Horror Readers Advisory: How to Help Your Scariest Patrons

Presented by Becky Spratford
“Horror is not a genre like mystery or science fiction or the western. It is not a kind of fiction meant to be confined to the ghetto of a special shelf in libraries and book stores. Horror is an emotion.”

Douglas E. Winters in his introduction to *Prime Evil* (1988)
For me Horror is....

1. A favorite genre
2. It’s okay
3. I don’t like reading it myself but I know how to help those who do enjoy it

OR

4. I am barely holding it together simply participating in this webinar; I may run away in fear at any moment
The Scary Truth

Which genre(s) do you fear the most?

1. Science Fiction
2. Christian Fiction
3. Westerns
4. Horror

#WeHaveAppeal NovelList RA for All
Now you can pick a new genre to be scared of:
- State of Horror Today [including current trends]
- Appeal of Horror
- Need to Know Authors
- Horror Resources
- Becky’s Tips and Tricks Scattered Throughout
Evolution of Horror in Print

- Slow to gain legitimacy but now a bestselling phenomenon
- We will be focusing on Modern Horror as it is enjoyed by readers today
What is Horror?

“Horror is a story in which the author manipulates the reader's emotions by introducing situations in which unexplainable phenomena and unearthly creatures threaten the protagonists and provoke terror in the reader.”

-Becky Spratford
Bare minimum
- Must create a sense of dread in the reader.
- Must be speculative
  - some will not be happy if science fiction is involved though
- The speculative, scary thing must be the thing causing the dread, fear, and chills
WHAT IS NOT HORROR

- Paranormal
- Serial Killers
- Supernatural Thrillers
- Traditional Monsters Revolt
ZOMBIES = HORROR? NOT ALWAYS...

Horror

Not Horror

NATE KENYON

Finalist for the Bram Stoker Award and author of The Bone Factory

SPARROW ROCK

“A voice reminiscent of Stephen King in the days of Slevin’s Lot” – Cemetery Dance

FEED

MIRA GRANT

THE GOOD NEWS: WE SURVIVED.
The BAD NEWS: SO DID THEY.
The Lure of the Dark Side

- Best defined by Stephen King in *Danse Macabre* (1981)
- Don’t be scared. Horror readers are not monsters, they just like to read about them.
- Do not underestimate how much people LOVE being scared.
- Horror is an emotion.
APPEAL FACTORS

● Tone and Mood: provokes terror, gives voice to our fears, uneasy atmosphere
● Characters we care about
● Pacing: steady build to frantic conclusion
● Style and Language
  ○ Lots of adjectives but still frank and colloquial
  ○ Can be quirky to build unease
  ○ Flashbacks common
• **Storyline: Common themes and issues**
  ○ Speculative
  ○ Coming-of-Age
  ○ Safe exploration of the dark side of humanity
  ○ Place where readers can face own fears
  ○ Provides escape from life’s real horrors
  ○ Validates a belief on the supernatural

• **Frame and Setting: Vary**
POSSIBLE HORROR LIMITERS

- Populated by supernatural monsters or elements
- Graphic Violence, strong language, and explicit sex are possible
- Especially with more recent titles- no character is safe
- Open but generally resolved ending
THE NEW HEADS OF HORROR

- **Joe Hill**
  - Novels, graphic novels, short stories
  - Start with: *NOS4A2*

- **Jonathan Maberry**
  - Novels, speculative thrillers series, zombie YA series, comics, movie-tie ins, and nonfiction
  - Start with: *Rot and Ruin*
OLD GUARD

- Stephen King (The Shining)
- Peter Straub (Ghost Story)
- Ramsey Campbell (Nazareth Hill)
MUST KNOW NAMES FOR PUBLIC LIBRARY COLLECTIONS [2017]

- Brian Keene
- Christopher Golden
- Paul Tremblay
- Ania Ahlborn
- Mary SanGiovanni
- Stephen Graham Jones
- Adam Nevill
- Kaaron Warren
- John Langan

- Victor LaValle
- Josh Malerman
- Jonathan Janz
- Isaac Marion
- Thomas Olde Heuvelt
- Sarah Pinborough
- Ellen Datlow [editor]
- Nick Cutter
- Grady Hendrix
FIVE TITLES TO READ RIGHT NOW

These recent novels best showcase why Horror is a good option for a wide range of readers. Most links go to my review:

1. **Bird Box** by Josh Malerman
2. **Children of the Dark** by Jonathan Janz
3. **Head Full of Ghosts** by Paul Tremblay
4. **Behind Her Eyes** by Sarah Pinborough
5. **Hex** by Thomas Olde Heuvelt
Horror Resources

I have you covered:

- RA for All Horror which includes news, original reviews, lists, resources, author interviews etc…
- My regular reviews in Booklist
- Library Journal 2x a year column

- The Horror Writers Association
- This Is Horror - reviews, podcast, weekly rundown
- Author websites and newsletters
Final Fears

Current trends:
- Horror is creeping into every genre
  - Even book clubs aren’t immune
  - Don’t forget TV and Movies
- Lovecraft [and not just horror titles]
- Series and linked worlds
- Indie publishers thriving
  - But BEWARE!- authors move around
- Short Stories, Novellas, and Audio
- Podcasts- both original content AND about the genre
- No one is safe
WHY WE NEED HORROR

“Readers love fantasy, but we need horror. Smart horror. Truthful horror. Horror that helps us make sense of a cruelly senseless world.”

--Author Brian K. Vaughan in the introduction to Locke and Key Volume 3 (2010) by Joe Hill and Gabriel Rodriguez
I CAN HOLD YOUR HAND

Training Librarians To Help Leisure Readers
Since 2004
Through Your Local Public Library

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