

SCARY MONSTERS AND SUPER CREEPS

Module Three



STORYWORKS

A Story Works Fiction Course

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Module 3.3

Some Notes on Point of View



Notes about POV

In every story there is a protagonist who has a point of view, POV.

This is the main character, the one the reader empathizes with, who is the reader's vehicle through the story.

In monster fiction, you can choose to tell the story from the monster's perspective, making the monster your protagonist. Or, you can choose to tell the story from the hunter or victim's perspective, making the monster's foe or prey the protagonist.

If your monster is the main character (not a secondary POV character), it has to be intelligent and sympathetic enough to be relatable to the reader in order to serve as the reader's vehicle through the story.



Who Is Your Main Character?

Decide if you want to tell the story from your monster's POV or the foe or prey's POV.

The one you choose depends on the kind of monster you've been creating.

Remember that a protagonist does not need to be likable per se. He must be likable *and* fascinating enough for a reader to want to follow him through a story from beginning to end. The less likable a character, the more fascinating he has to be.

Think of it as a scale. The less we like someone the less we want to spend time with him. *Unless* he's really really interesting to us. Then we'll endure his unlikable qualities. As the likable side of the scale goes down, the fascinating side of it goes up, and vice versa.



Balancing the Scale

Hannibal Lecter is charming, intelligent, well-mannered, which gives him a surface likability. But we know beneath that surface, he is a serial killer who eats his victims. Readers like this character because he is inherently fascinating.

Frankenstein's Creature is sympathetic despite his sins. We feel bad that he is abandoned and despised. He's more repellant than Lecter, because of his looks and brutishness. But through his POV, we know he is intelligent, philosophical, and capable of kindness. He is only sympathetic because he has a POV.

Mogwai of the Gremlins is cute and lovable. Once the monsters come out, we see a Jekyll and Hyde story in which the most hideous things come out of the sweetest thing. Here the attractive side and the repellant side of the character are split into two creatures seen through the protagonist's eyes.



Balancing the Scale

How much will you humanize your monster? How likable and sympathetic will it be to your human readers?

Creating a monster POV is about the balance you strike between attraction and repulsion. If your monster is too repulsive, readers won't want to spend time with the story. A monster that is completely unsympathetic or repulsive will fall into the category of Things to Destroy.



Should Your Monster have a POV?

The short answer is: *it depends*.

If your monster is also your protagonist, he will, clearly, have a POV. But if he is the antagonist or a supporting character, as in *The Island of Doctor Moreau* and other mad scientist stories, it all depends.

- Why do you want to give your monster a POV?
- How will your monster's POV advance the story?
- What will your monster's POV contribute to the reader's understanding of events that is *unique* and unavailable from any other source?
- Can you write your monster's POV without creating spoilers?

Do not give your monster a POV just to give him a POV. Answer all of these questions in comprehensive detail. Explaining how and why this POV will serve both your story and your reader will help you determine whether or not to give that monster a POV.



Module 3.4

Reading

