

POSTSECONDARY LEVEL

LESSON PLANS TO ACCOMPANY
“Dracula as a Foretelling of WWI”
by Genesea Carter



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1. When was the novel Dracula written? By whom?

2. When was World War I? Where was it fought? What was its cause?

3. What is the author’s thesis?

4. What does the author use as proof or support for her argument?



5. Name three parallels which the author draws between the fictional story of Dracula and the actual events of World War I.

5. *Godzilla* is frequently tied to Japan's experience of the nuclear bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Can you name another horror movie and identify similar ties it might have to the fears of its age?



6. To understand why horror stories scare us, we might find Sigmund Freud's view of how the mind is organized to be useful. According to Freud, the father of modern psychology, the mind can be divided into two main parts:

1. **The conscious mind**, which includes everything that we are aware of in our daily lives. This is the aspect of our mental processing that we can think and talk about rationally. A part of this includes our memory, which is not always part of consciousness but can be retrieved easily at any time and brought into our awareness. Freud called this ordinary memory the "preconscious".

2. **The unconscious mind**, which is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges, and memories that outside of our conscious awareness. Most of the contents of the unconscious are unacceptable or unpleasant -- feelings of pain, anxiety, or conflict. According to Freud, the unconscious continues to influence our behavior and experience, even though we are unaware of these underlying influences. These fears may arise in our dreams, or in stories that we tell and read.

Freud would say that the Dracula story taps into unconscious fears – anxieties that we may not be aware that we have.

You have a childhood fear. What is it? Does it recur in your dreams? Is it at all related to your adult life and adult fears?



7. a) What is a recurring nightmare of yours? Does it mean anything, or is it just stupid?

b) What is a waking fear you have? Is it (or are they) different from nightmares?

c) Do any movies actually scare you? Why do you find them scary? Is it because of your personal makeup, or just because they are well-made movies?



8. Name three movies with zombies in them. How are zombies different from Dracula? Are they less threatening or more threatening? Why? What cultural or shared fears might the current crop of zombie movies represent?

10. Please read the attached article about zombies.

a) What is its thesis?

b) What do you find to be the most useful point which the author makes?

c) Are there differences among zombie movies? If so, what are they? Is all this speculation about monster movies meaningless?



<http://blog.deeperquestions.com/blog/the-deeper-meaning-of-zombies/>

The Deeper Meaning of Zombies

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Dr. Mark Dillof

Have you noticed all the books, films and articles about zombies? (If not, you might be a zombie yourself!) There are bestsellers, such as *Pride, Prejudice, and Zombies* — a fictional retelling of Jane Austen’s classic novel — by Seth Grahame-Smith. There are also pseudo-nonfiction works, such as *The Zombie Survival Guide* by Max Brooks. There are websites devoted to zombies, an increasing number of films about zombie invasions, and scholarly conferences devoted to zombies. Is this obsession with zombies the obsession of a relatively few weird individuals or does it reflect something important about the national spirit of the times? I shall argue for the latter.

It’s true that the fascination with zombies is nothing new. But in regard to American culture and society, the key date is 1956. That’s when the cult classic, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, was released. Another seminal film was *Night of the Living Dead* (1968). Of course, today’s zombie literature is, to a large extent, tongue and cheek. But it’s been said that “Many a true word is said in jest.” Could it be that the recent spate of zombie books and films is a defense mechanism against **an underlying anxiety?**

Zombies threaten to possess one’s body and one’s mind. In regard to the latter, they threaten to eat one’s flesh, at least according to popular films about zombies. Other zombies can make one a zombie oneself, one of the walking dead! (In that sense, they are like vampires, for a bite by a vampire can transform one into a vampire.) The anxiety in question is of a paranoid quality, **for paranoia is, essentially, a fear of being possessed and thus losing one’s autonomy.** A related paranoid anxiety is that one’s borders will be violated, for if they are, one will lose the integrity of self, thus losing one’s autonomy.

