

Fear in different genres by mizov essay



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Fear in Different Genres By Michael J. Mizov Fear is defined as a condition between anxiety and terror either natural and well-grounded or unreasoned and blind. Fear is one emotion that everyone dislikes, and it is as unavoidable as night or day. Through the use of novels, plays, films, short stories, and poems it becomes clear that fear is an emotion that the writer like to heighten not only in the protagonist, but also in the reader. After reading great works by people such as George Orwell and Stephen King, it becomes clear that fear is the most uncontrollable emotion, quick to come, and long to last. The horror movies of today may bring about a cheap scare, but to truly fear something is the same as dying a thousand times over. All people have a worst fear, be it heights or ducks, that an author or film maker can use to their advantage. Their goal is to make the hairs on the back of one's neck raise, as well as have them looking over their shoulder as the story progresses with more twists and turns than a roller coaster.

Aforementioned, the main purpose of this research is to prove that fear is an emotion that is prevalent throughout all genres, regardless of topic or plot, and through meticulous research of all genres, the fear presented in all shall be revealed. The first genre to be discussed will be film. After viewing such classics as *Last of the Mohicans*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and *Bartleby*, it becomes clear that the film making industry is not at a loss for instilling fear. There are films that make one's pulse quicken as the story becomes more involved, or some that have one lying awake in bed at night thinking of the frightening stuff they had just seen. The whole concept of fear in a film is not a prolonged fright, but a short lasting one, that may conclude after the end, or in some cases, a few days afterwards. The first film that was viewed was *The Last of the Mohicans*. It was a story that encompassed all the emotions,

from love to fear. The first instance of fear was short-lived but still present, it began as the opening credits finished, and three men are running through the forest at high speeds. The viewer begins to speculate as to what they are running after, or more importantly, from. That instance of fear was a letdown and also quickly forgotten, but the emotion was still present nonetheless. A short way into the film the viewer is introduced to an Indian named Magua, and through his speech and body movements it becomes noticeable that he is concealing an ulterior motive, but the viewer can only wonder at what. Magua then acts as scout leading two women and a regiment of troops through the woods it becomes clear that something is about to occur. As the signs of impending action come one's pulse quickens and one may even lean forward in the seat in anticipation. The rising fear is rewarded as a group of Indian braves attack them from the woods and then as the battle is happening one begins to fear for the lives of the main characters that were only recently introduced. In all predictability, they survive, but for a moment the viewer was fearing the worst. As the group proceeds to the fort which is under attack fear is of course stirred to life. Not very strongly, but like a splinter in one's mind, it is always there. Through the film the fear for the lives of the main characters comes into play quite often as they are involved in many life-threatening situations and what not but the real heart stopped comes at the end of the film. Magua has captured the two female characters and the Mohicans are racing up the mountain after him to save them. As they approach the peak, the Mohicans catch up, and a brutal fight ensues. Magua then fights one of the Mohicans one to one, and the viewer begins to think, good always beats evil.

Although not in this case, as the Mohican plunges to his death off the side of the mountain, the viewer is in shock, then the viewer remembers that his new love witnessed the whole thing. The horror is too much as she is taken over by fear of having to live without him, and she too hurdles to the jagged rocks below, to live with her love in eternity. Such scenes rarely occur in films that invoke such fear, because it is a rare occurrence that the not one, but two of the main character die. The title then has meaning, as the father of the full Mohican and half-Mohican men truly becomes the last of his race, the last of the Mohicans. The next film viewed was *Bartleby*, a short film based on the novel by Herman Melville. Throughout the film, there is not much hair raising fear, but a more subtle level. The kind of fear caused by this film comes into play late at night when one has trouble falling asleep. *Bartleby* was a normal man at first, but as the film progresses, he becomes stranger and stranger. In the world, the fear of the strange and or unknown tends to come about a lot as a result of being misunderstood. *Bartleby* is one such misunderstood fellow, and this in turn causes all other characters in the film to fear him, even though he has done nothing menacing. *Bartleby* is a different kind of fear, and it is shown through the given examples or by simply picturing someone that looks normal, but you cannot quite grasp what they are thinking. Another film viewed was *The Lottery*, the main aspect of fear in that film was simply the fear of death. There are a few underlying fears that come forth such as the fear of change. The people of town have been doing the lottery more than likely since it was founded in order to reap a good harvest in the fall. The premise of the lottery is to randomly pick someone from within the populace, and stone them to death so that the harvest will be bountiful. An old man brings up that a nearby town has abandoned the

