

Name:

Date:

Before Reading

Read the following statements. Tell whether you agree or disagree by circling your response.

All living things are capable of loneliness..... Agree Disagree

Isolation causes depression Agree Disagree

It's normal to fear the unknown Agree Disagree

The truth will set you free Agree Disagree

Memories guide us through life Agree Disagree

You should never be ashamed of who you are Agree Disagree

What you look like doesn't matter Agree Disagree

Feeling like an outcast can be detrimental on your mental state..... Agree Disagree

Everyone seeks companionship of some kind..... Agree Disagree

Accepting your true self is freeing..... ☐ Agree ☐ Disagree

Your mind can be a prison Agree Disagree

The world would be a better place without mirrors..... Agree Disagree

Pick one statement from above to discuss. Explain why you chose “agree” or “disagree” for that particular statement. Support your opinion.

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“The Outsider” by H. P. Lovecraft — Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Part of Speech	Defintion
wretched	adj	
grotesque	adj	
accursed	adj	
akin	adj	
entreating	adj	
venerable	adj	
capacious	adj	
abysmally	adv	
latent	adj	
eidolon	noun	
carrion	noun	
cataclysmic	adj	
fiendish	adj	
abomination	noun	

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"The Outsider" by H. P. Lovecraft
Vocabulary

Vocabulary	Part of Speech	Defintion
wretched	adj	in a very unhappy or unfortunate state
grotesque	adj	Describes repulsively ugly or distorted
accursed	adj	used to express strong dislike or anger toward someone or something
akin	adj	of similar character
entreating	adj	urgently or anxiously requesting something
venerable	adj	commanding respect because of great age or impressive dignity
capacious	adj	having a lot of space inside
abysmally	adv	in an extremely bad way; appallingly
latent	adj	existing but not yet manifested
eidolon	noun	a specter or phantom
carrion	noun	the decaying flesh of dead animals
cataclysmic	adj	used to emphasize the extent of something bad or unwelcome
fiendish	adj	Describes something extremely cruel or devilish
abomination	noun	a thing that causes disgust or hatred

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Reading Comprehension Questions
"The Outsider" by H. P. Lovecraft

1. What point of view is the story written? What are your first impressions of the narrator?

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2. What is the setting of the story? Cite an example of the description. What mood does it create?

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3. What is unusual about the narrator's childhood?

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4. In what ways is the castle like a prison?

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5. How does the narrator leave the castle?

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6. How does the use of descriptive language create suspense?

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7. How do the people gathered at the party react to seeing the monster?

8. What revelation does the narrator uncover? How does this occur?

9. What words and phrases describe the narrator's appearance?

10. How does Lovecraft make the narrator seem human-like and relatable? Provide a specific example from the text.

11. What foreshadowing does Lovecraft use to hint to readers the narrator is not human?

12. Do you think Lovecraft intended to have a deeper meaning than a simple horror story? Explain.

13. What is the main conflict of the story? Does it get resolved?

14. Is the narrator reliable or unreliable? Explain.

15. What gothic or horror stories does "The Outsider" remind you of? Why?

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Reading Comprehension Questions
"The Outsider" by H. P. Lovecraft

1. What point of view is the story written? What are your first impressions of the narrator?

The story is written in first person point of view. He/she is sad, forlorn, depressed, lonely, confused, and an outcast. Some students may feel sympathetic for the narrator.

2. What is the setting of the story? Cite an example of the description. What mood does it create?

The setting is in a castle, surrounded by a dark forest, with grotesque, gigantic, and vine-encumbered trees. The castle is described as horrible and barren; it appears to be decaying with crumbling stones and cobwebs everywhere. The smell was putrid like rotting bodies and it was extremely dark all the time; no light could find its way in. These descriptions create an eerie mood, filled with horror and disgust.

3. What is unusual about the narrator's childhood?

The narrator does not know who he is or what he looks like. He has lived in the castle for many years (assumingly); he's all alone, and he can't recall seeing or speaking to another living thing besides rats, spiders, and bats.

4. In what ways is the castle like a prison?

The castle is like living in solitary confinement. The narrator has no mirrors, no television, no friends/companions, not even sunlight. He is lonely and depressed. The only knowledge the narrator has of the outside world is from reading "antique books" that line the walls of his castle.

5. How does the narrator leave the castle?

The narrator climbs the ruined staircase of the high castle tower and finds a trapdoor in the ceiling that leads to an observation chamber. He is surprised because he's actually in another realm of sorts, at ground level, with the sight of the full moon before him.

