

# Horror (Genre) in the Classroom: The Power and Applicability of Popular Culture Metaphors and Analogies for Information Literacy Instruction

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## Introduction

• How do we **connect with students**? Often by **analogies**. Popular **narrative genres** can provide a shared vocabulary, and sometimes we run a **thematic thread** throughout **library instruction** sessions in order to **strengthen the experience**. Consider the example of horror and its archetypal monsters, on page and on the screen.

• *Frankenstein* is a rich tale, replete with **gatekeepers**, **hidden knowledge**, **misunderstanding**, and **disciplinary strife**, to say nothing of the complexities of **gender**, both in the story and in Mary Shelley's life. All provide fodder for analogies.

• *Dracula* likewise offers good material. From conflicting **systems of knowledge** to the value of **documentation**, from conducting **local research** to working within **systems of authority**, ideas recur in Bram Stoker's novel that fit the library classroom.

## Frankenstein



### It's alive!

- Moment when first successes/light bulbs happen
- Limbs start to move

### It's run amok!

- Fear of databases getting out of control
- Fear of projects, systematic failures

### Fear of the unknown (record)

- What happens when you find something that radically alters your research?
- Research as a process: don't destroy the monster, rebuild it

### Find your Igor

- Ready helpers, like librarians
- For every Monster, a Monster Hunter or Monster

### FrankenSTEIN, not FrankenSTEEN

- Treat the topic with due respect
- ...unless levity is needed

### Bodies of the dead!

- Uncoordinated at first, but all one monster
- Composite, assembled over time

### Torches and Pitchforks

- Bad sources
- Academic misconduct

### Building the Bride

- Need to connect with other activities
- One project will generate another

### Not just medicine, but alchemy!

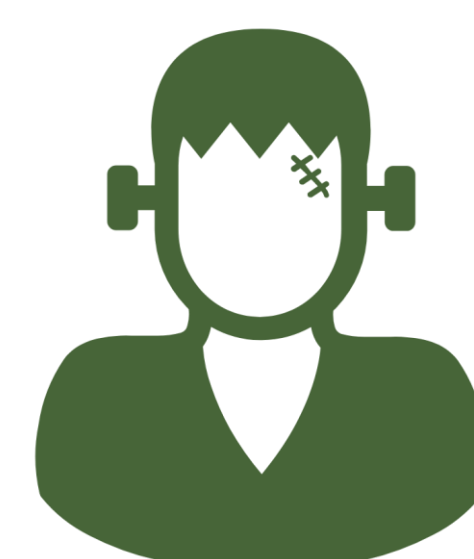
- Curiosity about other fields
- Combining old ideas to create new ones

### Harness the lightning

- Searching for relevance
- The moment when you find the perfect source

### The terror of ugliness

- Some monsters take time to develop
- Some drafts take time, start ugly



## Dracula



### Children of the night

- In the dark... when you aren't watching...
- Disappearing content! Software updates! Evolving controlled vocabularies!

### Garlic

- Use citation management software
- Multiple backups

### Siren song

- Keywords
- Using familiar, but incorrect styles

### Vampire hunters

- Team approach
- Different strengths

### Hypnotizing gaze

- Using citation management software
- Multiple backups

### Shape-changing

- Persistent problems with...
  - getting full text
  - Broken citations
  - False hits
  - Misleading titles, abstracts
  - Fake solid research (citation logrolling)
- Print vs. digital

### Slow infection...

- Building on bad premises
- Not thinking broadly/interdisciplinarily

### Rats and other minions

- Markers of academic legitimacy
- Predatory journals

### The vampire's castle

- Browse the ominous shelves!
- Dare to explore the dungeons of microfilm!



## Many Monsters

• Which to use? Consider your context and your students. What do they watch or read? What fits your institution?

- Cryptids like Bigfoot
- Dragons like the Hydra
- Aliens like the Greys
- Shapeshifters like the Werewolf



## For your nightstand

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- Wisker, G. (2005). *Horror fiction: An introduction* (Continuum studies in literary genre). New York: Continuum.

## Gratitude

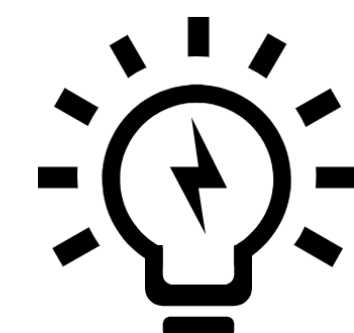
- Our supervisor, **Bettina Peacemaker**, for encouraging us to pursue an IL topic that intersected with our personal interests.
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## Benefits for Learners

Information Overload



The "A-Ha" Moment



Memorable Class Experience



Easy In-Class Image Contexts



VCU Libraries