

Ah, yes it is Halloween night and isn't it a spooky time! *Gasp* Someone's at the door! Oh, just some trick or treaters. Are you scared yet? *Sigh* For the past six years I've done nothing for Halloween. At most I'll go for a run and then that will be my night. Maybe that's usual for most of you, maybe you are spending your night likewise with me, writing up your blogs, but sometimes I wonder what was lost. Who knows, but this year to reconcile those years I've done more than those past six years combined for Halloween and that is something to celebrate. This year I'm creating a **Halloween Spooktacular!** Discussing and comparing the classics and originators of much of the horror genre to date: *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*.



Frankenstein



In the comedy world, this is known as a callback.

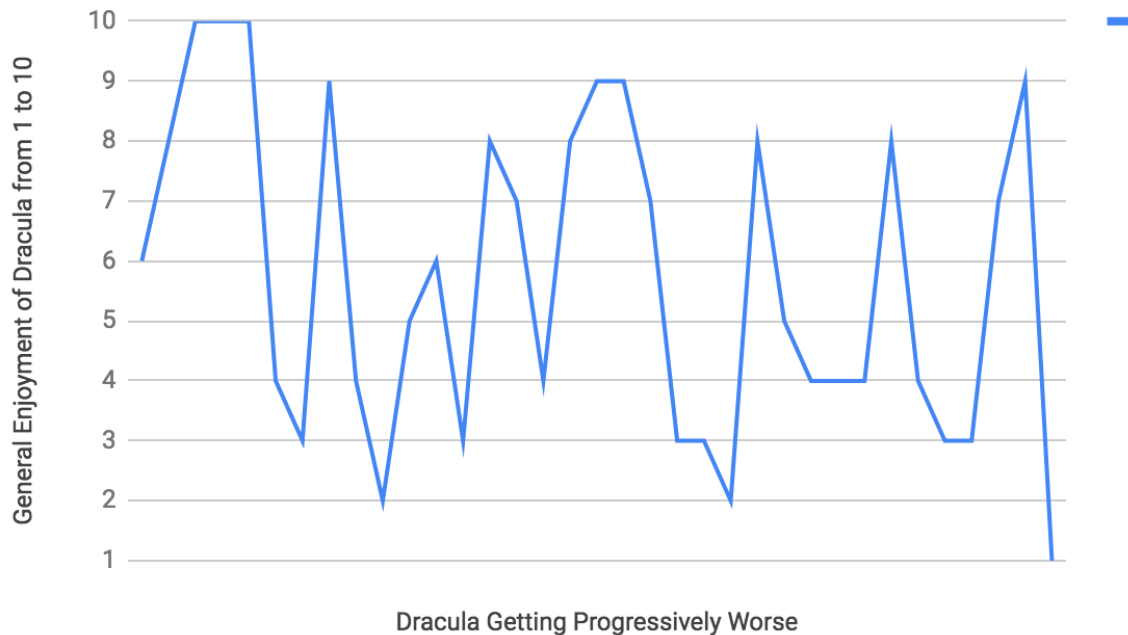
Openings:

Ahem, so to kick off our **Halloween Spooktacular** with a bang, let's kick off with a (pardon the slang) bangin' opening -- *Dracula*. It begins with a novel way of telling the story, through journals, newspaper clippings, and letters. It adds to the horror, but the author, Bram Stoker, doesn't really allow it to reach its full potential. Whatever, I'll get to that when I get to it, now, back to this horrifyingly awesome opening. It follows Jonathan Harker making a trip to Transylvania to inform a buyer, a Mr. Dracula, to conclude his real estate transaction in England and the environment and ramifications of that purchase. While making the trip, people are in hysterics when learning of his destination. They warn him, give him crucifixes, and other charms against evil. Harker amounts this to outdated superstition, although he can't help but feel a little bit unsettled. Eventually, Dracula makes it to the castle and is impressed by Dracula's gracious and courteous manners. However, he can't help but notice that a few things are off. There are no mirrors in the entire manor. Dracula says he will be served his meals by a servant, however, Harker can't imagine that any other person lives here. Harker never sees Dracula eat. And after an incident with Dracula, he begins to apprehend his dire situation. Nearly all the doors are bolted, with the only exits being a steep drop. Harker goes on to realize that there is no escape for him and Dracula's malicious intent to dispose of him. Harker can't allow this evil to escape to London, and thus while attempting his escape, with the might of Zeus, slams a shovel into Dracula's chest while he's sleeping. It has no effect. **Spooks. Dismay. Uneasiness. True Horror.**

It's a shame that it never reaches that level again for the whole book. After that dramatic and well-composed intro, you know what it goes into? A woman being proposed to by three people on the same day. But why do I care! I was just following someone escaping from Dracula's manor with the matter of life or death and now you transfer to this! Two women exchanging letters talking about relationships and their prospective husbands. With one of them also talking about how she is trying to journal her life and therefore feels the need to enumerate the reasons

why. What a buzzkill! Here, just to add a little something special, *and to keep up with Brandon's infographics*, here's a graph to elucidate my general enjoyment.

