

Classics of Horror

Here we present some of the most classic, seminal works of the genre. Naturally, any such list can't be entirely comprehensive, but if you consider yourself a Horror reader, then you will want to read the books listed here (based in part on the content of [Hooked on Horror.](#))

Although the first horror or gothic novel (characterized by gloomy settings and sinister events) is agreed to be Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, published in 1765, the writer's fascination with fear and terror can be traced back to the 13th century. The year 1765 also saw the arrival of the *Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe, perhaps the most popular horror novel until the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1818. The following year, one of the first vampire novels appeared, *The Vampyre* (1819) by John Polidori. Soon the literary world was populated with a new cast of characters including madmen, sadists, vampires, monsters, and werewolves lurking in dark woods, secluded castles, or haunted houses. Matthew Lewis' novel, *The Monk* (1796) is described by Stephen King as "a black engine of sex and the supernatural that changed the genre, and the novel itself, forever."



[The Exorcist](#) by William Blatty (1971)

The inspiration for Blatty's best-known work dated to 1949 when Blatty was a student at Georgetown University and read local newspaper accounts of an exorcism involving a fourteen-year-old boy in Mount Rainier, Maryland.

[The October Country](#) by Ray Bradbury (1947)

The October Country is Ray Bradbury's own netherworld of the soul, inhabited by the horrors and demons that lurk within all of us. Bradbury shows with each of these nineteen stories his brilliant knack for extracting the chilling essence of a world's insanities, disorders, and hang-ups. Once again he proves himself to be America's master of the short story. Also try [Something Wicked This Way Comes](#) (1962).

[The House of the Seven Gables](#) by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1851)

Generations before the present story begins, wealthy Colonel Pyncheon covets Matthew Maule's land. When Maule is hanged for witchcraft, he puts a curse on the Colonel—and all his descendants. Now the menacing Judge Pyncheon continues the family tradition of hiding cruelty under a dazzling smile, while his scowling niece, Hepzibah, and half-mad nephew, Clifford, are reduced to poverty by his machinations. Also try [Young Goodman Brown and Other Tales](#).

[The Lottery: and Other Stories](#) by Shirley Jackson (1949)

The Lottery, one of the most terrifying stories written in this century, created a sensation when it was first published in *The New Yorker*. "Power and haunting," and "nights of unrest" were typical reader responses. This collection, the only one to appear during Shirley Jackson's lifetime, unites "The Lottery:" with twenty-four equally unusual stories. Together they demonstrate Jackson's remarkable range—from the hilarious to the truly horrible—and power as a storyteller. Also try [The Haunting of Hill House](#) (1959).

[The Turn of the Screw](#) by Henry James (1898)

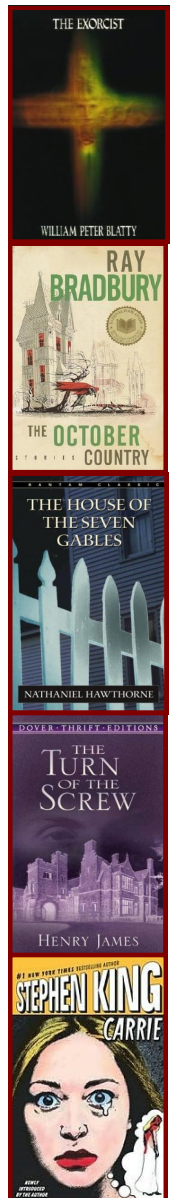
The story unfolds with the arrival of a new governess at a remote country estate. She has been hired by the uncle of two young orphans to take charge of the children's lives and upbringing. Her first peaceful weeks are disturbed by the apparition of the ghosts of two evil servants who once served in the house.

[Carrie](#) by Stephen King (1974)

An introverted girl with remarkable powers of telekinesis faces the horrors of teenage life and unleashes a few horrors of her own when she attends the high school prom. Since its publication 1974, neither misfit Carrie White nor her catastrophic prom has been forgotten, largely because they marked the introduction of one of the preeminent Horror writers today. Also try [Salem's Lot](#) (1975) and [The Shining](#) (1977).

