they have, the children, and their way of life. If people were to unanimously decide to believe in the supernatural, and make it a well-known fact of life in public, then everything would change. Although our way of life is quite different to that of historical eras, the same feelings, the same atmosphere would be created, something almost in tandem to the Dark Ages.

In the movie *Rise of the Guardians*, the character Pitch Black states that the Dark Ages were a time of great fear. Children and adults believed in 'the Boogie Man' and the dark was a constant source of distress. This fear of things that go 'bump' in the night has been portrayed through many different forms of literature. The 1958 film *Dracula* is a perfect example of what was perceived as horror to the modern day society of that era. Dracula was a creature, portrayed as a killing machine, bent on taking the lives of innocent victims and creating them into a monster like he was. The differences between today's society, what is currently believed to be physically and mentally abnormal, and that of history, aren't that wide-spread apart.

There are still many outlooks on the forces of the supernatural, and how they merge with everyday life. As in the poem *First Day at School* by Roger McGough, the faceless and nameless boy speculates as to the use of the railings at school. His first thoughts are that they are a way of keeping monsters out, things that carry children off. It is with children that our belief of supernatural in society continues to grow and evolve to suit ever changing times. From an early age, we're taught and shown things that are in the same category as supernatural, although, albeit a somewhat more refined, nicer image. There are many examples of this in our everyday lives, television shows suitable for children, books read, even movies made.

Children's minds are easily influenced by the actions and views of people around them, meaning that they essentially build their future cultural and societal beliefs on what they were taught at an early age. When children are younger, it seems to be the intent that they have a more closeted view of supernatural forces - which could be extended to that of Disney cartoons. Princess movies, happily ever after's, magic that brings happiness and joy into other's lives. In the original novel *Alice in Wonderland*, written by Lewis Carol, Alice is transported to a magical land, filled with magical creatures - caterpillars that smoke pipes, rabbits in waistcoats, flowers that talk - in which she must go through a series of events to try and find her way home.

The starting off point for the basis of mystical beliefs are almost like trying to ease children into the more complex and frankly horrifying images that can come up later in life. However, as expressed in the short story *Dougie*, written by Ben Thurley, children are also able to see the darker side of the paranormal. In this case, after making friends with a monster that was  
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plaguing Dougie in the bath, his ' friend' offers to get rid of his abusive father. This is where the story ends, but it's obvious that there is a scarier ending after the ending. Another short story, Daddy, written by Steve Rasnic Tem, tells a tale about a little girl loves her father so much, that she is unwilling to leave his side, even when that involves her beginning to starve to death. This illustrates to us both how naive children can be, but also how open minded they are when it comes to incredible things.

In life, it is expected that children are naive, that they will need to learn certain ways of the world in order to properly survive, i. e. make friends, find a partner, get a job, etc. But, although children need to learn these types of skills to manage well within society, it usually goes hand in hand that they lose their open-mindedness, they no longer believe in things seemingly impossible in nature. Like in the movie, The Polar Express, every child but one ends up no longer believing in the North Pole, elves, and most of all Santa Clause.

This demonstrates how as people grow older, they are more influenced by society and the people around them. However, just because belief of men jumping down chimneys, and bunnies that hide hard boiled eggs dissipate with age, does not mean that belief of supernatural forces are dispelled as well. Many phobias are brought on by movies and novels. It is quite sad that adults seem to no longer believe in things that bring joy, comfort and hope, rather in things that show the darkest side of both human nature, and other realms. Almost like there has to be some form of evil for different phenomena to be accepted as even a partial truth.

The only supernatural force that seems to have a positive faith is that of Religion. No matter how many facts given about the world and the scientific relation as to how life works, people will always need some sort of faith, something to believe in. As far as different cultures are concerned, that belief is to a higher power to guide them through life, help them be a better person. Religion is a way for people to trust that they aren't alone in their lives - a way of knowing that they were meant to go through hardships everybody has to face sooner or later. In the poem *Trees*, by Joyce Kilmer, she is describing the beauty of something as simple as a tree. She is saying how even somewhat simple, everyday things that are always around us can be one of the most beautiful things in existence.

She does give the credit to god, at the end saying that " poems are made by fools like me, but only God can make a tree". This is a perfect sample of the need to believe in a higher power of some kind. The supernatural in literature has been used throughout history to convey thoughts and beliefs of how life works in relation to the human mind. Through many variations over time, the supernatural has existed within literature, as a way of society as a whole to convey the beliefs about good and evil within, and beyond life. Literature in the past is a layout for the opportunity of the future for the ability of society to express thoughts and beliefs of life and paranormal dimensions.