# WHY DO HORROR FILMS TELL US WHAT PEOPLE WERE AFRAID OF?

## WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A new exhibition in Los Angeles is bringing together nearly 350 objects from the history of horror films. Visitors can see costumes, posters, props and books connected to films such as Dracula, Frankenstein, Psycho, The Shining and Scream. The exhibition also looks at how horror has changed over time. Early films often reflected fears about war, science, immigration and powerful leaders. Later films explored worries about consumer culture, racism, changing ideas about women and pressure to look a certain way. The 1920 German film The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, for example, appeared after the First World War and showed a frightening world controlled by an authoritarian figure. The exhibition's organisers argue that horror films act like a mirror. The monsters may be imaginary, but the fears behind them often come from real historical events and social changes.

## WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

Popular culture can be historical evidence. Horror films reveal what different generations feared, including war, dictatorship, new technology, racism and social change. A monster is rarely just a monster. It may represent worries about outsiders, unfair power or a rapidly changing society. Looking at films this way helps explain why some stories remain popular while others disappear.

## THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

**"What fears can horror films reveal about the time they were made?"**

**Source:** Smithsonian Magazine

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/from-slasher-films-to-vampire-flicks-horror-movies-are-more-popular-than-ever-relive-the-genres-scariest-momentsif-you-c