

# Analyzing the invasion of zombies into popular culture essay examples

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In recent years, it seems as though zombies have taken over much of pop culture, invading the expected (literature, television and movies) but also reaching into academia, larger social narratives and even governmental organizations. There are several different opinions regarding why the zombie narrative has become so pervasive.

The origins of the zombie are traced back to the Caribbean and the zombie is among few monsters that have entered popular culture without a Gothic, European tradition or background in literature (McIntosh 1). The way the zombie is imagined has changed over time, as has the cause of its zombie nature. Zombies, former humans that exist in their zombie state because of reanimation or contagious disease, are now generally recognized by their single-mindedness hunger for living creatures and remorselessness.

According to Arnold T. Blumberg, who taught a course on zombies at the University of Baltimore and co-authored a book on the topic, zombies in American pop culture provide allegory that varies depending on the atmosphere of the time, “ whether it’s the threat of communism during the Cold War or our fears about bioterrorism in 2010.” Different zombie narratives provide different underlying meanings and may have different messages, warnings or lessons. Screen zombies in the 1930s and 1940s told stories about racial inequality before evolving to cast a revealing light on topics like the white patriarchy and the collapse of the nuclear family (Bishop 95).

Zombies are not feared because they are complex, but because they are persistent, indefatigable and occur in massive numbers. This massive horde and zombie tirelessness forces humans to band together. According to

Christopher Zealand, author of the essay *The National Strategy for Zombie Containment: Myth Meets Activism in Post-9/11 America*, “ Humanity’s only hope, then, is to band together. Defeating the zombie hordes is thus as much a matter of psychological and will as it is a matter of tactics and firepower” (233). In the zombie horde, observers may see a threatening majority, blind obedience to a higher entity or technology or a lack of intimate social contact. The tightness and interdependence of the surviving human minority may have the observer craving this type of social group that is bound together for survival, rather than simply because of casual friendships. It is also possible that the interest in zombie narratives exists partly because these stories present what was historically common knowledge but is now frequently lost. The generations that are now so fascinated by zombies were not, with some exceptions, of course, raised on farms or in the forest and lack even basic survival skills like starting fires, foraging for edible plants, hunting for prey, avoiding potential predators and emergency first aid. Along this vein, the Centers for Disease Control saw an opportunity to use interest in zombies to better educate the public about preparedness for natural disasters and other emergencies, offering advice ranging from what to include in an emergency kit to identifying possible evacuation routes and family meeting points.

I drew on the unfeeling, single-mindedness nature of the zombie and took inspiration from myriad zombie movies I have seen when I was creating my costume and persona for the Thriller flash mob. I tried to demonstrate no emotions and overall unawareness of myself, dressed in torn, ragged clothing.

Storytelling plays an important educational and bond-forming role in human societies and zombie narratives have certainly found a place in contemporary pop culture in the United States and beyond. Whether this broad fascination with zombies will continue uninterrupted is not totally clear, but it is apparent that stories with zombies tend to reflect current concerns about social and political structures.

## **Works Cited**

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