lottery, and everyone in town agrees that this was a foolhardy gesture, and they are only in for ruin; those statements brought to light the fact that they could not give up the lottery, even if they had wanted to. As time passes eventually all families are called and the family with the black dot has to take a second lottery to see which one of them would be killed. The woman who receives the black dot shows her fear of death by making such allegations as it was a mistake, or the lottery is worthless, but to no avail, she is promptly killed because the fear of the townspeople of dealing with a bad harvest overtakes the fear of one doomed woman. The Red Badge of Courage was then reviewed and the emotion of fear is what drives the story along.

Henry Fleming had recently joined the army and now his battalion was going into battle for the first time. Henry is scared out of his wits by the course of action presented to him, and looks to his friends for comfort, but they all claim that they are unafraid. The viewer begins to worry about Henry, because for all they know he may not survive the battle, or he could be badly wounded. Henry eventually gathers his courage and proceeds into the raging battle of the Civil War. Upon seeing his comrades killed or wounded next to him he makes a mad dash for the woods, in order to save his own skin; this action goes unnoticed by his superiors and they congratulate him on being so brave when he finally does return. While walking back to camp after the battle Henry spies one of his close friends wounded and lying in the road, he goes over to help him, and his friend asks him to make sure he does not get run over when he passes. Henry carries him over to a field where he soon dies, and Henry is devastated by this. Henry no longer is afraid, he is full of rage that he was too afraid to stand by his friends who remained steadfast and died in the line of duty. The viewer then begins to fear for Henry's life even

more so for the fact that now he would be on a rampage into the next battle, because everyone knows that foolhardy soldiers have even less of a chance than those trying to be heroes. Henry's friends then confide in him that they had the most fear in battle than in their entire lives, and this fact holds true for the real world as well. They congratulate Henry on being so brave while most of them were cowards, and this prompts Henry to be guilty instead of afraid, and he feels that it is up to him to win the upcoming battle. In the next battle Henry performed bravely but then once the battle is over more Union soldiers come over the hill to tell them that the real battle was over there, not here. This of course sets all the troops on edge with fear for their lives, because if what they had just lived through was not the battle, then what could real war be like? That fact would remain a mystery for Henry, and the rest of his battalion, because they would all be too afraid to go over the next hill. The fear for one's life is present almost everyday, be it in a war, or walking down the street to buy a newspaper. The last film reviewed was based on a short story entitled Dr. Heidegger's Experiment and it was about the fear of aging and losing one's looks. The people that are in the opening scene are all old, withered people that were once young and robust, and the viewer is able to assume that they do not like it one bit. The actual experiment presented in this film is with an elixir to reverse the aging process, the Dr. first shows how it works on an old rose, long dead, saved from his wedding day. It comes back to life almost instantly and the four old people are amazed, and all want to try the amazing elixir. These people do not take time to think of the consequences of such a miracle; they are all too afraid of their age and impending death to think of such things. The viewer has a little twinge of fear for these people because it is quite

predictable how it will turnout in the end for these unfortunate souls. They grow young again, and end up fighting over the old woman that had turned beautiful again. They squander the short time they have to be young as the elixir only last for a few minutes and in their fighting they had knocked over what remained of the elixir. The old-turned young-old again character's worst fear became quite noticeable in the closing scene as they all knelt on the ground around where the last of the miracle elixir spilled. The genre of film has many, many examples of fear throughout the many movies made over time. There are many different types of fear presented, as shown through the examples given; the fear of losing a love, a life, change, or one's looks. Fear is a terrible emotion to experience, and film has only been around for almost a hundred years. Poetry on the other hand has been playing with our fears since the beginning of recorded time. The genre of poetry has had quite a jump on film, and contains just as much fear through verse as shown in a horror movie. The first poem read was 'Lenore' by Edgar Allan Poe, a story about a lost love and trying to struggle on in the speaker's own life. The speaker mentions that all of her friends were simply getting close to her for the money she owned, while the speaker held her as his reason for existence. The fear of losing a loved one that special is shown through the verse of Poe's speaker in this poem. One of the worst fears is having to live out the rest of one's life without the only person that brought meaning into it, and it is a deep fear that lies in the hearts of everyone. When the speaker saw the death upon her eyes, his world is crashing down around him; life becomes meaningless. The speaker then tries to find some sort of memorial for Lenore, but alas, nothing on this earth is worthy enough for her memory. Edgar Allan Poe was a master of fear and the macabre, this poem was one

