

### The Benefits of the Supernatural

The goal of my unit of study is to find real world lessons and morals from supernatural fiction. Sometimes the best way to relate problems and issues to teens is to present them in a way that gives them a disconnect from the “real world”. Supernatural fiction allows those issues and problems to be presented as physical entities or are placed in environments that disconnect from reality enough to help the reader. One book that showcases real life problems and issues in a supernatural environment is *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

As the third novel in the *Harry Potter* series, *Prisoner of Azkaban* moves the problems to a new level and challenges Harry and his friends with maturing faster than they anticipated, while constantly throwing moral dilemmas their way. Harry is in constant of the escaped murderer Sirius Black, and must be able to stay safe while also conquering his 3<sup>rd</sup> year of school. Hogwarts is under watch from Demenators, creatures that literally suck the life out of their prey. The combination of these terrors pushes Harry to his limits as he continues to adventure with his friends.

Although this book came out in September 1999, the morals of this book are still relatable to today’s youth. Every teen feels fear, and demenators are the incarnation of fear. Having a disconnect from the actual fears that teens face give them a way of relating to the material, without it being too much for them to handle. This is just one of example of how supernatural fiction allows lessons to be learned in an emotionally safe way.

One activity I would use to teach these kind of lessons is to have the class make a list of three things in their life: one person that is one of their mentors/teachers, one pet/friend that they have had for awhile, and one enemy that turned into a friend. This exercise would put into perspective for them how Harry and his friends felt in the story. Harry had Sirius start out as his enemy and turn into his family, Ron had Scabbers go from his friend into an enemy without his knowledge, and Harry had Lupin as his mentor throughout the book, but was also able to help him when he needed help the most. This lesson will make the story a bit more personal for them and see how the story would work for them if they were in Harry's shoes.

The material would be taught to high school freshman and sophomores because the books are at a bit lower reading difficulty. This would also help get them ready for harder works in their later portions of their English classes.

Opening for the supernatural unit: Bringing up a show that most students would know from their childhood: Power Rangers. I would bring up that week after week the rangers are faced with challenges from monsters and villains from supernatural backgrounds. The thing they did was conquering these challenges, often by transforming, and saving the day. This would lead the discussion of how supernatural media and entertainment shows problems, but with a mystical twist. I would then ask around the room what people's fears are or what their "monster" is. The goal would be to have the class come up with potential ways to "defeat" these fears and monsters. Then we would discuss the metaphor of them "morphing". We would discuss what they interpret this as. It would then (hopefully) lead to everyone sometimes having to think go outside of their comfort zones and "morph" into another person in order to combat these problems.

After this first exercise is finished, the book list will be introduced so that students know what to expect from this genre. The *Harry Potter* series will be the main focus because it is read by multiple age groups and has a cohesive story, while also allowing new readers to pick up the story in later entries with ease. The students can pick which book from this series they would like to read to allow them freedom to return back to their favorite entry, or to begin the series with fresh eyes and perspectives toward the material. The movies can also be shown as both homework and in class to give a visual representation of some of the lessons learned from the book.

After the students have started their reading and have gotten at least a third into the book, questions will be asked and discussed in class. Some of these questions can be: what scene stuck out with you the most thus far? Who is your favorite character and why? What situation(s) did you relate to in the book and why? This will help let the class know who is getting the most out of the readings and also allow students to express their opinions and insights without being forced to perform multiple homework assignments outside of class.

An in class essay will be done after everyone has finished their books. It will use the same questions as the previous discussion, but will allow the students to look back on their previous answers and expand on them since they have now finished the book. After this is done clips from the movies will be shown to highlight some of the ideas brought up by students in their writing. It will also allow them to decompress, getting ready for the next unit.

