

*Horror: the Soul of the Plot, Part One*

By Elizabeth J. Tenney, CRDL Reference Associate

*"That motley drama oh, be sure*

*It shall not be forgot!*

*With its Phantom chased for evermore*

*By a crowd that seize it not,*

*Through a circle that ever returneth*

*To the self-same spot;*

*And much of Madness, and more of Sin,*

*And Horror the soul of the plot."*

*-Edgar Allen Poe, excerpt from "Conqueror Worm" (1843)*

Scared of the dark? Things going bump in the night? Odd howling noises outside your door? Spooky fog makes the cemetery across the street a little creepy? Ah ha! You've been reading too many of the library's wide range of horror fiction and grisly true crime novels!

Horror fiction has a long, dark history and has fed the masses chills and shivers for centuries. From the oral traditional stories of ghosts and the supernatural told around communal fires to the modern tales from the insidious dark side of humankind, we still enjoy a good scare now and then. The literary genre began with the gothic novels of the 18th century in western Europe, like *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole and Johann von Goethe's *Faust*, and spread to America with such notable authors as Washington Irving, who generated *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.

Edgar Allen Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Ambrose Bierce carried the tradition into the 19th century. Poe wrote short stories of madmen and killers, where Hawthorne penned stories that explored the dark recesses of the troubled human psyche. Bierce's later work is populated with the twisted exploits of aliens, demons and monsters. The high adventure author Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the short story *The Body-Snatchers*

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and the novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, about a mild mannered Dr. who invents a potion that turns him into a psychopathic monster. Of course, two master works of 19th century literature that include elements of suspense and terror are *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde.

Stephen King and Dean Koontz had to come from somewhere, didn't they? Read the originals that inspired the scariest stories you've ever read! Part Two of *Horror: the Soul of the Plot* will talk about the Horror genre in the 20th century and the latest entries on the Best Seller lists, so be sure to read your Library's column every week in the Morning Sun. Horror can be the soul of your plot by checking out your Library this weekend!

Be sure to mark these special events that will take place at CRDL Libraries this month. At Veteran's Memorial Library, the popular program for kids, sponsored by the Mt. Pleasant Kennel Club, Tale Waggers starts Monday, October 13th. If your children like to practice their reading skills and love dogs, this program is for them! For information or to sign up children of any age see the helpful folks at the Children's Reference Desk. Also, at the Faith Johnson Memorial Library, Master Cake and Confection maker, Beth Trevorrow will be leading a demonstration and practice session for anyone wanting to try their hand at cake decorating on Thursday, October 23rd from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Join us for some fun @ Your Library!