[The Phantom of the Opera](#) by Gaston Leroux (1911)

They say that a ghost haunts the labyrinthine chambers beneath of the Paris Opera House. While there are those who laugh off such superstitions, they always do so nervously, in the bright light of day. But beautiful, talented young singer Christine Daae will soon experience a terror far more acute than any vague feeling of unease. For she is about to learn the secret of why the man who has made the tunnels beneath Paris his private domain must forever hide his face behind a mask.



Rosemary's Baby by Ira Levin (1967)

Levin's most famous work, in which an apparently average couple find new friends among devil worshippers, was a huge best seller, and the film version starred Mia Farrow and John Cassavetes.

The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories by H.P. Lovecraft (1926)

Originally appearing in pulp magazines like *Weird Tales* in the 1920s and 1930s, Lovecraft's work is now being regarded as the most important supernatural fiction of the twentieth century. Many of Lovecraft's legendary (and weird!) stories, written in a highly distinctive style, feature Cthulhu, whose "pulpy tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings." Also try [At the Mountains of Madness](#) (1931).

The Bad Seed by William March (1954)

For his novel, William March draws on actual case histories to explore a serious question: What happens to ordinary families into whose midst a criminal is born? Featuring a cast of memorable characters, *The Bad Seed* is a solid suspense story that's more chilling, more intelligent, and far more absorbing than its Hollywood namesake.

I Am Legend by Richard Matheson (1954)

Robert Neville may well be the last living man on Earth . . . but he is not alone. An incurable plague has mutated every other man, woman, and child into bloodthirsty, nocturnal creatures who are determined to destroy him. By day, he is a hunter, stalking the infected monstrosities through the abandoned ruins of civilization. By night, he barricades himself in his home and prays for dawn.

The Fall of the House of Usher and Other Tales by Edgar Allan Poe (1839)

A collection of fourteen of the author's best-known tales of mystery and the macabre includes "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "The Fall of the House of Usher," in which a visitor to a gloomy mansion finds a childhood friend dying under the spell of a family curse.

Interview With A Vampire by Anne Rice (1976)

Here are the confessions of a vampire. Hypnotic, shocking, and chillingly erotic, this is a novel of mesmerizing beauty and astonishing force—a story of danger and flight, of love and loss, of suspense and resolution, and of the extraordinary power of the senses. It is a novel only Anne Rice could write. Also try [The Vampire Lestat](#) (1985).

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley (1818)

Shelley's timeless gothic novel presents the epic battle between man and monster at its greatest literary pitch. In trying to create life, the young Victor Frankenstein unleashes forces beyond his control, setting into motion a long and tragic chain of events that brings Victor to the very brink of madness. How he tries to destroy his creation, as it destroys everything Victor loves, is a powerful story of love, friendship, scientific hubris, and horror.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson (1886)

A lawyer in Victorian London tries to understand the nature of the strange relationship between his physician friend and the cruel and violent man he seems to protect. This landmark work, based on a dream and written and printed in ten weeks, has inspired at least twenty screen adaptations and several sequels by authors such as Loren D. Estleman, Robert Bloch, and Valerie Martin.

Dracula by Bram Stoker (1897)

Stoker's novel about the infamous Count Dracula has spawned an enormous and long-standing interest in vampires. The Web site of Dr. Elizabeth Miller, an internationally recognized expert on Stoker's novel, contains information on the novel, Stoker's life, and links to other sites of interest to vampire lovers.

The Island of Dr. Moreau by H.G. Wells (1896)

The sole survivor of a shipwreck, Edward Prendick, a young naturalist, finds himself stranded on a remote Pacific island run by the sinister Dr. Moreau, a mad scientist intent on creating a strain of beast men.

The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde (1891)

As a young man Dorian Grey wished that a portrait of him would grow old and ugly, and that he would stay young, innocent, and fresh forever. It almost worked.

* Authors such as Robert Bloch, J. Sheridan LeFanu, Matthew Lewis, Richard Marsh, Ann Radcliffe, Thomas Tryon, and Horace Walpole are available to order, either through our catalog or [Inter-Library Loan](#); please ask us.