My Enjoyment of Dracula



Those first sixty pages could've just been the book (or maybe just a short story) and I would've left the book more satisfied than when I read it in full. It got close with rising tension in areas and experimenting with the fear of the unknown, but that never lasted long enough.

I must disclose before talking about *Frankenstein*, it is one of my top ten books. It doesn't really incite the horror like *Dracula* does, but I love the story and the themes presented in the novel. Little do people know, that *Frankenstein* opens not with following a scientist embarking on unexplored areas of science, but it opens with Victor Frankenstein being picked up by a person obsessed with heading as far north as possible for glory. Dr. Frankenstein hears of this and seeing the same obsession that brought his life to ruin, he tells his story as a warning. You already know the story of Frankenstein from that point forward so I won't cover it.

Although it may not inflict anything close to horror like *Dracula's*, it's a good opening nonetheless. It sets the tone and makes you wonder what could've ruined this intelligent, eloquent man and brought him to this point. Unlike *Dracula*, the story only builds from that point forward.



Character:

For *Dracula*, however, for it being such a cool concept, it is undoubtedly weakened by its characters and the ways they are written. His characterization and prose at points bore me to tears because, for a lack of a better term, emotional exposition. **Show, don't tell!** You may have seen this before in other books made in the late 1800's, most of Charles Dickens's books for example. Instead of say a character's action or maybe a brief statement that reflects their current emotional state of mind and letting the reader fill in the rest, with *Dracula* expect that every time a character goes "Oh, woe is me! I am fortune's fool!" for it be followed by a long dissertation. I understand that the novel is done through an epistolary format, through mostly

journals and letters, but even a melodramatic seventh-grader whose one-year boyfriend just broke up with her wouldn't find so many different ways to express her grief and despair.

Matter of fact, the epistolary format, in general, makes it so you have to suspend your belief on the power of human memory. Everything is recited exactly, and people love to speak their beliefs in the novel, to the point where a speech has to be broken up to eight separate paragraphs. Somehow though, the writers remember every word without notes. *Frankenstein* also uses this format in addition to being a framed story, but there it is somewhat believable, with shorter, less adrenaline-pumped intervals, the writer taking notes, and Dr. Frankenstein editing them in the end.

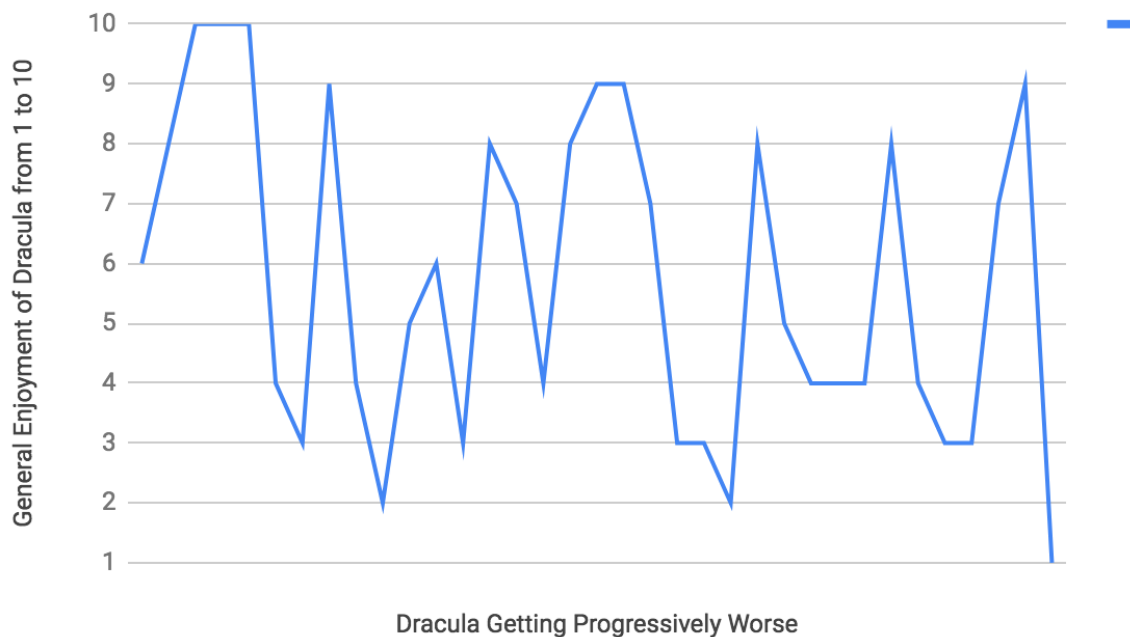
Frankenstein, a book written seventy years before *Dracula* understood how to reveal people's mental and emotional landscape without pedantically (word of the day and one of my favorite words meaning needlessly obsessed with minor details and academic rules) explaining what the characters are going through. Even when the protagonist is engaged and everyone around him is optimistic, he can't help but grieve at the monster he released into the world. Ravaged by grief and guilt, Dr. Frankenstein retreats to the mountains because he can't live with himself anymore. These moments are made more powerful because instead of being told what to think, we can relate our own experiences to empathize with the character allowing for greater attachment for greater tension.