type of fear he was capable of expressing very strongly, and a different type is present in the next poem by him. The poem 'The Haunted Palace' also by Poe presents the fear of the unknown to the reader. As the poem starts there was once a glorious palace sitting in the middle of a very prosperous and great land. Travelers through the valley saw the spirits of happiness dancing in the windows at night, and this always comforted them as they passed. Then, one fateful day, evil began to assail the castle and the valley, all but destroying it as the wickedness passed through. The king was killed and the entire kingdom was collapsing without him and the happy times became but a dim memory in the elderly's minds. Now travelers fear going through the valley because of the evil spirits now dancing around inside the once great palace, while lies decimated and useless. The people that still live in the kingdom fear going near the palace because of the evil that vibrates from the very foundation of it. The people in the kingdom may laugh, but they smile no more. That type of fear is the fear of evil, and the unknown, the people have no idea what horrors await them inside the palace, and they are in no hurry to find out. Poe was definitely a master of fear, and another person who brings about fear through novel writing wrote a poem for a change, and will be discussed next. The poem 'For Owen' by Stephen King is a very vague poem, but the fear inside of it begins to surface after numerous readings of it. The fear presented in this poem is the fear of those that are different, as two young men are walking down the street to school, they begin to discuss the other schools around. There is one dressed in army fatigues and the other's dress is not known, but as they make fun of the other kids, the one in the fatigues makes fun of fat kids; which reveals the fact that the other child is fat. The poem takes a drastic turn from there, as it delves into the mind

of the fat child, and he thinks of the horrible things he could tell the child wearing the army fatigues. How badly he is treated, how the fat kids can't reach down to tie their own shoes, and how he has died a thousand deaths already. This poem presents the fear of those that are different, little children are especially fearful of the unknown. Those children's only defense to such overwhelming fear is to put down or make fun of those that are different from them. There are thousands upon thousands of poems that convey the emotion of fear quite well. Poems may seem vague or hard to understand at first, but viewing them between the lines brings out the true emotions that the poet or speaker is trying to bring about. Sometimes reading about scary things is enough to get one going, poetry is a good example of such, but the short story genre is certainly the harbinger of fear. Some short stories' sole purpose is to make the reader fear for their very lives from just a short plot and some details in which everything is wrapped up in twenty or thirty pages. The short story is by far the easiest of the genres to examine because of such abundant resources. The first short story that was reviewed was *Here There Be Tygers* by Stephen King. It was a story about a little boy who was afraid to go to the bathroom. Charles, the protagonist, was in Miss Bird's class, and she was the meanest teacher in the whole school in his opinion. In the middle of class one day Charles had to use the bathroom, but because he feared Miss Bird, and the word bathroom instead of basement, he tried to play it all off. Charles having a fear of his teacher would be a common thing in most small children, but a fear of going to the bathroom is a very strange fear indeed. Charles soon gets noticed by Miss Bird and she forces him to leave class and go to the bathroom. When he arrived at the bathroom and went in, he turned the corner and saw a large

tiger, lying in wait for someone to come in. He had no idea how it got there but he knows that it is there to eat him. Charles runs for his life and the reader begins to wonder if the tiger is a figment of his imagination created by his fear of the bathroom, or is there a real tiger escaped from the local zoo hiding in there? After standing around a few minutes Kenny, another boy from class comes to see what happened to Charles, and he finds Charles standing outside the bathroom in fear.

