

Full Portfolio – Word count: 3004

My fiction piece is written as an additional chapter in Bronte's novel 'Jane Eyre' while my fiction piece is written in the style of Charlie Brooker and investigates female representation in the horror genre.

Fiction – Word count: 1,161

Six lengthy hours had passed since I had had the intense displeasure of encountering Bertha Mason, and since that moment a thick smog encapsulated my mind. The creature's shagged appearance became a permanent emblem of distress and its name rung about my ears.

Until this point, it had been fear which dominated my psyche: fear of the hellish beast which resided in the attic. But now, as I ruminated in my own company, my attention began to shift onto the gallant who slept just a few doors down from myself. I first wondered how, and by what poor judgement, Mr. Rochester had entangled himself in this ensnarement, as well as questioning how he himself could be considered sane after electing to wed Bertha in the first place. These thoughts soon faded though, as a sense of rationality began to return to my clouded brain. Rochester was a smart man: well-educated and from an exceptionally fine background; he would not make such a solemn mistake as to endanger his life and reputation by marrying a hysteric.

✓ understanding of genre
✓ developing themes
✓ an individual voice crafted

While this cleared Rochester's name of insanity, it brought clarity to a larger issue; this issue was that maybe Bertha was driven to hysteria by her husband. The suggestion of abuse and torture flurried about my mind with callous illustrations being exhibited in the gallery of my thoughts. Illusive actors in the theatre of my mind danced beneath the storm in my head – patronising, promenading and performing the horrors which now submerged me.

✓ selection of techniques

In just one foul evening the shining light in my life, which had only recently been lit, was extinguished. I was, once again, just Jane Eyre: a young woman who's stained past fell behind her and who's previously tangible future now seemed infinitely out of reach. A future with Mr. Rochester would see me cared for till the end of my days. However, I couldn't marry an adulterer: someone with whom, yes, I shared the finest years of my life but someone who didn't have the courtesy of telling me that he was already bound to another.

✓ developing voice & character,
reflecting context & exploring themes

Until this day, I had never heard the name 'Bertha Mason'; now, it seemed as if it were the only name to exist. At this peculiar moment, with an intense desire to rid my mind of this name and consequently the turmoil it caused, I decided that I would confront her.

✓ range of paragraph lengths –
for effect
& successful

The next morning, I awoke at five O'clock; dawn was yet to break over Thornfield and the estate wailed with the eerie silence of a rejected churchyard. Inside the muffled darkness I dressed myself; I pulled on

✓ genre

a subtle pale dress which clung to my ankles and tied a paired bonnet around my neck. I took the tired lantern from my bedside; the wick flared before settling to a small flame which illuminated a faint circle around me. As I left my room, a coldness filled my body as if icy sea water had been injected into my veins; the tempest above these glacial waves was my mind which wrestled with an all-encompassing anxiety and horror.

✓ Techniques for effect –
Some skill displayed

I crept closer to her lair and my body stiffened with anticipation as if I were preparing to receive a strike from an ill-tempered parent. As I wrapped my hand around the door handle, a forceful terror clawed at me. It only grew in intensity when I twisted, pulling the door open, and a plume of aborted dreams and dust erupted in my face. Coughing, I covered my mouth and nose with the trimmings of my dress and continued forwards. As I ventured into the den, I felt my eyes swell and compel tears to run down my face. Alongside this, I sensed a roar begin to grow in my stomach. In just a few seconds, I was both uncontrollably weeping while also trying to stifle howling laughter. An eerie twilight, contained solely in that room, sat uncomfortably on my shoulders, and hugged at my neck.

As I neared the end of the room, the soft glow from my lantern began to illumine signs of life. However, this life didn't seem human but that of some kind of fantastical Kobold who tactfully haunted the estate. Long claw marks were chiselled into the surface of the floor and splinters of mauled wood lay strewn about the room. I looked up and in a dark ball of frustration and primitive rage. Unkempt black hair ran and fell off her head and down her back which showed the worn bones of her spine arching out of her rear.

“Bertha?” Her head whipped upwards and small, glazed, bloodshot eyes peered back at me. As I edged closer, she recoiled back, pinning herself up against the sodden walls.

“Bertha,” I repeated; “do you know who I am?”

I purposefully softened my voice as you would to coddle a hurt toddler. Her eyes softened and she began to uncoil herself, revealing a soiled dress which, I assumed, was once pearly white and clung to her youthful figure. Now though, this dress billowed around her disguising and concealing the deformities that plagued her as if the stage curtains to the newest Rigling Bros. production.

