**“Five Archetypal Horror Characters and Why They’re Important”**

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Horror movies seem to always employ the same basic formula for their characters, especially if the plot calls for a group of friends falling prey to whatever villain or obstacle in place. Some might be annoyed by the continued use of the same characters, but those characters are important and serve a purpose in the viewing experience. While not every horror movie uses this formula, it is definitely a recognizable theme within the genre.

**The Jock**

This guy doesn’t necessarily have to play sports, but he does have certain recognizable personality traits. He is attractive, narcissistic, and usually not all that bright. He is a macho man, believing himself the strong alpha male which is, more often than not, his downfall. He usually dies in an attempt to vanquish the villain. He is usually a womanizer, and only tolerated by the other characters. He is present as the boyfriend of the main female character’s best friend; he can also be main male character’s best friend, or both. He is important in the horror movie because he presents us with a dilemma. For women, he is the object of desire; for men, he is the object of envy. He is strong, handsome, and popular with the ladies. He is what every man wishes to be, and what every woman wishes to possess. But he becomes a villain within the group. Though we might want him, we also hate him. When he is confronted by the villain, we root for the killer.

**The Cheerleader**

She is just The Jock in female form. Not necessarily a cheerleader, she is a pretty girl who is not very bright and not very nice. She is usually the main female character’s best friend, for reasons unknown to the rest of us. She is mean, but she is also beautiful so the other characters, mainly the guys, tolerate her. She is the object of desire or envy respectively, and is easy for viewers to hate and the villain to kill. This is always the character who becomes the most terrified in her situation. She becomes absolutely hysterical, which means she also becomes incredibly annoying. It’s usually at this point that the viewer will start thinking, “Just kill her already!”

**The Nerd or Stoner**

From my experience, there has been either a stoner or a nerd, but hardly ever both (unless, of course, the stoner is a nerd). If the group consists mostly of stoners, then there will be a nerd; otherwise, we have our token drug user. They are the outcasts of the group, and usually only present due to a long term friendship with one of the main characters. They’re usually severely ridiculed by The Jock and The Cheerleader, which makes them easy to relate to for most viewers. Most of us have been ridiculed by someone at some point in our lives, so we can really feel for this character. They’re usually far less attractive than their cohorts, less agile and fit, and far more intelligent. They can also double as either prankster or comic relief. They’re important because we care about them, and they’re funny, whether intentionally or not; and we need something laugh at in a movie that is otherwise trying to scare us to death.

**The Nice Guy**

This is our main male character. He is usually the main girl’s love interest, but he can sometimes be her brother or a friend. His best friend is usually The Jock, even though they are nothing alike. He is sometimes viewed as “girlie” or feminine but really he’s just nice, which makes him seem weak in the midst of all the alpha males. He usually acts as the voice of reason, because every group needs one. He is nice to everyone, and he’s very easy for viewers to like and relate to. We root for him. He can survive with our main girl, but hardly ever on his own. The only way for him to survive on his own is if there is no “final girl”. If he doesn’t survive by her side, or on his own, he is the last to die. This provides a tragic ending, as the last girl loses her one true love. We hope that he makes it to the end, but even though we love him, he is also expendable.

**The Final Girl**

This is our survivor. She is the subtly pretty girl who is smart, sweet and liked by everyone. She doesn’t necessarily have to be a virgin, but she is far more pure than the other female character–and a lot nicer. Her mind is not clouded by lust or drugs, so she is able to make it to the end and defeat the villain. She is often a very quiet and laid back girl who finds strength she didn’t knew she had. She becomes a killer herself. After watching all of her friends die, she is willing to do whatever it takes to make sure that she is not next, and that the killer pays for what he did. Starting off as the more reserved of the bunch, she becomes the strongest person in the group. That’s why she’s able to survive, and that’s why we like her so much.

These characters vary in degrees of likability, which is why each and every one of them is important. The order of deaths is appropriate, and the suspense level rises with each as the danger gets closer to our Good Guy and Final Girl. The characters’ deaths assist the pacing of the movie. We don’t really care when the minor characters die, because they were never given any real depth. We realize there’s a threat, but we’re not too worried yet. We’re elated when The Jock and The Cheerleader are killed, because every moment leading up to it is spent making us hate them. We’re unhappy when the Stoner/Nerd gets it, because we secretly kind of liked him; and that just means that Good Guy or Virgin is next. Now is when we get really nervous, and our hearts race as we hope that the last two survive and come out victorious. When, and if, the Nice Guy is killed, we’re devastated, because we really hoped that he and The Last Girl would live happily ever after.

Despite the repetitiveness of these characters, you should definitely be grateful for their presence, because they each provide us with something to feel. If a movie consisted of only the mean people, there would be no one to root for. If we were bombarded with a group of nice girls and guys, we would be happy with anyone who survived, so there are no real stakes. There would be no suspense, or the heart-racing fear for our favorite characters.