

***The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* (dir. Nick Park & Steve Box, 2005)**

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Key Stage 5 English Literature

This lesson takes place as part of learning for the Gothic synoptic unit at A Level, and looks at what parody is and what it says about the genre, focusing on the Wallace and Gromit film, *The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*. Students closely study the film, and also develop their knowledge of both the Gothic genre and the Parody sub-genre of film. (Students should have a working knowledge of the conventions of the Gothic genre when this film is studied.)

Curriculum Links

To be studied as part of the Gothic Synoptic unit at A Level:

- Development of deeper understanding of Gothic conventions and the nature of parody; development of comparative skills.

Lesson Objective

To understand what Parody is, and how *The Curse of the Were Rabbit* is a parody of the Gothic genre.

You will need...

- **Trailer:** Access to the web
- **Main Attraction:** DVD of the film, 'How is it parodied?' resource



Activities

TRAILER: WHAT IS PARODY?

Before watching *The Curse of the Were Rabbit*, students need to understand what a parody is. Explain that a parody, also called a 'spoof', is when an existing film, or genre of films (or book, or work of art), is imitated for comic effect. This comic effect is achieved in two ways: exaggeration and inversion (you may have to explain what these two words mean). To get the idea embedded into students' heads, show them some examples of parody. Ask students to think about how the parody imitates the original and how it exaggerates or inverts it while they are watching or reading.

There are loads of examples, but some good ones are:

- Dr Evil making Evil Plans (language warning near the end of clip) – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-PlidaqCyU>
- Any French and Saunders parody (*Lord of the Rings*, *Famous Five*, Shopping Channel and *Harry Potter* are all good ones) - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCYbRUMzIb0>
- The Twilight parody 'NightLight' is very funny for readers and watchers of Twilight and links nicely to the Gothic genre – extract available at http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,20308569_20317217,00.html

Following each example, conduct a discussion with students to check understanding. Ask:

- How is this a parody?
- What aspects of the genre/original does it exaggerate and how does this add humour?
- What aspects does it invert – how does this add humour?

Get students to note down their own 'Rules of a Parody' – you could come up with these as a class – what does a parody need to exist?



MAIN ATTRACTION: EXPLORING GOTHIC PARODY

Explain that *The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* is a parody of the gothic theme, and ask students what they might expect to be parodied (haunted houses, perverse vicars, monsters etc.). You could ask students to note these down and tick them off as they are watching, like a form of gothic bingo.

- Watch the film. Following this, get students to explain (either in writing or through discussion) how it is a parody of the gothic.
- Encourage criticism and comparison – What works well? What doesn't?
- Finally, get students to link the film to as many gothic works (film and literature) as possible, through theme. Students could either create their own structure for this activity, or use the template attached.

For students needing more support, use the How is it a Parody? Resource sheet.

END CREDITS: CRITICAL RESPONSE

Get students to craft a response to the statement:

- *Parody tells us more about the gothic than gothic writing itself. Discuss.*

Give students time to plan and write, and to share their ideas with each other. Again, encourage critical and comparative responses.

Extras

Other Ideas

- This film could also be studied in tandem with Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, a 19th Century parody of the Gothic.

Read

- *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen, (1817)
- *The Wolfman* by Jonathan Maberry, (2010)
- *The Wolf's Hour* by Robert McCammon, (1990)

Watch

- *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (dir. Jim Sharman, 1975)
- *Little Shop of Horrors* (dir. Frank Oz, 1986)
- *Young Frankenstein* (dir. Mel Brooks, 1974)



CONVENTION	HOW IS IT SEEN IN THE CURSE OF THE WERE RABBIT?	HOW IS IT EXAGGERATED OR INVERTED?
Scary Monster		
Damsel in Distress		
Scary Settings		
Use of religious figures and churches		
Community come together to deal with threat		
Use of music and pathetic fallacy to create atmosphere		