Horror:

Going into *Dracula*, I wasn't expecting much. It is a century old after all, but what a spooky surprise it was for me! Besides the opening, there are some truly scary moments in the book, sorry to sound like a broken record, but if it wasn't for the dense prose, this book would be truly horrifying. There are even some remnants of what is used to create fear in modern movies. There is this scene that only lasts six pages but actually inflicted great dread upon me. It follows a captain on a ship recording happenings on his ship. It starts with him recording his crew is unusually scared and uneasy. A crew member notices a tall, strange man on the ship and follows him. The strange man turns to another area of the ship and disappears. Four days later a crew member is missing. The crew is increasingly anxious. There are unusual storms for five days. Following the storms, while on watch, another crew member is gone. This repeats until there are two people left on the ship, the captain and his second mate. The captain goes to check on his second mate at the steering wheel, only to see that he, like everyone else has disappeared. In desperation, he ties himself to the steering wheel swearing that he will make it to England. His body arrives, in England, mutilated, a rotting corpse. That's much like modern-day Predator there except with a blood-sucking vampire going on an absolute rampage. Like most modern horrors, the author here knows what is ultimately scary -- the unknown. And nowhere is his knowledge of that better illustrated than at that passage

My Enjoyment of Dracula



See those nines in the My Enjoyment of Dracula graph? That was whenever there was actual action, terrifying suspenseful action, going on. The author is really effective when it comes to horror and suspense, the in-between though, not really.

Frankenstein never really gripped me with horror though. Yes, there were moments of dread when I read the book, but that was me sympathizing with the characters not out of fear. One of the most memorable moments of *Frankenstein* was Frankenstein's monster telling his story of how he gradually got to this point, being vengeful and murdering all who he loved. It begins with the monster relating that he was hated and feared by all who he encountered. So he had to hide from all and was in an abandoned cottage near a poor family. Learning of their dire situation, he discreetly helps him out. Eventually, the creature plans on making the acquaintance with the family. After months of deliberation, he was able to befriend the blind father figure. Oh how I cheered for the individual, but then the rest of the family arrives and all flee in terror away from the creature. That's the novel best attempt at inciting dread and it is successful, but like I said before, there is never really that spine-tingling horror that is present in *Dracula*.

Now, I was going to do a whole segment on the endings of the two, but this blog is already long enough, so, I'll just cover them briefly. Dracula, for being such a powerful creature, (unbeknownst to most, in the book he can transform into wolves, command wolves, transform into particles in the air which allows him to slip through windows, and possess super strength) you would expect some incredible fight at the end. But no, he is just stabbed with a wooden stake. The end. If you were wondering why the drastic plummet on the graph at the end, that's why. In *Frankenstein*, Dr. Frankenstein has spent the rest of his life hunting down the creature who is always right in front of him. After finishing his story, he makes an effort to continue his pursuit. But the effort drained the little energy he had, and he dies. His creature his found weeping over him the night of the death. The book ends on a poignant and conclusive note. The end. In case, you can't tell, I liked the ending of *Frankenstein* much more than *Dracula*.

Winner:

The winner of the first ever Halloween Spooktacular is . . . I think it's obvious, *Frankenstein*! While it may not serve up the horrors that *Dracula*, it is simply a much better read. I'm sure if I gave the book a rereading that I would like it better because there was a lot of things that I didn't catch on to until much later while reading, like the importance of the boxes of dirt or that Dracula can actually turn into fog. Nevertheless, that does not change the bane that is *Dracula*'s prose.

If that wasn't an issue, I would've really enjoyed the book on the same level as I did *Frankenstein*. I had plans for a cheesy takeaway, but I'll spare you in contradicting spirits of the Halloween Spooktacular. Instead, I'll tell you if the books are worth your time -- yes for both. For *Dracula*, just read the first fifty pages then, for the rest, read a synopsis and act as if you read the whole thing. You won't miss out on much. For *Frankenstein*, make sure you are reading an unabridged version. I remember reading a version that was for children, but I thought it was the actual book for a while, even though it was only 100 pages long with a picture on every other page. Thanks for reading and **Happy Halloween Spooktacular everyone!**

Short, brief, concise MetaBlog: Is my blog increasing in length a good thing? Was that one of my established purposes? Am I too casual? Can I improve this blog much more?