Kenny laughs at Charles and tries to drag him in, but Charles breaks free and Kenny goes in. There is a scream as the tiger devours Kenny and Charles cringes outside the bathroom. Soon after that incident Miss Bird comes by to see what happened to the two boys, and she goes right into the bathroom and is devoured as well. Charles then noticed that the tiger was satiated and he proceeds to use the bathroom, and heads back to class. The fear in this story may also be a fear of growing up. Charles sounds to be in about first grade and is getting used to acting more mature and being a responsible young man. The fact that Miss Bird made him say bathroom instead of basement is something that may have played tricks on Charles' mind, and maybe the tiger was his fear come out into the open, and devouring Miss Bird to show Charles could be any way he wanted. The next story, also by Stephen King, is the short story 'Gemma' about another young boy that is alone for the first time with his extremely old, dying grandma'.

The boy named George had moved in with his grandmother with his mother and older brother when he was six to take care of her in her declining years, and George has been afraid of her since day one. Normally, grandparents are warm loving people, but this grandmother is old, mean, and decrepit, and this

frightens George immensely. As George sits alone while his mother goes to the hospital to see his big brother Buddy who broke his leg, he begins to recall past instances where his grandmother particularly frightened him. George begins to work himself up as the evening progresses and becomes frightened for his life as dusk approaches. George had never been alone for that long, or at all in fact, with his grandmother. George begins recalling strange things that his grandmother was involved in a long time ago, things he overheard in his mother's conversations with relatives and friends. Then, as a strong storm began approaching the little house, George's grandmother up and died. George then thought he would remain calm and call for help, but the phone's were out, then he began to get extremely frightened. As it turns out, George's grandmother had made a deal with the devil a long time ago, and he in turn gave her books of spells which made her a witch of sorts. George, who thought his grandmother was dead, saw her rise up and start going after him. Much later, when George's mother came home, George was calmly sitting at the kitchen table and he told her that his grandmother had died. The story ends with a twist, as the narrator mentioned that George's mother would be curious when he develops a taste for herbal tea. That was a frightening story with a twist, as most people who have read this were looking over their shoulders as they got towards the end. A good story is one that is able to cause the reader to experience the same emotions as the protagonist, and that story certainly did a good job at it. The next story reviewed had a sort of primal fear expressed through it. The last story reviewed was 'Survivor Type' by Stephen King, about a doctor that became shipwrecked on a desert island. More deserted than desert would be applicable for its description, as it was barely twenty yards across with only

rocks on it for shade. As the story progresses the doctor is left with no water or food, and the story is told from the perspective of his journal, as he sees the events happen. The primal fear of death is told through this man's journal, and the instinct to survive is his only outlet. As time goes on the island he attempted to catch a seagull for dinner and broke his ankle on the rocks. Now that he is immobilized there is nothing to do to try and survive, and he becomes greatly depressed and thinks of how he ended up in that situation. While his ankle festers he comes up with the idea to amputate it, since he is a doctor. Well, amputate he does, and instead of disposing of the foot, he eats it in order to survive. As one can see, the fear of death is so overwhelming in this man that he has resorted to eating his own foot in order to survive. Since he ate his foot, he really has nothing, so as time goes on he begins to amputate various other body parts all the way up until his journal becomes so garbled and unintelligible that the reader can only fear the worst for the good doctor. The fear of death, and a bad stroke of luck, was what caused the doctor's death. If he were able to control his fear, he may have survived. Short stories are a major player when it comes to scaring readers, some stories would have the reader looking over their shoulder to make sure the feared thing in the story is not walking up behind them to do something. Fear is easily taken out of short stories since the premise of them is to scare the reader, but the genre of Plays is a lot harder to become frightened in. Plays are live action movies, and have been going for a very long time; almost the same amount as poetry. It takes a lot to scare an audience when there are only a few actors dressed up performing something directly in front of them, but when there is a scare it tends to stick. The first play reviewed was *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare and is a play about