There exists, in all human societies, many borders. One of the most fundamental is the border between the living and the dead. When that border is transgressed — whether it be by visitations from the spirit world or simply by memories of the deceased — we feel haunted. **Thus religious rites and rituals are**



created to ensure that the dead do not intrude upon the realm of the living. In zombie books and films, that is exactly what happens. Paranoid narratives often take the form of conspiracy theories and apocalyptic fantasies. The zombie apocalypse involves the emergence of the dead, thus “the night of the living dead.”

If the fear of zombies is prevalent today, it is because this is an age in which borders are being transgressed, on many fronts. Sometimes, borders are being literally transgressed, as in the case of the border between Mexico and the United States. Borders are also being transgressed socially. Traditional marriages are predicated on their existing limits on what can be regarded as a marriage. A marriage cannot, for example, consist of three people. Nor can it, for example, consist of the union of a human and an animal. The advocates of homosexual marriages seek to violate traditional limits. An example, in the economic realm, is socialism and communism. They seek to dissolve, by fiat, economic distinctions. Finally, such movements as diversity, multiculturalism, globalization are threatening to dissolve the identity of various nations.

Most relevant here is how the borders between the human and the inhuman are being transgressed. There are animal rights activists who claim that humans are guilty of “speciesism,” which consists of placing a higher value on human beings than other beings, whether they be animals, plants, or bacteria. Philosophers, like Peter Singer, view speciesism as morally equivalent to racism. Then there are the computer theorists who claim that humans are essentially no different than computers. They like to point to “Big Blue,” the IBM computer that defeated the Grand Master Gary Kasparov.

But that which makes human beings different from both other animals is not that humans can think, or it would appear that the computations of computers certainly resembles thinking and may indeed be thinking. Thinking is not essentially what distinguishes humans from both animals and computers. What distinguishes humans from everything else is self-consciousness. We have the amazing ability to reflect upon ourselves. The existence of human consciousness is being denied. In so doing, the border between the human and the nonhuman is being dissolved.

It has been said that “sometimes paranoids are right.” There, indeed, exists a nefarious effort to dissolve the fundamental distinctions, which limit and define the human realm, the realm of culture and civilization, and which make selfhood possible. Nightmarish tales of zombies stem from our fear of a reversion to the pre-human realm. **When essential borders are dissolved, and true selfhood is destroyed, we transform into mindless beings,** bereft of humanity, roaming the streets, seeking to feed on those who are still vibrant and alive. There lies the danger and that is the source of our anxiety about zombies.

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- Another example of this archetype can be found in the “Borg”, the most popular villains in the newer Star Trek series. Rather than eating flesh, however, they inject their victims with nanotechnology that subjugates the will. The Borg have no individual consciousness, belonging to a vast “hive-mind” which is in keeping with the thesis behind this article (ie the dissolution of boundaries).
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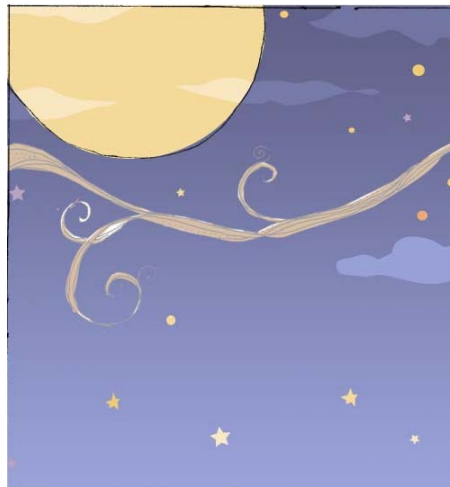
That is very interesting about the Borg! Yes, they are hellbent on assimilating everything into their organization, and its directives. In that sense, they are akin to a totality movement, like communism or radical Islam.

The Borg’s nano-technological implant is akin to the propaganda that is implanted in young minds today in schools: “You must believe in global warming. Al Gore is the prophet. Obama is the messiah. Resistance is futile! Resistance is futile!”

10. Please read the attached story, “The Right Hand of Doom,” by Robert E. Howard. You probably do not want to read this at night-time.

Is this story scary? Why or why not? What elements does it share with Dracula? Who should direct a short film of this? How would you rewrite or amplify this story if you were directing the movie “Right Hand of Doom”? Who would star in it?

300 words or more



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