

THEME 2

Horror Films



Learning objectives

- Reflect on the success of the horror genre
- Develop your speaking & listening skills
- Build up your range of adjectives
- Improve your vocabulary related to this topic

Final task

Present an idea for your own horror film

I. Introduction

1. What is your horror score?

Work in teams of four. Follow your teacher's instructions for the quiz.

2. Talking about horror films

a. Listen to the audio and answer these questions:

1. What is the speaker's opinion of horror films?
2. What type of scene makes him uncomfortable?
3. What type of horror film scares him the most?
4. What sometimes happens while they are watching a horror film?
5. What is his girlfriend scared of?

b. Vocabulary & expressions

Match the words from the audio with their definitions or synonyms on the left.

1	Scaredy-cat	Bloody, horrible
2	Squeamish	Shock or frighten you very suddenly
3	Gory	Troubling, disturbing
4	Gives me the heebie-jeebies	Sinister, haunted
5	Unsettling	Terrified of
6	Send shivers down my spine	Make me nervous
7	Spooky	Receive an unpleasant surprise
8	Creepy	A person who is easily frightened
9	Put me on edge	Trembling violently with fear or nervousness
10	Scare you half to death	Make me feel very frightened or excited
11	Jump out of our skins	Causing a feeling of horror or fear
12	Petrified of	Easily nauseated or disgusted
13	She was shaking like a leaf	Makes me feel uncomfortable / disgusted

c. Listen to the audio once more with the transcript.

d. Do you like scary movies?

Tell your team members how you feel about horror films.

Try to use some of the expressions from the audio and the language box below.

Personalising	Showing interest
For me personally, ...	Uh-huh.
Speaking personally, ...	That's interesting/weird.
From my point of view, ...	Oh, I see.
When it comes to (scary movies), I think...	Right.
Speaking of (scary movies), in my opinion...	Totally/absolutely.
I find (gory movies) really (terrifying)	I see what you mean.
I find (psychological horror movies) much/ far scarier than (gory movies)	I'm exactly the same.
	Uh-uh, not me.
	No way!
	You're joking.

e. In your opinion, how can we explain the popularity of the horror genre?

Share your ideas with your group members and take notes.

Add your comments to the class notepad on Coursus.

II. The Early Days of Horror

Use the words below to fill the blanks in the text.

throughout - devices - running - Hunchback - screen - monster - frighten
motion - atmosphere - cauldrons - dealing - paved - legend - produced - era

The first horror narrative on record is *Le Manoir du Diable* (1896), created by the visionary Georges Méliès. Although it has a _____ time of a little over three minutes, this supernatural story still manages to pack in the genre paradigms. Bats, devils, witches, _____, skeletons, ghosts and goblins all appear and disappear in puffs of smoke. It was the first movie to deliberately use special effects to _____ its viewers. Méliès continued to dominate as master of the spook tale through the 1900s. He invented camera modifications and _____ to help bring his fantastical visions to the _____ and is believed to be responsible for many special effects firsts: split screen, double exposure, overlapping dissolves, fades in and out, and stop _____ photography.

Horror films of the early 20th century were influenced by German Expressionist cinema where the effect of horror was usually created by means of a macabre _____ and theme. *The Student of Prague* (1913), an early German film _____ with a dual personality, and *The Golem* (1915), based on the medieval Jewish _____ of a clay figure that comes to life, were the first influential horror films. In the 1920s, such German films as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), *Nosferatu* (the first filming of the Dracula story in 1922), and *Waxworks* (1924) were known _____ the world. In the United States a number of outstanding horror films were _____ in the 1920s. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1920) became a classic of the silent screen, and Lon Chaney terrified audiences as *The _____ of Notre Dame* (1923) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925).

Once the silent _____ had given way to technological progress, we had a glut of incredible movies that _____ the way for generations to come, particularly in the field of _____ movies - the second iteration of *Frankenstein* (1931), *The Mummy* (1932) and the first colour adaptation of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931). The 30s also marked the first time in the industry that the word "horror" was used to describe the genre - previously, it had just been considered romance melodrama with a dark element.

III. The Golden Age

Video 1

1. Answer the following questions:

a. Which events or developments lead to expressionist cinema in Western Europe?
(4 items)



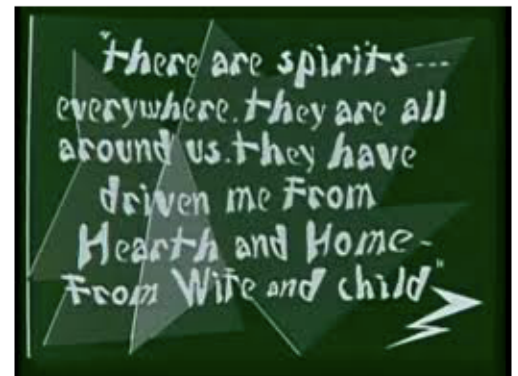
b. Expressionism used set design and cinematography to _____
_____.

c. How did *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* revolutionise horror films?



d. Fill in the gaps.

