The Gruffalo

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An introduction to monsters
“What is a monster?” - John LANDIS

From DK Publishing

Available Wherever Books are Sold
Definition

• Two different latin roots:
  • From latin *monstrum* (an omen)
  • From latin *monstrare* (to show, to demonstrate)
• Overall, a monster correspond to a surprising, unusual being.
• A “freak” tends to be human, whereas a monster can be a chimera, a hybrid, non-human creature.
The Great Unknown

The frightening monster

“Until relatively recently in history, monsters close to home, such as deformed babies or two-headed calves, were construed as warnings of divine wrath (colère). Monstrous depictions in newspapers and pamphlets expressed strong political attitudes. The monstrous races or traditional monstrous beasts such as basilisks or unicorns, that were banished to distant regions in maps, represented a frightening unknown: 'here be dragons' effectively filled cartographic voids.”

(Natalie Lawrence, PhD, source here)

The exotic monster

“Simultaneously, however, monsters represented the wonderful diversity of divine creation, a playful ‘Nature’ that could produce a multitude of strange forms. Exotic beasts brought to Europe for the first time in the 16th century, such as armadillos or walruses, were often interpreted as 'monstrous'. More accurately, they were made into monsters: things that did not fit into the accepted natural categories. An armadillo became a pig-turtle, while a walrus was a fish-ox.”

(Lawrence, source here)
Freak shows

• Early 19th century: naturalists would tour Europe with exotic animals = cabinets of curiosities.

• Soon, abnormal, deformed human beings were added to these shows.

• Freak shows were highly popular in the U.S. in the 19th century.
The Elephant Man
Famous Literary Monsters
Frankenstein

- *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), Mary SHELLEY (1797-1851)
Mr. Hyde

- *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894)
- Dual personality
Dracula

- Dracula (1897), Bram STOKER (1847-1912)
The Picture Book
Presentation

- Title: The Gruffalo
- Author: Julia DONALDSON
- Illustrator: Axel SCHEFFLER
- Year: 1999
“There’s no such thing as a Gruffalo!”
Reading aloud
Writing
Writing

• Create your very own monster!
  • Describe it carefully and precisely (its body as well as its personality)
  • Imagine its encounter with a child
• 100-200 words
Sources

• About freak shows: [https://www.britannica.com/art/freak-show](https://www.britannica.com/art/freak-show)


• About monsters: [https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/what-is-a-monster](https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/what-is-a-monster)

• The evolution of monster in children’s books: [https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-020-0414-7](https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-020-0414-7)