

Good example of  
stephen king's "the  
shining" - horror  
fiction's most  
representativ...

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Among the strongest, most common and oldest emotion of man is the feeling of fear. Fear is the reason why every human civilization around the world nurtured faith that urged them to establish religion. People's fear of unexplained events or unknown circumstances have ignited their belief in one Divine Power who governs their destiny. Every mysterious phenomena is linked to the workings of a certain character who possess supernatural power. The wild and limitless imagination of man have caused the birth of supernatural characters such as demons, zombies, vampires, ghosts, dark spirits, witches, monsters and humans that are branded as freaks. Such imagination have conceived different stories and myths that feature either supernatural or human characters, their distinct powers, disturbing behavior, unstable emotional state and irrational actions.

Despite the advent of science, the stories about fearful, disturbing, irrational and mystical characters exhibiting their often destructive powers are still one of the favorite themes of modern literature. This literary genre is called the horror fiction. Horror fiction provokes a spontaneous response from the readers. This genre invokes fear, horror and terror by creating eerie atmosphere, showing evil forces and presenting shocking transition of events. One of horror fiction's most representative and influential work is Stephen King's " The Shining." The novel's characters, plot, theme and effect on the readers are haunting, and dreadful which ultimately stirs fear. " The Shining" undoubtedly provokes fear in every reader- an element that is the qualifying factor in the genre of horror fiction.

One of the characteristics of horror fiction that is present in " The Shining" is that it features major characters as ordinary people whom the readers may

identify with. Although these characters are haunting, hostile and indifferent, the readers can understand their unfortunate realities. In the novel, King “ set up characters and situations we recognized—and then something unexplained and truly horrific suddenly changed everything, leaving these people, who seemed to be just like us, in battles for their lives and souls.” (Saricks, p. 19) The protagonist of the story, Jack Torrance, is like every common man who has big dreams and wanted to live a promising life. He is a man who tries to recover from his alcohol addiction and violent temper issues and wants to make it up to his family. “ He's lost his teaching job; he's had to give up his beloved hobby of drinking after having assaulted a couple of minors, one of them his five-year-old son, and run down a third; and he's had to relocate across the country, far away from the scene of his crimes.” (McNamee, p. 462) Although the character of Jack is hostile and estranged, the readers can relate to him and understand his behavior. Furthermore, they can identify with him as he is a man who have been lost and committed several mistakes in the past, but plans to redeem himself. Their life was normal until he accepts the caretaker job at the terrifying Overlook Hotel in his attempt to reconnect with Wendy and Danny. There was a sudden shift in their lives as Jack's son, Danny begin to see visions of past tragedies in the hotel. This unexplained events have changed everything; making them helpless victims of horrifying circumstances. King builds an in-depth story where ordinary characters are trapped in extra-ordinary experiences. A terrifying experience that is crafted by the sordid past of the Overlook Hotel. King includes a surprising transformation of the novel's characters. From being the hotel's caretaker who dreams of financial stability for his family,

Jack becomes possessed by Grady's ghost. The story gets more hauntingly complicated when his priority motive is not to provide for his family anymore, but to murder them.

Violence is one of the key elements of horror fiction. This element is prevalent in "The Shining" as it narrates several gruesome and violent scenes of murder. In fact, almost every page of the novel speaks of violence. One of the most violent scene in the story is the episode where Jack chases Wendy with a mallet. Haunted and surprised, Wendy says that "How could he be doing that with a knife in his back? Where was he finding the strength?" (King, p. 279) This descriptive question creates a clear graphic of violence that brings the reader to the world of brutality. The theme of violence becomes more intense at the near end of the story where Jack hits his own head and face with mallet.

In a horror fiction like "The Shining", the protagonist fights against evil forces. The most important evil force that they are battling with is the ghost of Grady and other ghosts that make Jack emotionally and psychologically unstable. Another evil force is the "dead woman in 217, a woman that was perhaps only a spirit and harmless under most circumstances, but a woman who was now an active danger." (King, p. 191) The hedges that turned into life are also prominent evil forces that add thrill to the story. The voice of the Overlook Hotel itself are endless echoes that frighten the readers and makes the novel an excellent representative of horror fiction.

Horror fiction chronicles events that are unexpected and are unlikely to happen in reality. It also involves the element of the supernatural. King presents many supernatural elements such as the Mafia victims who reside

in the Presidential Suite. There are also extraterrestrials who are not human, but are natural like the garden bushes that turned into animals. At first they were trimmed hedges, but When Danny “ looked back again, the point lion was only five feet behind. It was grinning. Its mouth was open” (King, p. 198)

The story also features the ancient and defective boiler that should be nursed constantly in order to prevent it from blowing the whole of Rocky Mountain- an incomprehensible phenomena that the author did not fully explain. He also incorporates absurd events such as the vintage masquerade party that actually happened in the 1940's. The 5-year old Danny also possesses supernatural powers as he can see premonitions and visions of past events. Furthermore, Tony, the imaginary friend of Danny is a supernatural and fanciful figure. “ Looking at Tony was like looking into a magic mirror and seeing himself in ten years.” (King, p. 288) This passage means that Tony is the future version of Danny or a 15-year old Danny- an instance that is unbelievable. From being Danny's invisible playmate, King reveals that Tony came from the future who had travelled to the present to rescue his younger self- the 5 year old Danny. Danny's full name is Daniel Anthony Torrance and the name “ Tony” was taken from his middle name. Like his younger self, Tony have psychic abilities and can see future events. Though Danny is only five years old, he is already a powerful pyschic, but because he is only a child he can not consciuosly use most of his powers. Thus, his future self comes to him to provide guidance- a dubious transition that is one of the key ingredient in horror fiction.

“ The Shining” indeed deserves to be one of horror fiction's most influential work as it was adopted by film makers and made it into a phenomenal

motion picture. It faithfully represents the genre of horror fiction because it contains all the elements that make up such genre. "The Shining" presents the story of an ordinary man who later fights with evil forces and supernatural elements where violence, blood and brutality are the highlights of the battles. It also features the theme of paranormal existence and does not provide rational explanations for the occurrence of improbable events. Reading King's novel is like experiencing the worst nightmares of one's life and invokes the feeling of true and deepest fear. "The Shining" has made a lasting impact on horror fiction genre and its frightening effect on readers is timeless and universal.

## **Works Cited**

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