a group of people coming back from a wedding that become stranded on a vast island in small groups, without the knowledge if the others had survived. Prospero the wizard is actually in control of the entire island and he is the one who staged the shipwreck so that he may rightfully reclaim his place as Duke. As the play goes on, the characters begin to fear for the lives for the other people that were on the ship and then fear for their own safety on this uncharted island. As the story progresses, more characters are introduced such as Ariel and Caliban, Prospero's slave. Caliban is a slave because he is afraid of Prospero's power as a wizard since Prospero killed his mother and claimed Ariel as his own. Sebastian and Antonio turn out to fear the king's wrath so they plot to kill him, but Ariel intervenes and saves King Alonso. Sebastian and Antonio of course come up with an elaborate cover as to why their swords were drawn, and Alonso believes them. Later in the play, Trinculo and Stephano get Caliban drunk, and he forgets Prospero's powers and decided to try and kill him. Being drunk often keeps the brain from thinking accordingly and forgetting a fear is a bad situation indeed. Eventually, everyone finds their way to Prospero's encampment and all of the problems are resolved. Prospero forgives Sebastian and Antonio, and is restored to his rightful place. This story played on the fear of being alone in an unfamiliar place, such as being separated from your group while in a faraway place. The other fear exploited is the fear of someone's power, as in between Caliban and Prospero, if one is frightened of someone more powerful, there is not much to change one's mind about not bothering them. The next play reviewed was Arthur Miller's 'The Crucible' and play about the Salem witch trials and the paranoia caused by the Puritan lifestyle. The play opens with a little girl Betty struck by some malady which causes her to

remain unconscious and the person looking over her fears that dark forces had caused it. After a few of the other girls in town come to see her, she sits bolt upright and begins accusing, along with the other girls, almost all the people in town of witchcraft. The fear of witchcraft sweeps Salem as almost the entire town is arrested for fear of them being a witch or warlock. The Puritan religion has people living by strict rules, and to alleviate boredom some girls went dancing in the forest and were caught. To shift the blame away from themselves they say that witches caused them to do it.

The fear of getting in trouble started the witch purging, with the fear of witchcraft fueling the flame so to speak. One of the girls that caused the witch hunt to escalate even further was Abigail, who was in love with John Proctor, whom was already married. She then accuses his wife of being a witch out of fear of losing him because she wants nothing but to be with him. Proctor then tries to save his wife from being put into prison, but the plan backfires and he ends up in prison for a very long time. Then as Act III starts it is a number of months later, and the view is focused on Proctor who is finding out what has happened in the past months. It turns out that the populace of Salem was so afraid of witches that almost every person in town was arrested except for a select few. The who are arrested are soon forced to confess, which in turn brings about their execution. Proctor is forced to confess, but refuses to sign it, and as a result is eventually executed. Fear is somewhat over exaggerated through the course of the play, but since it is based on a real event, it certainly could not be too far from the truth, which is a frightening thought in itself. The genre of plays has some fear to it, but it can never match the fear instilled from reading a good novel. There are many

scary novels around, Stephen King specializes his work on scaring the living daylight out of his readers.

Novels are able to articulate the feelings of the procrastinator as well as those around them more than a short story would ever be capable of. The novels discussed here have to deal with a fear of dying, and a fear of truly living.

The first novel is 1968 by Joe Haldeman, a novel about a young man who goes to Vietnam, and returns a far different man. The novel begins as a new man to Vietnam nicknamed Spider tells about the situation there. He has currently never seen combat, and works way out in the middle of nowhere. As his company receives word of the combat becoming more intense Spider begins to fear for his safety, as well as his life. The army has a small group, including Spider, going out on frequent search-and-destroy missions, which means to kill anything that is not identified. At first no one was truly frightened of the true danger, but as they were out on one of their missions a man was shot in the groin, and everyone realized the danger that they were truly in. After Tet 1968, which was the famous Tet Offensive by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) strategies changed and they were out in the jungle more than they were in the base. On one such outing Spider's group was assaulted in one of the most gruesome scenes ever depicted in a novel. Spider turns to run, smacks his head on a tree, and is knocked unconscious. When he comes to, he is more afraid for his life than ever, as he sees the lone man that assaulted them that will haunt his dreams forever. He sees the NVA troop going to each body and putting a bullet in the head to be sure, and when he gets to Spider he sees that Spider is still alive. Just as he was about