This was followed by *The Phantom of the Opera* in 1925 and *The Man Who _____*, starring German expressionist actor Conrad Veidt, in 1927. Universal horror would _____ in the 1930s. Movies were now well into the talking era and Universal exploited this to the fullest with two massive _____ in 1931 - *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. These two films _____ the _____ for modern horror movies and _____ in an age of big-budget monster movies.



2. Study the visuals on this page. Comment on the aesthetics of German expressionism and their effect.

Video 2

1. Pre-listening activity

You will hear the words below in the next video. How do you pronounce them?
Can you identify the stressed syllable in each one?

Stressed syllable dictionary notation / ' /

That **syllable** is considered to be the **stressed syllable**. The vowel sound of the **stressed syllable** is emphasized by being pronounced longer, louder, and often at a higher pitch than the surrounding **syllables**.

released - embodiment - neglect - aftermath - atomic
communism - duplicates - naked - psycho - political

Stress pattern	Words
Oo	
oO	
Ooo	
oOo	
Oooo	
oOoo	

2. Watch the video and answer the following questions.

- The appeal of horror movies with monsters lies in their ability to _____
_____ and transform them into _____.
- Frankenstein* was released during...
- Why is Frankenstein seen as the embodiment of millions of Americans?

- d. The monsters on screen allowed audiences to...
- e. What was terrifying Americans in the 1950s? (2 items)
- f. Monsters such as Godzilla or the supersize ants in *Them* embodied...
- g. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is said to be inspired by... (2 items)
- h. The 1 _____ v _____ b _____ - _____ screams of Janet Leigh.
- i. Alfred Hitchcock introduced audiences to...
- j. Which 1960s events are mentioned and what did they expose?
- k. Fill in the gaps.

This film was made before the _____ system went into effect and shown during the Saturday _____, which meant that young children were in the audience and probably _____. Considered one of the most violent and bloody horror films of its time, it also set box office records proving that _____ the gore and terror of being besieged by _____-_____, people enjoy the escape from, or perhaps the parallels to, modern day life and _____ in America.

3. Discussion

Director John Carpenter once said 'horror is a reaction, it's not a genre'. Comment on this statement. To what extent do you agree?

IV. Subgenres of Horror

Match the descriptions and examples with their subgenre.

Subgenre	Descriptions	Examples
Psychological horror	1. Also called splatter films, they zero in on the vulnerability of the human body, often with frequent close-ups.	a. • Halloween • A Nightmare on Elm Street • Friday the 13th
Slasher	2. Portrayed as if it were “discovered” by the filmmakers rather than created by them.	b. • The Fly • The Thing • Teeth
Gore	3. Relies on mental and emotional fear, rather than violence or monsters, focusing on characters’ states of mind throughout the story.	c. • Night of the Living Dead • Godzilla • The Mummy
Body horror	4. Similar to monster horror, but focuses on the monsters we can’t touch—supernatural entities like ghosts, spirits, and demons. Often feature haunted houses, possession, exorcism, or occult worship.	d. • The Blair Witch Project • Cloverfield • Creep
Comedy horror	5. Capitalize on the fear of the unknown by featuring frightening creatures from science fiction and dark fantasy. Werewolves, vampires, aliens are often the main antagonists.	e. • The Shining • The Silence of the Lambs • Psycho
Found footage	6. Features scenes of the human body that has been severely altered.	f. • The Conjuring • The Amityville Horror • Poltergeist
Monster horror	7. Doesn’t always leave your skin crawling - aims to make you laugh at the same time.	g. • The Evil Dead • Saw • Braindead
Paranormal horror	8. This subgenre usually focuses on a serial killer as they go after a group of people.	h. • Scream • The Cabin in the Woods • Tucker and Dale vs. Evil

V. Language Focus - Order of Adjectives

1. Read the rules below.

The general order of adjectives before a noun is the following:

Opinion	Size	Shape	Condition	Age	Colour	Pattern	Origin	Material	Purpose	Noun
ugly	small	thin	dirty	old	red	striped	Italian	cotton	sleeping	bag
beautiful	--	long	--	--	white	--	French	silk	wedding	dress
--	large	--	broken	ancient	--	--	Greek	clay	flower	vase

OPINION Attitude / Observations

delicious, lovely, nice, cool

SIZE Size / Height

big, small, tall, huge, tiny

SHAPE Shape / Weight / Length

round, square, long, fat

CONDITION Condition / State

clean, wet, rich, hungry

AGE How old is it?

old, young, new, antique

COLOUR

Colour / Approximate Colour

green, blue, reddish, purple

PATTERN

Pattern / Design

spotted, checked, flowery, zigzag

ORIGIN

Where is it from?

American, British, Arabic, Turkish

MATERIAL

What is it made of?

gold, wooden, plastic, synthetic

PURPOSE

What is it used for?

gardening, shopping, riding

2. Place the adjectives in the correct order.

- They entered the (forest / large / terrifying / dark).
- The path lead to a(n) (green / cabin / wooden / abandoned / tiny).
- She peeped through the (oval / small / window / cracked).
- Starving zombies ate the (flesh / raw / disgusting / red).
- They hid under the (cover / striped / blue / duvet).
- We watched a(n) (horror / amazing / film / German / old).
- The ugly witch held out the (green / apple / round / mouth-watering).
- I visited a(n) (ancient / castle / spooky / Transylvanian).
- Inside the box, she found a(n) (wedding / silver / antique / beautiful / ring).
- He chased them with a (chopping / sharp / knife / huge).