To the left of Bertha, in the corner of the room, stood a long baroque style mirror, down the centre of this mirror ran a long, perfect crack which distorted the band of light which came from my lantern. The right-hand side showed a distorted depiction of Bertha which warped her already gnarled appearance. However, it was the left side of the mirror which truly sickened me; it projected a foul and unjust illustration of someone whom, if you hadn't met Bertha, you would assume to be the rejected bride of Mr. Rochester. The reflection showed me: a youthful girl who had been beaten and silenced by the drawn-out competition with oppression; she stood similarly to Bertha in a long white dress, her eyes bestowed upon me the pain of the entire world, manipulating my emotions and creating a sense of impending doom which brewed and boiled in my stomach.

✓ In keeping with
Jane's imagination
– Stimulus text
& genre

✓ miming
dopp-
genre
features

✓ Character
development
well-
selected
details

15 Assured control of genre, mode, audience.
An individual voice crafted using sophisticated techniques

→ The climax is built late into the narrative perhaps hindering its full potential to reach 'highly engaging' and some v. minor technical lapses.

"Lef mi!" the gowned figure snarled from the corner. She spoke in a broken lexicon of English, patois and growls which rattled my bones. Bertha had fallen to her knees now; her scraggly black hair skimming the floor. She dragged herself closer to my feet looking up though her eyebrows at me the entire time. She continued to grunt and groan as she drew her hands towards me; her palms, covered in the same gray skin which covered her body only more worn and lifeless, faced the sky. I retreated.

The pained groans repelled me as I found myself closer and closer to the door which had led me to the nest of this hellish creature. I felt the cold brass of the handle under my hand; taking one final look at the beast, I thrust myself out of the door and took solace in the click of the lock behind me.

Non Fiction – Word count: 887

Monsters, Maidens, and Mayhem: The Female Archetypes of Horror

I'll never forget the night my friends convinced me to watch a horror film with them. As someone who's easily spooked, I should've known better! But... peer pressure is a powerful thing. We sat on my friend's sofa with blankets and snacks, ready to brave the terror flickering on the screen. It was when the first jump scare hit that my dignity took a nosedive; I let out a shriek so loud that it could've woken the dead. It goes without saying that I spent the rest of the movie with my eyes half-covered and my pride shattered. But, as I forced myself through this painful experience there was one thing (other than the alarming number of jump scares, the obscene scenes of blood and guts, and the tension which held my stomach hostage for the night) which stood out to me. In the eerie realm of horror lies an even more troubling truth; the portrayal of women often takes a sinister turn. From literature classics to modern cinema, the depiction of women in horror has long been plagued by damaging stereotypes and harmful tropes which have a dramatic and frankly terrifying effect beyond the screen.

In the crypts of Gothic literature, the identity of women is often diminished to a damsel in distress or a wicked seductress with their persona overshadowed by male protagonists or supernatural forces. Think of Mary Shelley's Elizabeth Frankenstein, more a pawn than a person in the hands of male protagonists, or Charlotte Bronte's Bertha Mason, portrayed as a societal menace deserving of imprisonment. In these novels (and many others) women are denied the complex development of character and backstory received by their male counterparts. And as the silver screen continues to embrace the horror genre, women still find themselves trapped in tropes and stereotypes which dehumanise and objectify them.

Cunning & engaging voice

Then, the "final girl" archetype emerges as a beacon of resilience... yet, this tenacity is usually undermined as she is defined by her purity and innocence. Meanwhile, female characters who dare to embrace their sexuality or assert their independence from men are met with gruesome ends, often punished with a spectacular exhibition of blood and gore. The infamous "damsel in distress" trope, a cornerstone of horror cliches, is arguable one of the most damaging cliches in horror. This archetype presents women as feeble and dependent, reliant on the strong or brave male protagonist for salvation.

At times 24
sketchy but not
consistent
Ambition
stimulus
chosen
- genre
convention
evident

Crafting
personal
individual
voice

Stance
outlined
clearly
- effective
structuring

link to
fiction
piece

Genre features & selection
of techniques

This is a worn-out narrative that not only diminishes women but also reinforces outdated gender dynamics, leaving us wondering if the horror lies within the story or the stereotypes themselves.

