

## Icons of Horror and the Supernatural [2 volumes]: An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares (Greenwood Icons)

By S. T. Joshi

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Horror and the supernatural have fascinated people for centuries, and many of the most central figures appear over and over again. These figures have gained iconic status and continue to hold sway over popular culture and the modern imagination. This book offers extended entries on 24 of the most enduring and significant figures of horror and the supernatural, including The Sea Creature, The Witch, The Alien, The Vampire, The Werewolf, The Sorcerer, The Ghost, The Siren, The Mummy, The Devil, and The Zombie. Each entry is written by a leading authority on the subject and discusses the topic's essential features and lasting influence, from the classical epics of Homer to the novels of Stephen King. Entries cite sources for further reading, and the *Encyclopedia* closes with a selected, general bibliography. Entries include illustrations, sidebars of interesting information, and excerpts from key texts.

Horror and the supernatural have fascinated people for centuries, with many of the most central figures appearing over and over again across time and cultures. These figures have starred in the world's most widely read literary works, most popular films, and most captivating television series. Because of their popularity and influence, they have attained iconic status and a special place in the popular imagination. This book overviews 24 of the most significant icons of horror and the supernatural.

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### Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

In this collection of 24 essays analyzing major "icons" in the field of horror and supernatural literature, icons are defined as themes—"The Alien," "The Haunted House," "The Zombie." Chapters are arranged alphabetically, and each contains between 12,000 and 15,000 words tracing the roots of the icon in folklore and legend and its prevalence in media and popular culture today. Although the emphasis is on print fiction, movies, television, and role-playing games are mentioned. Radio is not included. Works for children and young people are covered, from the Bunnicalseries in the chapter on vampires to His Dark Materials. Surprisingly in a work that examines popular fiction, the Harry Potter series is barely mentioned in either the chapters on the sorcerer or the witch. Illustrations are small and confined to chapter headings, although there are many sidebars in each chapter, usually lists of films, books, or short stories. Each chapter has a bibliography that often includes a filmography and Internet resources. A general bibliography and index are contained in volume 2. The work is weakened by editorial errors. In the chapter "The Doppelganger," people "wreck havoc." A Gene Wolfe story is described as "creepy but ghost." Jerry Ahern and Sharon Ahern's novel Werewolves is spelled Werewolvess. Many similar errors should have been corrected. The index is incomplete, missing many items that are mentioned in the text. With a better index and fewer errors, this would have been easy to recommend, but as it is, it is recommended with strong reservations for larger public libraries as a readers'- and viewers'-advisory tool and for academic libraries with popular culture and literature classes. Stipek, Kathleen

### Review

"This two-volume work presents 12,000-15,000-word essays on 24 leading icons of horror and the supernatural as they first appeared in fiction and later in film, television, and other media. Distinguishing this collection are editor Joshi and the 20 hand-picked contributors chosen to write insightful entries on topics including The Alien, The Monster, The Urban Horror, and The Vampire. Joshi, a much-published authority on H. P. Lovecraft, contributed the entry on the American horror writer's Cthulhu Mythos. A template for the work's other entries, Joshi's essay traces the various literary and cultural influences on Lovecraft's work while closely examining the author's key stories and novellas and their influence on other writers who expanded the so-called myth of gods from other worlds. Also discussed are various media spin-offs, with each entry containing sidebars featuring lists of important literary works. Primary and secondary bibliographies of books, articles, and Web sites are also offered. This work is a definitive, absolutely indispensable starting point for students and interested readers. Essential. Lower-level undergraduates through faculty/researchers; general readers." - **Choice**

