
The Aspects Of Fear In Beloved And Dracula

Fear can be described in many ways, whether it is out of supernatural experiences, haunting or fear suffered by characters in a book. The topic of fear is depicted by the authors in both *Beloved* and *Dracula*. Fear in each of the texts can be fuelled by the reader's interpretation or within the author's objectives to create a perception of fear for the reader to feel.

One aspect of fear in '*Beloved*', is depicted through the idea that *Beloved* is a genuine reincarnation of Sethe's daughter, *Beloved*. The character comes across as a supernatural entity in the novel, which could be the cause of fear starting to unravel. It can be argued that *Beloved* is Sethe's daughter as, when *Beloved* is discovered, she is fragile and sick. However, she is seen to have superior strength, "I seen her pick up the rocker with one arm". The imagery produced here suggests that *Beloved* has power beyond her realistic abilities, regardless of the concept that she "acts sick, sounds sick". The repetition of the word sick allows Morrison to stress the concept of *Beloved* being unwell and thus she must be weak too. Morrison allows it to grow into an important point to focus upon so that the reader can see the juxtaposition in *Beloved* being "sick" and "weak", but still being capable of raising a rocking chair with one arm. This proves *Beloved* to be somewhat supernatural and these themes being established could spark a great sense of fear for the reader with concern to the safety of the other characters, since they are residing with *Beloved*, who may not necessarily be human. Thus, supports the idea that *Beloved*, is, in fact, a re-embodiment of Sethe's late daughter whose main priority is to haunt or create fear to the additional characters. These supernatural themes are like that of those cast by Bram Stoker in his text, '*Dracula*'. In this novel, the supernatural themes are conducted through the arrival of Johnathan Harker at *Dracula's* castle.

This is where it begins to be clear that Harker is a 'prisoner' within *Dracula's* castle. Harker's lack of control and dominance when in the presence of *Dracula*, installs a sense of panic and fear within the reader. His diary entries being the 'narrator' within the novel further allows us to fully understand the anxiety in which Harker is feeling. The fear of the 'unknown' is what drives Harker to be curious of *Dracula's* 'inhuman' actions and attributes, "I have not seen the Count eat or drink" and Harker not seeing "him in the mirror" casts a lasting feeling of uncertainty for the longevity Johnathan's character. Bram Stoker's repetitive imagery of the count acting strangely inevitably leads to the anagnorisis of Harker and Van Helsing realising *Dracula* is a vampire, this insight further instils fear within the characters as they are still are unaware of the counts' capabilities, being of a supernatural nature.

A lot of fear produced in '*Beloved*' is through Sethe and Paul D coming to terms with their harrowing reminiscences of abuse, as a result of slavery. The significance of the past is essential to the text, with the majority of the themes of fear being generated through the memories that the characters remember. The tone helps to enforce this through the continuous switch between characters perspectives, flashbacks of the past provide different perspectives of fear within each character, and how they act upon these emotions. Morrison often makes it clear that the characters have not come to terms with their traumatic pasts, as this is shown by the memories being eluded to but never stated or spoken about, much like in *Dracula*, in which again, issues are eluded to but never specifically deal with, one occasion being the arrival of Johnathan to the castle. He endures with what appears to be a serious case of amnesia, as he

alleges, "if I had been fully awake, I must have noticed the approach to such a remarkable place". Not only is Jonathan sceptical of whether he noticed his approach or not, but he implies that he is uncertain of whether this was a result of a hallucination or actual memory loss. Harker's disregard for the seriousness of this event could be a result of the fear installed with the knowledge of knowing the count's capabilities, however, the lack of acknowledgement is what ultimately leads them to undermine Dracula's supernatural power by the end of the novel.

The idea of sin is widely present in both novels, the characters' awareness of the sins committed in the past could be a powerful force for why they are so fearful in the present day. As fear is made a clear theme for Sethe's past, it can be argued that the physical embodiment of Beloved 'haunts' Sethe in the present. The victim of her infanticide leads to the arrival of her deceased child later in her life. Despite the tragic death of her children, it was a sacrifice of her maternal instincts, she couldn't let her children endure the torture and suffering she was faced with at sweet home. To Sethe, the fear of watching her children become slaves was equal, if not more painful than to murder them, this highlights the daily torment the "60 million and more" endured. Similarly, in 'Dracula', the character of Lucy Westenra commits acts of murder against young children whilst under the supernatural power of the count. Even though Lucy is unaware of the acts she's committing, the characters observing her sinful acts present a sense of fear as they are aware of the amount of dominating power Dracula could potentially have over them. Witnessing a once innocent individual, such as Lucy, commit acts "unclean and full of hell-fire", obliterates any lasting hope they had for salvaging her soul from eternal damnation. Furthermore, it can be argued that Lucy was a sacrifice to Dracula as she conveyed the sexual desires of a 'New Woman' and was killed as punishment for the betrayal of the Victorian ideal. The New Woman in the Victorian era would not be dependent on men for survival, not only does this contradict Lucy's character at the start of the novel where it's seen she seeks the approval of men, evident of "three proposals in one day", but is extremely ironic as by the end she's dependant on Dracula's vampiric power to remain surviving. Readers of the Victorian era would despise Lucy for her in conformity to women's societal standards, however, as of the modern era, women are no longer seen as objects of men, therefore Lucy would be portrayed as a revolutionary female of the 21st century

To conclude, the authors of both novels use fear to create a sense of identity, while Stokers characters move voluntarily towards authority as an outlet for repressed fear, Morrison presents characters that suppress their past as a result of induced anxiety. Both authors see fear as highly representative, both psychologically, socially and morally, which is reflected in the damage triggered by emotions.