Looking beyond the blood curdling horrors of fiction, you'll find the echoes of these stories in the real world, staining societal perceptions and reinforcing harmful and outdated stereotypes. The glorification of violence against women in horror doesn't just entertain; it encourages misogyny, presenting it as a form of entertainment for spectators to be amused by. The punishment and suppression of complex developed women in the horror genre acts as a reminder of the difficulties women are forced to endure in order to write their own narrative in our society. Additionally, the scarcity of well-developed female characters, as well as the broad focus on purity and innocence, generates marginalisation outside the confines of pen and paper. The absence of diverse female voices is a missed opportunity for innovation and creativity and, in my opinion, holds the genre back. By limiting the narratives available to women, horror films and novels explicitly reinforce harrowing stereotypes, presenting a skewed and narrow view of female identity. It's time for the genre to embrace inclusivity and diversity, and to challenge conventions and break free from the shackles of outdated stereotypes.

As we grow and mature as a society there are glimmers of hope as female characters who defy convention and challenge the stereotypes are beginning to emerge. Examples of this can be seen in the fierce resilience of Ellen Ripley in 'Alien' as well as the complex development of Amelia in Jennifer Kent's 'The Babadook'. Unlike many female characters in the horror genre, Amelia is not diminished to the role of a victim or love interest. Instead, she is provided with a rich and intricate backstory, allowing audiences to understand the complexities of her character and the challenges she faces as a single mother grappling with grief and trauma. Throughout the film, Amelia remains the focal point of the narrative and presents her grit and determination as she battles with fear and grief. It's crucial to celebrate these successes, however despite these strides towards progress, the terrifying use of gender stereotypes continues to haunt the genre of horror. Whether through the encouragement of tropes, the marginalisation of female voices, or the misrepresentation of female mental illness, the genre remains stuck in a cycle of misogyny and injustice.

So, you, the audience - next time you sit down to pick up a gothic novel or lay back to enjoy the 50th Scream sequel, stop yourself and think. Think about how these genres depict women. How they depict mothers, sisters, and children. Think about this the next time you want you want to entertain this tainted genre. Or just think about this next time you want an excuse not to embarrass yourself in front of a group of friends.

Commentary – Word count: 1248

✓ Effective understanding of genre, mode, audience

✓ An individual voice & engaging response

→ The opening half is more assured and highly engaging than the final section but it ends on a strong note.

Strong personal opinion delivered using skilful techniques

Examples given - convincing of genre

Effective ending - cyclical structure used well.

Taking inspiration from Charlotte Brontë's 'Jane Eyre', my fiction piece makes use of a first person retrospective narrative voice in order to provide Jane's experience and interpretation of events in an additional scene where she goes back to see Bertha. I emulate Brontë's use of Gothic conventions such as: doppelgangers and mirroring, pathetic fallacy and the themes of isolation and madness. My writing would appeal to an audience interested in the Brontë sisters and the Gothic genre. My use of first-person narrative also allows me to reveal how Jane is ignorant to her similarities with Bertha.

A04
connection

A03 considers CAP

Brontë explores the Gothic themes of isolation and desperation from the very opening of her novel when Jane recollects being locked in the red room: "I shall remember how you thrust me back – roughly and violently thrust me back – into the red-room, and locked me up there [...] I was in agony; though I cried out, while suffocating with distress". In "agony", "suffering" and distress, Brontë uses an emotive semantic field of misery to depict how reject and outcast she was made to feel. The repetition of the dynamic verb "thrust me back" highlights the theme of isolation through entrapment that Jane cannot control. Similarly, in the opening of my piece, I show the Gothic theme of isolation and entrapment surrounding all three of my characters: Mr Rochester, and particularly Bertha and Jane. This is ironic as the narrator, Jane, clearly considers Bertha as 'other' and very different to herself whilst my narrative uses mirroring to reflect the parallels in their lives. Additionally, as both Bertha and Jane have been trapped away in rooms of grand houses as means of repression and control. This links to the patriarchal society which dominated the 19th century as women were seen as the possessions of their father or husband.

A04
developed

A03
Interesting
connection

In my opening paragraph, the narrator uses a semantic field of entrapment and confusion: Mr Rochester is "entangled", suffering "ensnarement" and "wed," whilst Jane's psyche is "dominated" by "fear" and has a "clouded brain", and Bertha is hidden in "the attic". This creates an atmosphere of claustrophobia right from the opening. It also reflects on the consequences of isolating people and restricting their freedom; I am introducing a key theme in my piece which is that isolation leads to intense, repressed emotion and madness. This is highlighted in my very first sentence where fear is personified and "dominated" Jane's psyche, showing the power and control of the all-consuming nature of her emotion and situation: from the opening we see that our narrator is not in control. Like Brontë's, my narrator dehumanises the character of Bertha. In Brontë's text, Jane describes Bertha as: "a figure" as well as repeatedly referring to her as 'it'. I emulate this theme of dehumanisation describing Bertha as a "hellish beast"; this is particularly effective as at this point in the novel Jane is aware of who Bertha is and yet still does not see her as human despite being very similar to her.