"Chronicled here are our collective nightmares, as mirrored in multicultural and multigenerational stories in print, on television, and in pop culture. More than just the fodder of B movies, they are a glimpse into our psyche. Horror genre scholar Joshi here focuses on the icons themselves, 24 in total, as opposed to supernatural literature, an angle that makes this set unique. Witches, ghouls, sea creatures, and aliens are dissected and addressed as both historical and pop figures. Each icon definition focuses on central features of the myth, such as the requirement that zombies must lack free will. The set covers traditional horror symbols like vampires and mummies but also tackles more amorphous terrors like urban horror and the curse. Authoritative entries are accompanied by bibliographies and further readings and interspersed with relevant chronologies and black-and-white illustrations....[a]n excellent source for research....Highly recommended for academic libraries as a core entry into the study of supernatural symbols; public libraries should purchase where interest warrants." - **Library Journal**

"Written by noted authorities, including professors, librarians, and authors, the entries range from 12,000 to

15,000 words, yielding a depth of discussion not found in other sources." - **American Reference Books Annual**

"As a foundation to study, this book works well to introduce important themes, texts, and authors in an accessible format, breaking up the text with images and boxing information in the form of quotes, poems, timelines, and key facts wherever applicable. This is an informative resource, whether entries are simply dipped into from casual interest or read through for a more nuanced understanding." - **Science Fiction Studies**

"While horror tales have been around from earliest times, Stephen King, with other authors and television shows such as Buffy, the Vampire Killer, have given this genre importance and popularity in recent times. Students may use this book to research 24 of the leading icons (aliens of supernatural and non-supernatural fiction and their roots in folklore. This is the place to read about aliens, angels and demons, devils, ghosts, ghouls, haunted houses, monsters, mummies, sea creatures, sorcerers, vampires, the werewolf, witches and zombies. The articles, written by experts in the field, begin with a black and white photograph of the icon or a book cover, and they include the author's name, some manifestations and where the icon originated and their appearances in literature, theater and motion picture. . . . This is a much sought-after genre, and teachers and students will find this introduction appealing as they read and see supernatural and horror books and films." - **GALE Reference for Students**

"[F]or larger public libraries as a readers'- and viewers'-advisory tool and for academic libraries with popular culture and literature classes." - **Booklist/Reference Books Bulletin**

"*[I]cons* is without question a solid addition to the reference collection of any public, university, or secondary library." - **Dead Reconings**

"The breadth and length of essays make them useful introductory primers, some of which likely say things that haven't been said elsewhere. . . . [r]esearchers as well as horror readers can peruse a library copy for historical context, some of it fascinating. And Joshi's choice of topics provides a neat way of framing horror, largely as supernatural beings: defining the what if not the why of horror." - **Locus**

"*Icons of Horror and the Supernatural: An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares* covers the mythos, horrors and ideas of horror in supernatural literature and genre mediums. From evolving concepts of haunted houses and motivators for writing *The Exorcist* to the history and psychology of the doppelganger, *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural* compiles historical, literary and psychological references under one cover and represents a key reference for any college-level collection." - **Midwest Book Review - California Bookwatch**

"As one who, perhaps fortunately, does not suffer from nightmares, this reviewer found Joshi's encyclopedia totally absorbing and fascinating." - **Reference Reviews**

"This encyclopedia features topics relating to icons in supernatural and nonsupernatural fiction, their origins in folklore and legend, characteristics, and analysis of their prominence in specific works of literature and film, and in popular culture and society. Joshi, an author of books on the supernatural and other topics, brings together two volumes that contain 11-13 articles each; these are longer than conventional encyclopedia entries (about 30 pages) and presented alphabetically. Topics discussed by scholars, writers, and other authorities on the subject include icons such as the alien, angel and demon, devil, curse, ghost, haunted house, immortal, monster, mummy, psychic, sorcerer, vampire, werewolf, and zombie. Quotations and excerpts, and lists of major films and novels, are included in each article. The volumes are aimed at students, general readers, and scholars and avoid any technical jargon from literary criticism." - **Reference & Research Book News**

## About the Author

**S. T. Joshi** is one of the world's foremost authorities on the supernatural. His many books include *Supernatural Literature of the World: An Encyclopedia* (Greenwood, 2005), *An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia* (Greenwood, 2001), and numerous editions of H.P. Lovecraft's writings.

## Users Review

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