6. How does the use of descriptive language create suspense?

The narrator can't see anything which creates suspense; he is exhausted and is trying to find a way out in complete darkness. The narrator creates suspense through the fear of the unknown. "In the darkness I raised my free hand and tested the barrier, finding it stone and immovable. Then came a deadly circuit of the tower, clinging to whatever holds the slimy wall could give; till finally my testing hand found the barrier yielding, and I turned upward again, pushing the slab or door with my head as I used both hands in my fearful ascent. There was no light revealed above, and as my hands went higher I knew that my climb was for the nonce ended; since the slab was the trap-door of an aperture leading to a level stone surface of greater circumference than the lower tower, no doubt the floor of some lofty and capacious observation chamber. I crawled through carefully, and tried to prevent the heavy slab from falling back into place; but failed in the latter attempt. As I lay exhausted on the stone floor I heard the eerie echoes of its fall, but hoped when necessary to pry it open again."

7. How do the people gathered at the party react to seeing the monster?

The narrator hears the most "horrible screams from nearly every throat." All the guests screamed in fear and "flight was universal," meaning everyone tried to flee. "Many covered their eyes with their hands, and plunged blindly and awkwardly in their race to escape; overturning furniture and stumbling against the walls before they managed to reach one of the many doors." The crowd was terrified and thought the creature was going to hurt/kill them, so they ran away in a panic.

8. What revelation does the narrator uncover? How does this occur?

The abomination that the partygoers are running from is *him*. He is the thing that everyone is afraid of. He looks in the mirror to see a rotting, corpse, disgusting and appalling.

9. What words and phrases describe the narrator's appearance?

Unwholesome, unclean, abnormal, detestable, "no longer of this world," abhorrent, and a monstrosity.

10. How does Lovecraft make the narrator seem human-like and relatable? Provide a specific example from the text.

The narrator is lonely, which is a common feeling amongst humans. The narrator reads a lot to keep himself busy. He finds company and relevancy in the books he reads and regards himself as one of the characters in his books. He feels youthful and dreams about a better future. He would "longingly picture myself amidst gay crowds in the sunny world beyond the endless forest."

11. What foreshadowing does Lovecraft use to hint to readers the narrator is not human?

The narrator has never heard his own voice or seen his own reflection. He lives in a castle that smells of rotting bodies that is apparently underneath a world where humans are. He doesn't need light to live and doesn't mention what he eats or how he survives. He is able to scale the building like a creature.

12. Do you think Lovecraft intended to have a deeper meaning than a simple horror story? Explain.

Lovecraft could be trying to say that there are people out there that don't fit the mold of what society expects them to be. When people who are different or are outsiders try to fit in, it doesn't usually work out because they can't pretend to be something they're not. They won't be accepted nor will they want to live a life other than what they are. The narrator says, "I know always that I am an outsider; a stranger in this century and among those who are still men." This line shows that the narrator is different, but it is enough. To be who you really are is a freeing experience.

13. What is the main conflict of the story? Does it get resolved?

The main conflict is that the narrator is trapped in a castle and he feels all alone. It is resolved in certain ways: he escapes the castle and he accepts his loneliness. Although he still ends up alone, he now knows what is out there and that it is not for him. He also doesn't return to live in the castle which he loathes. He is content with his new found wildness and freedom. "I know that light is not for me, save that of the moon over the rock tombs of Neb, nor any gaiety save the unnamed feasts of Nitokris beneath the Great Pyramid; yet in my new wildness and freedom I almost welcome the bitterness of alienage."

14. Is the narrator reliable or unreliable? Explain.

The narrator is unreliable because of his confused mental state. Although he seems like he has good intentions, he doesn't know what he is and what he is capable of. He seems to remember things and forget things at the same time.

15. What gothic or horror stories does "The Outsider" remind you of? Why?

Answers will vary. Some students may say Frankenstein; some may say Edward Scissorhands, etc.

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**“The Outsider” by H. P. Lovecraft
Paired Passage & Constructed Response**

Read this excerpt from Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein* (the narrator is a monster created by scientist Victor Frankenstein). Then use “The Outsider” and the following passage to answer the questions below.

Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?

