

Horror film clichés

Of all the genres that exist, horror is perhaps one of the most conventional. Many horror films rely on specific plot devices, also called tropes, to make their audience frightened. When a trope is used well, it can really make us jump out of our skin. Here are some of the most used, and perhaps abused, clichés in horror films.

1

No matter what kind of house it is, the basement is a scary place in horror films. That's usually where something is hiding or where the evil psychopath has hidden their tools. Basements are always dark and often damp. You can only reach them by a narrow staircase. And basements are always creepy, even when there isn't anything down there.

2

In older horror films, when protagonists were in desperation, it was difficult or impossible for them to call for help or call the police. Mobile phones have made that situation a bit less believable now. What's the solution to maintain suspense? No phone coverage! If you're a hero in a horror film, it's almost certain that at a key moment, just when you absolutely need to call for help, you will not have any coverage at all. Or your phone battery will die just as you are making the call. Or both.

3

This horror film cliché was especially popular with horror films of the late 20th century. It starts with a group of teenagers all enjoying themselves, and it ends with everyone dead except one girl. At the beginning the girl is usually innocent, shy and not particularly strong. By the end, she has become the toughest and most resourceful person in the world.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Nearly ten years had passed since the Dursleys had woken up to find their nephew on the front step, but Privet Drive had hardly changed at all. Only the photographs on the mantelpiece really showed how much time had passed. Ten years ago, there had been lots of pictures of what looked like a large pink beach ball wearing different-colored bonnets - but Dudley Dursley was no longer a baby, and now the photographs showed a large blond boy riding his first bicycle, on a carousel at the fair, playing a computer game with his father, being hugged and kissed by his mother. The room held no sign at all that another boy lived in the house, too.

Yet Harry Potter was still there, asleep at the moment, but not for long. His Aunt Petunia was awake and it was her shrill voice that made the first noise of the day.

"Up! Get up! Now!"

Harry woke with a start. His aunt rapped on the door again.

"Up!" she screeched. Harry rolled onto his back and tried to remember the dream he had been having. It had been a good one. There had been a flying motorcycle in it. He had a funny feeling he'd had the same dream before.

His aunt was back outside the door.

"Are you up yet?" she demanded.

"Nearly," said Harry.

"Well, get a move on, I want you to look after the bacon. And don't you dare let it burn, I want everything perfect on Duddy's birthday."

Harry groaned.

"What did you say?" his aunt snapped through the door.

"Nothing, nothing . . ."

Kilian Jornet

When you picture mountain climbers scaling Mount Everest, what probably comes to mind are teams of climbers with Sherpa guides leading them to the summit, equipped with oxygen masks, supplies and tents. And in most cases you'd be right, as 97 per cent of climbers use oxygen to ascend to Everest's summit at 8,850 metres above sea level. The thin air at high altitudes makes most people breathless at 3,500 metres, and the vast majority of climbers use oxygen past 7,000 metres. A typical climbing group will have 8–15 people in it, with an almost equal number of guides, and they'll spend weeks to get to the top after reaching Base Camp.

But ultra-distance and mountain runner Kilian Jornet Burgada ascended the mountain in May 2017 alone, without an oxygen mask or fixed ropes for climbing.

Oh, and he did it in 26 hours.

With food poisoning.

And then, five days later, he did it again, this time in only 17 hours.

Sleeping only seven hours a night, Kilian Jornet seems almost superhuman. His resting heartbeat is extremely low at 33 beats per minute, compared with the average man's 60 per minute or an athlete's 40 per minute. He breathes more efficiently than average people too, taking in more oxygen per breath, and he has a much faster recovery time after exercise as his body quickly breaks down lactic acid – the acid in muscles that causes pain after exercise.