If this unit is extended further, there will be a new list of books to choose from and comparisons can be made. Here are some of the books that can be used:

Meyer, Stephanie, *Twilight*. In the first book of the Twilight Saga, internationally bestselling author Stephenie Meyer introduces Bella Swan and Edward Cullen, a pair of star-crossed lovers whose forbidden relationship ripens against the backdrop of small-town suspicion and a mysterious coven of vampires. This is a love story with bite.

Clare, Cassandra, *City of Bones: The Mortal Instruments #1*. When fifteen-year-old Clary Fray heads out to the Pandemonium Club in New York City, she hardly expects to witness a murder—much less a murder committed by three teenagers covered with strange tattoos and brandishing bizarre weapons. Then the body disappears into thin air. It's hard to call the police when the murderers are invisible to everyone else and when there is nothing—not even a smear of blood—to show that a boy has died. Or was he a boy? This is Clary's first meeting with the Shadowhunters, warriors dedicated to ridding the earth of demons. It's also her first encounter with Jace, a Shadowhunter who looks a little like an angel and acts a lot like a jerk. Within twenty-four hours Clary is pulled into Jace's world with a vengeance, when her mother disappears and Clary herself is attacked by a demon. But why would demons be interested in ordinary mundanes like Clary and her mother? And how did Clary suddenly get the Sight? The Shadowhunters would like to know... Exotic and gritty, exhilarating and utterly gripping, Cassandra Clare's ferociously entertaining fantasy takes readers on a wild ride that they will never want to end.

Garcia, Kami, *Beautiful Creatures*. There is a girl. Slowly, she pulled the hood from her head . . . Green eyes, black hair. **Lena Duchannes**. There is a curse. On the

Sixteenth Moon, the Sixteenth Year, the Book will take what it's been promised. **And no one can stop it.** In the end, there is a grave. Lena and Ethan become bound together by a deep, powerful love. But Lena is cursed and on her sixteenth birthday, her fate will be decided. **Ethan never even saw it coming.**

Collins, Suzanne, *The Hunger Games*. The nation of Panem, formed from a post-apocalyptic North America, is a country that consists of a wealthy Capitol region surrounded by 12 poorer districts. Early in its history, a rebellion led by a 13th district against the Capitol resulted in its destruction and the creation of an annual televised event known as the Hunger Games. In punishment, and as a reminder of the power and grace of the Capitol, each district must yield one boy and one girl between the ages of 12 and 18 through a lottery system to participate in the games. The 'tributes' are chosen during the annual Reaping and are forced to fight to the death, leaving only one survivor to claim victory. When 16-year-old Katniss's young sister, Prim, is selected as District 12's female representative, Katniss volunteers to take her place. She and her male counterpart Peeta, are pitted against bigger, stronger representatives, some of whom have trained for this their whole lives. , she sees it as a death sentence. But Katniss has been close to death before. For her, survival is second nature.

Mead, Richelle, *Vampire Academy*. St. Vladimir's Academy isn't just any boarding school—it's a hidden place where vampires are educated in the ways of magic and half-human teens train to protect them. Rose Hathaway is a Dhampir, a bodyguard for her best friend Lissa, a Moroi Vampire Princess. They've been on the run, but now they're being dragged back to St. Vladimir's—the very place where

they're most in danger. . . .Rose and Lissa become enmeshed in forbidden romance, the Academy's ruthless social scene, and unspeakable nighttime rituals. But they must be careful lest the Strigoi—the world's fiercest and most dangerous vampires—make Lissa one of them forever.

These books will help give the class a diverse enough list that most will find something that peaks their interest. The intention is to keep the class engaged by not giving them something completely unheard of or uninteresting to their wants. Students should feel accomplished by the end of the unit for finishing one or multiple books. Often this is a struggle due to the dependence on technology and the decline of traditional reading. This will be a way to help re-spark the interest in novels in teens, while also showing them real life situation in these supernatural environments.

#### Resources:

-Good Reads Inc, <http://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/young-adult-supernatural>, 2015, Web.

-Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. New York. Scholastic. May 1 2004. Print

-*Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*. Saban. 1993 Television