I cannot describe to you the agony that these reflections inflicted upon me; I tried to dispel them, but sorrow only increased with knowledge. Oh, that I had for ever remained in my native wood, nor known nor felt beyond the sensations of hunger, thirst, and heat! Of what a strange nature is knowledge! It clings to the mind when it has once seized on it like a lichen on the rock. I wished sometimes to shake off all thought and feeling, but I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death—a state which I feared yet did not understand. I admired virtue and good feelings and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers, but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows. The gentle words of Agatha and the animated smiles of the charming Arabian were not for me. The mild exhortations of the old man and the lively conversation of the loved Felix were not for me. Miserable, unhappy wretch! Other lessons were impressed upon me even more deeply. I heard of the difference of sexes, and the birth and growth of children, how the father doted on the smiles of the infant, and the lively sallies of the older child, how all the life and cares of the mother were wrapped up in the precious charge, how the mind of youth expanded and gained knowledge, of brother, sister, and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds.

But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion. I had never yet seen a being resembling me or who claimed any intercourse with me. What was I? The question again recurred, to be answered only with groans.

Compare the monster’s experience with the experience of the narrator from “The Outsider.” Use specific details from both texts to illustrate and highlight the similarities and differences.

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“The Outsider” by H. P. Lovecraft
Paired Passage & Constructed Response

Possible examples:

-Both narrators are not human. Both possess: "no money, no friends, no kind of property." They don't have a family or a history.

-Both narrators are aware of their hideously deformed and grotesque appearances.

-In the excerpt, the monster from *Frankenstein* reflects on his sense of isolation, loneliness, and differences from man. The narrator from "The Outsider" also feels complete isolation and loneliness.

-The monster from *Frankenstein* has more awareness that he will make man flee in fear, while the narrator in "The Outsider" didn't know he was the cause of complete and chaotic panic at the party he showed up to.

-Both narrators feel like they could have related and understood people given the chance. They wanted to be human in a way. In *Frankenstein*, the monster admired virtue and good feelings; he "loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers." In *The Outsider*, the narrator read books and "merely regarded myself by instinct as akin to the youthful figures I saw drawn and painted in the books."

-The monster from *Frankenstein* discusses his mental development, from at first having virtuous intentions that were appreciated by the cottagers, to feeling shut out, to sinking into misery and unhappiness because he is ugly to others.

-The narrator from "The Outsider" also felt like wanted to fit in at first, but ultimately realized he was too different.

-The narrator from "The Outsider" accepts his fate with satisfaction where the monster from *Frankenstein* is still working through his feelings and cannot be content not knowing *what* he is.

-Both are misunderstood and have human-like emotions despite their outward appearances.

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“The Outsider” by H. P. Lovecraft
Creative Writing

“The Outsider” demonstrates a great example of a “lovable monster.” The narrator is a misunderstood villain with emotions and hardships of his own. Your job is to write a story from the perspective of any known villain. Your antihero can be from any movie, show, or story you’ve read/watched before. You must create a **COMPLETELY ORIGINAL** backstory for the villain of your choice, meaning, you cannot use a character that already has an origin story. Your story should make readers SYMPATHIZE with the narrator and understand why this character has become a villain.

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H.P. Lovecraft

- Howard Phillips Lovecraft was an American writer of macabre, science, fantasy, and horror fiction.
- He was born August 20, 1890, in Providence, Rhode Island.
- Lovecraft suffered many illnesses as a child, so he spent a lot of time at home instead of school.
- That didn't stop him from becoming successful; he was reciting poetry at age two!
- From 1923 on, most of Lovecraft's short stories appeared in the magazine *Weird Tales*.
- Some of his most famous works include: *The Call of Cthulhu*, *The Whisperer in Darkness*, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, *The Dunwich Horror*, *At the Mountains of Madness*, and *The Shadow Out of Time*.
- He's written over seventy short stories as well as hundreds of poems and scientific articles.
- He passed away March 15, 1937.



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wretched

- adjective
- describes a very unhappy or unfortunate state



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grotesque

- adjective
- describes repulsively ugly or distorted



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accursed

- adjective
- used to express strong dislike or anger toward someone/something



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akin

- adjective
- describes of similar character



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entreating

- adjective
- urgently or anxiously requesting something



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venerable

- adjective
- commanding respect because of great age or impressive dignity



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capacious

- adjective
- having a lot of space inside



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abysmally

- **adverb**
- **in an extremely bad way; in an appalling way**



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latent

- adjective
- describes existing but not yet manifested



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eidolon

- **noun**
- **a specter or phantom**



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carion

- **noun**
- **the decaying flesh of dead animals**



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cataclysmic

- adjective
- used to emphasize the extent of something bad or unwelcome



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fiendish

- adjective
- describes something extremely cruel or devilish



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abomination

- **noun**
- **a thing that causes great disgust or hatred**



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