A02
developing
along
with
integrated
A04

Sustained
comment &
genre
conventions

Similarly, my non-fiction piece explores the depiction of women in the gothic horror genre. My opinion article is inspired by Brooker's articles, particularly 'Introducing The strangest creature in the world: the audience.' I emulate Brooker's satirical and humorous voice as well as directly addressing the audience. In doing this, I create an engaging and personal voice to explore the concerning the misrepresentation of women in horror; the use of a colloquial and relatable voice persuades the audience to feel culpable and a part of the problem, hopefully provoking change. Similarly to Brooker, my piece is written for educated readers as well as people interested in the horror genre or the representation of women. My

Considers A04
and G. A.P.

piece aims to entertain as well as inform the audience of the negative stereotypes which plague the horror genre.

Brooker often opens his opinion pieces with a personal anecdote to create a personal, and often self-deprecating, tone providing the reader with an insight into his life: "Last year, I attended a glamorous TV award ceremony in order to not win an award." Similarly, I open my piece using an anecdotal, self-deprecating voice. "It was when the first jump scare hit that my dignity took a nosedive; I let out a shriek so loud that it could've woken the dead." My use of anecdote makes my article more personable and relatable to the reader; this hooks the reader and act as a persuasive technique as the reader feel more involved in the piece. The hyperbolic metaphor 'could've woken the dead' creates a self-deprecating, humorous voice; this mimics Brooker's witty style and juxtaposes the serious topic of the article, making the reader feel more at ease and likely to read on. Additionally, the repeated horror-genre lexis in "shriek" and "woken the dead" not only references the theme of the piece but also, at this point in the article, creates a hyperbolic and humorous voice. As a male, it is effective to describe myself as 'shrieking' and 'frightened' as it subverts typical gender stereotypes of the 'manly' man, the self-deprecating nature of this makes it more personable which appeals to the audience and creates a more credible voice.

Developed AO2 & integrated context

clear link to stimulus

Through many of Brooker's pieces, he often uses extended metaphor to provoke his audience to make comparisons. For example, In Brooker's article criticising the media he creates a continued comparison between drugs and newspapers by using utterances such as "heavy users," "dealers," and "available on every street." This comparison made through the use of drug specific lexis makes the audience aware of the dangers of the media. Similarly, I craft a continual comparison between the horror in fiction and the horror in real life using the repetition of genre specific lexis throughout my piece. Phrases such as, "haunt the genre of horror," "crypts of Gothic literature," and "blood curdling horrors of fiction," create an eerie tone reflecting the horror genre and drawing the reader in. The noun 'crypts' creates the idea that there is an evil behind the horror genre which, in this case, is the misrepresentation of women. The mixture of satire and serious debate in my piece is similar to Brookers allowing for an enjoyable, captivating read whilst also informing the audience about the negative real-world impact of horror on society. The theme of my piece holds real life relevance as stereotyping and gender bias in the horror genre has a severe impact on modern day gender dynamics.

AO2 - analysis of purpose & crafting

Integrates AO3 into developed analysis

like Brooker, although I often use a satirical and personable voice, the themes are relevant to society and of serious nature, this aids the purpose of my piece which is to inform and educate the audience whilst also being engaging and entertaining. The quote "It's time for the genre to embrace inclusivity and diversity, and to challenge conventions and break free from the shackles of outdated stereotypes." underlines the necessity for a shift in how women are presented in horror. The continued genre specific

AO1 & AO4

lexis through the noun 'shackles' maintains the light-hearted nature of the article whilst also conveying the drastic issue of female representation in horror.

In conclusion, in both of my pieces, I explore the horror genre and particularly the role of women within it. I emulate Brontë's use of first person as well as doppelgangers and gothic imagery in my fiction piece to demonstrate the personal conflict that Jane experiences. In my non-fiction, I use Brooker's satirical, personable voice to explore female representation in horror and inform the audience of how it effects our modern world.

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→ The analysis of non-fiction piece is stronger than analysis of fiction writing.

A01 ✓ Controlled discussion with discriminating examples

A01 ✓ Lots of accurately integrated terminology

A04 ✓ Discriminating analysis of connections

A03 ✓ Examines context & G.A.P - shows awareness of how this shapes writing

A02 ✓ Analysis here meaning is shaped.