

Monsters Among Us?



http://p6cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_2752615/File/Whats%20New/Monster-Mash.jpg

Monster Mash, A Graveyard Smash?
Monsters change in popular culture according to social and moral needs. Monsters exist as a construct to help us identify ourselves as “human” and warn us what happens if we forsake the company and moral compass of other human beings.

Humans belong to groups; monsters do not. Monsters in lore embody the unrestrained hate, anger, and envy that living in families and social groups teaches us to restrain.

Today, we will explore the concept of “monster” to learn how this term help us define our values and sometimes encourages us to discriminate against those who differ from us.

Working in groups of four or five, find an example of each of these “monsters,” and relate what you learn to three of the philosophers we have studied. You may refer to the Philosopher’s Chart on Blackboard to help you.



<http://raredelights.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Halloween-2.jpg>



<http://www.chicagonow.com/listing-beyond-forty/files/2013/10/halloween-graphic.jpg>

1. Compare a movie monster from before 1970 to one after 1990.

2. Find an urban legend monster.
3. Find a monster in a children’s book.
4. Find a good monster and an evil monster.
5. Find a human whose behavior earned him or her the label of “monster.”
6. Find a human who was called a “monster” unjustly.
7. Find a product that features a monster or several.
8. What do these monsters teach us about ourselves?
9. How might we relate three philosophers we’ve studied to lessons we learn about monsters?
10. Read Ellen Goodman’s article when you finish these tasks.

If Only the Killers Had Fangs

at http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2002-11-04/news/0211040185_1_monsters-monstrosity-ogre

By Ellen Goodman [November 4, 2002]

BOSTON -- It was a tame Halloween after all. The most popular costume on the market wasn't a super villain but an accidental superhero, Spider-Man. The small revelers on this death-defying holiday were dressed as angels.

I suppose the kids have had enough fear to go around this year. For weeks, there had been a boogeyman on the highways and on the news. Monsters had seemed far too real.

A sniper loomed over the landscape, growing in stature with every shooting. The analysts described him as a skilled marksman, a demonic genius, an intelligent and extraordinary serial killer. He declared himself "God" and warned, "Your children are not safe anywhere at any time."

Then just before Halloween, two "demonic geniuses" were found sleeping at a highway rest stop.

How quickly reality deflates our fantasy figures. John Allen Muhammad turned out to be, in the words of a *Washington Post* story, a "serial loser." Last week's monster was "an archfiend, beast, devil, ghoul, ogre." This week's suspect is a strutting man of failed marriages and failed business ventures and failed fatherhood. A loser with a young acolyte and a weapon.

This transformation seemed so familiar that I wonder why we create monsters to begin with. To match the monstrosity of the crime?

When the sniper suspects were caught, I remembered the day police broke into the Hamburg apartment where the terrorist, Mohamed Atta, had lived. All that remained of the Sept. 11 hijacker's life were some eggshells and onion skins.

It's not that sleeping makes snipers into ordinary folk, or that dining habits make terrorists kin to all the egg- and onion-eaters in the world. But such details brought the demons back to Earth, planting them firmly in the human species. Where, I am afraid, they belong.

Does this frighten us? Robert Precht, an assistant dean at the University of Michigan, is still "haunted" -- the word he chooses -- by the murderous clients that he represented in the 1993 World Trade Center bombings. You see, he says, "these were not programmed robots. These were not monsters."

He remembers with wonder when one of his murderous clients protested an unflattering profile in a local newspaper. It hurt the man's feelings, outraged his sense of fairness. As Mr. Precht learned more about his clients' background, families and motives, he says, "I was observing the evil and the human inexorably entwined."

Questions about entwined humanity and monstrosity run deep through our culture. In the modern fables created for children, fear is often defanged. The monsters in *Monsters, Inc.* are well-meaning workers misled into believing that the screams of children are needed for fuel. The ogre in *Shrek* is a slovenly loner who pre-empts his own expected rejection by vile behavior.

In the classic story for adults, even Frankenstein's monster is not without some poignant glimmer of humanity. He was created and wants to connect with people, yet he can't.

In real life, we know every serial killer is not a misunderstood child. Nor is every beast merely a waiting beauty. Maybe we resist "humanizing" a villain or a terrorist because we fear that understanding is accepting. We worry that recognizing the warped motives or the self-justifying ideology of a criminal would undermine justice.

But I also agree when Mr. Precht suggests that we turn sniper and terrorist into inhuman demons because "it is frightening to realize these people are not that different. ... We create these cartoons of evil to distance ourselves."

Children ask "why." Why did they fly the plane into the building? Why did they shoot those people at the gas station and the bus stop? Why?

As adults without answers, our instinct is to keep evil at arms' length. But time and again, the costume comes off. We don't find a monster, nor "God," nor "the devil," but a man who behaved monstrously.

When and why and how did another one of us cross the threshold? This question is the haunted house of our humanity.

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the **two-way**

AMERICA

Wisconsin Teen Sentenced To 40 Years In Mental Hospital For 'Slender Man' Stabbing

February 2, 2018 · 7:17 AM ET

SCOTT NEUMAN



Morgan Geyser leaves court after being sentenced to 40 years of institutional confinement at Winnebago Mental Health Facility.

Rick Wood/AP

A Wisconsin girl who pleaded guilty to stabbing a classmate as part of a bizarre attempt to gain favor with a fictional Internet character has been ordered committed to a mental institution for 40 years, the maximum penalty sought by prosecutors.

Morgan Geyser had pleaded guilty to attempted first-degree murder in the near-fatal stabbing of Payton Leutner. Geyser's cohort, Anissa Weier, pleaded guilty to being a party to the crime and was sentenced in December to 25 years in a mental institution. All three girls, including the victim, were 12 at the time of the stabbing.

Geyser and Weier, now teenagers, were tried as adults. Leutner survived the attack.

"I just want to let Bella and her family know that I'm sorry," a tearful Geyser said, using Leutner's nickname. "And I hope she's doing well."

The two girls apparently carried out the attack to impress a horror character known as Slender Man.

As member station WUWM in Milwaukee has reported, in the spring of 2014, Geyser and Weier lured Leutner to the woods in Waukesha, attacked her and left her to die.

WUWM writes:

"The victim was able to crawl from the site of the attack and flag down a bicyclist who came to her aid."

"Weier and ... Geyser said they planned the stabbing in order to please the Internet horror character Slender Man. Attorneys for Weier argued that she believed Slender Man would harm her family if she did not attack her classmate."



THE TWO-WAY

Teen Gets 25 Years In Mental Hospital In Wisconsin's 'Slender Man' Stabbing

Attorneys for Weier said she believed Slender Man would hurt her family if she did not go through with the attack on Leutner.

During testimony in October, Geyser cried as she told Judge Michael Bohren: "Anissa and I took [Leutner] in the forest and said that we were going to play hide-and-seek."

"Anissa said that she couldn't do it and that I had to," Geyser said, referring to the stabbing.

Bohren asked how Geyser carried out the attack, to which she replied: "I tackled her. I stabbed her."

Where? Bohren asked. "Everywhere," Geyser replied. How many times? "19."

"Anissa told her to lie down so she wouldn't lose blood so quickly, and told her to be quiet, and we left," Geyser said.

"slender man" stabbing

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