3. Watch the trailer and write three sentences about the film using suitable adjectives.



VI. Popularity of Horror Explained

Why do we Crave Horror Movies? Science Shows a Head Trip with Surprising Benefits

David DiSalvo for [forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com), Oct 28, 2018

What is it exactly that makes us seek out the scary – is it just a subjective preference for the macabre, or could biology play a role? Horror-movie hunting does indeed have a biochemical dimension, and paradoxically it's every bit as positive as the movies are horrific – at least for those of us who dig the experience. Research has found that willing exposure to that which scares us can provide a counterbalance to life's stresses. It may also be an effective way to undermine anxiety, and even bolster our resilience.

A handful of theories offer explanations why. One is what I'll call the controlled-environment theory, which says that when we watch scary movies, we're intentionally triggering our fight-or-flight response in an environment where we control the variables. This theory is similar to the thinking behind exposure therapy, sometimes used to treat phobias. The more we experience anxiety triggers in a controlled way, the thinking goes, the more we're able to deal with our anxiety-responses in the world.

Another possibility is that scary movies foster “good stress.” Even though stress poses plenty of problems in our lives, research has shown that manageable bouts of stress offer some benefits, like generating an immune response that strengthens the immune system against bigger threats. It may be that watching horror flicks is like giving ourselves small stress injections that catalyze resilience. In fact, a small study investigated the effects of watching horror movies on the immune system and found a significant link.

Yet another thought is that it's not so much the specific content of scary movies that matters, but more the memories associated with watching them. Many of us recall how old we were, where we were, and who we were with when we first saw *The Exorcist*, or *Halloween* (or insert your favorite here) – and there's some comfort in the recollection of how we faced our fear. And since those experiences with iconic horror tend to generate lots of chats with friends over time, they offer social-bonding benefits that also counterbalance anxiety.

In the shorter-term effects category, evidence suggests that watching horror movies elevates mood, at least for those seeking the experience. This theory features prominently in a book entitled, *Scream: Chilling Adventures in the Science of Fear*, written by fear researcher Margee Kerr, who also delivered a TED talk on the subject. The bottom line of this theory – and it appears decently demonstrated in the science – is that watching scary movies temporarily floods the nervous system with a cocktail of neurotransmitters and hormones, from dopamine to adrenaline, yielding mild, mood-boosting euphoria. The effect isn't unlike what many people seek from riding roller-coasters. Another part of this response, Kerr says, comes from our sense of accomplishment from enduring the worst scares a movie-maker can throw at us. Like achieving any goal, the good feels arise from knowing we did it.

All of these benefits, however, only appear to materialize if we're open to the experience. For those who are not, the results could easily go the other way. And for some people that won't mean just an immediate increase in anxiety, but potentially a residual one as well – and that's not going to help anyone.

Practice Reading Comprehension

Before you begin, add line numbers to the article.

1. Find a word in the text for each definition.

Definition or synonym		Word from the text
a.	A small number or quantity of something	
b.	An informal word for films or movies	
c.	Synonym of however	
e.	Synonym of remember	
f.	An aim or objective	

2. Say if the following statements are true or false according to the article.

- a. Margee Kerr states that watching horror films releases chemicals in our brain that can have a negative impact on our mood.

T ☐ F ☐ Line(s): _____

Quote:

- b. According to the article, some people can suffer long-term anxiety as a result of watching horror films.

T ☐ F ☐ Line(s): _____

Quote:

- c. The *Scream* slasher films were inspired by a book written by Margee Kerr.

T ☐ F ☐ Line(s): _____

Quote:

- d. Researchers have found that experiencing stress in small doses can have some advantages for our health.

T ☐ F ☐ Line(s): _____

Quote:

3. Reformulate these expressions in your own words:

- a. *'at least for those of us who dig the experience.'* (Line 4)

- b. *'the good feels arise from knowing we did it.'* (Lines 35-36)

4. Language focus

- a. Identify the tense underlined: *'Research has found that'* (Line 4)

- b. Explain why it is used in this sentence.

- 5. Explain in your own words what the author calls *'the controlled-environment theory'*. (Paragraph 2)**

VII. Final task - Coming to a cinema near you!

Your task

- In **groups of four**, you will present ideas for your own horror film
- Speaking time is **1m30 - 2 mins per person** (total presentation time = 8 mins maximum!)
- You must **include a visual** (slides, poster or sketch for example)
- You may have some notes but **you cannot read a text**

Instructions

- Create a **shared document** (Framapad, Google Doc for example) for your group
- **Brainstorm ideas** for a horror film and take notes on your document
- Agree on an appropriate **structure** for your presentation
- Decide **who will present each part**
- **Practise** (before the day of the oral) to check pronunciation, intonation and timing!