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to kill Spider his gun jammed, and he walked off, leaving Spider to a life of misery and constant fear. After Spider was rescued he was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic, which is having to control of your fear, a bad thing to happen indeed. Life for Spider became simply unbearable but eventually he learned to come to grips with his problem, and eventually tried to live a normal life. When Spider finally arrives home to see his parents, his father believes he is a homosexual because of his doctor's report, and his mother is all but frightened of him. As Spider realizes that he is no longer wanted he moves out and tries to get a job in a doughnut shop. When he was there the first day training he gets splattered with boiling grease, and is forced into the hospital, unable to even move. Spider has feared for his life through the course of the novel, but now he fears for his very existence, he wonders if it is possible that his life could become any more unbearable. Eventually Spider heals and is released, and his parents have moved with no forwarding address, the stuff he had in his apartment was given away, and Spider is fearful that he is truly alone in the world now. Spider then takes a bus to Florida, where he gets beat up and his stuff stolen, Spider lives the rest of his days as a bum, never knowing what to do. The twist to the novel was that in the last chapter it gave the perspective of the NVA troop during that fateful day in 1968. When his gun jammed, he said to Spider 'May you live in interesting times.', and live in interesting times Spider did, filled with constant fear, misery, and hopelessness. The novel 1984 by George Orwell has to do with a world where truly living one's life as one sees fit is against the law. The procrastinator, Winston Smith is living in a life that he considers pointless, and by all standards, that is exactly what it was. Life is controlled by The Party, the ruling factor in Oceania, and they maintain control with two

way view screens in every person's house, keeping an eye on them. As the novel starts out, Winston has begun writing a journal, a highly illegal thing in itself; not only that but he was writing bad things about the party inside of it. Just as things could not get worse, Winston meets a girl named Julia. Of course the entire relationship has to remain in secrecy because if they were found out they would be put to death. As their relationship blossoms, they can never shake the fear of being found out, the fear of death, as well as the fear of being alone in the world. Even though they took all the precautions they could, Winston and Julia were eventually caught by the Thought Police and brought to the Ministry of Love, a truly frightening place. At first nothing is done to Winston, but eventually the torture inflicted on him was unimaginable. The Thought Police uses psychological means for torturing their victims, and the things that these people fear. Winston is incarcerated for a number of months, and the pure horror of the place is that they cannot kill one until one truly loves The Party and Big Brother (the leader of The Party). Since Winston could not grasp the truth of things, he was tortured until near death, let recover, and tortured again.

The final torture was entitled Room 101, which was pure fear to anyone who even heard another person being sentenced to it. The torture was to take the person's worst fear in the world, and use that to finally break them. Winston's fear was rats, and this caused him to collapse like a tower of cards in a gust of wind; Winston was changed, and certainly not for the better. At the end of the novel, Winston's fear is gone because there is nothing they can further do to him, he is to just live out his life till the day they feel it necessary to shoot him in the head and end it all. A place where the fear of

living is stronger than the fear of dying is a place that is not worth existing in, it would be better to simply end it all by one's own means. Through the material presented and the discussion done as the material was being presented the thesis aforementioned proves entirely true. That statement was that fear is an emotion that is prevalent throughout all genres, regardless of topic or plot. This statement proves true as one looks over all of the genres. Every author, playwright, poet, and film maker proves it by what they write and show the audience. The results of this research show that fear is an emotion easily manipulated and instilled through mere words on paper or pictures on a screen.

Since it is known that fear is impossible to control, it is a favorite of those writers to use to their advantage. As one looks through the different genres it becomes clear how widely used the emotion of fear is used, that all genres work in the same manner to bring about fear. A famous quote said that 'The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself.' and that may be true to some extent, but many people are just as afraid of an object or person as they are of the atmosphere they create. Sometimes people become more afraid simply by thinking of fear, not from fearing something, but simply being afraid in general; the fear of fear itself. Those who produce these novels, plays, short stories, poems, and films know what it takes, and things are not going to change anytime soon.