

Retells and Remakes: Understanding How Horror Urban Legends Change Over Time

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# Retells and Remakes: How Horror Urban Legends Change Over Time

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## **Abstract**

This study seeks to understand how horror urban legends undergo changes over time and the possible reasons for their alterations. Past researchers have yet to analyze the shifts that have occurred within the retellings of these dark tales, and through this analysis, light will be shed onto what truly affects the media's storytelling behavior. Building upon meme theory, this study will use narrative and historical context analyses to uncover the objectives, narrative elements and temporal environments surrounding 10 replications of three horror urban legend memes over the past century. This research will uncover how these memes have mutated over time and inform the world as to how context plays a role.

A total of 30 horror urban legend artifacts (10 per meme) were analyzed using qualitative research methods in order to uncover the similarities and differences that appeared in the replications of each of the memes. Also, the contemporary thoughts, attitudes and values of the various time periods in which each of the retellings existed were analyzed to understand how historical events and movements may have led to a change in the story. The findings revealed that social movements played a large role in the alteration of horror urban legend memes, particularly in regards to the second wave of Feminism. Additionally, the findings showed that memes that heavily portrayed racism were altered in more recent decades to include leading actors and characters of various ethnic backgrounds. Because of these findings, this research aligns with and expands upon the work completed by Joel Best and Gerald Horiuchi (1985).

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### **General Audience Abstract**

This study looks at how three iconic horror urban legends have changed over the past century. Specifically, this study analyzes “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” in order to track the changes each tale has gone through, in addition to uncovering what might influence their change. Researchers have yet to understand this occurrence, and this study will serve as a way to answer why the media would be interested in revisiting and reviving older stories. Remakes of movies and TV shows are found in abundance within society, so this research will help assign a reason as to why ancient tales are dug back up from the grave. Using meme theory, this study examines how a story is able to be retold, remade and eventually changed by analyzing 10 remakes per urban legend, with each remake coming from a different decade between the 1920s and the 2010s.

The findings reveal that history plays a role in the remaking and altering of previous tales, mainly due to the older versions of horror urban legends no longer being relevant or culturally appropriate. Occasionally, the older adaptation of a story will have material or revolve around a subject matter that is no longer acceptable within a more modern society, such as women being shown only as a damsel in distress. Because of this, in order for the story to not be forgotten, it must be remade and altered to align with where the world is today.

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### Introduction

“This happened to a friend of a friend” (Slape, 2015). “I know, it sounds crazy, but it really happened” (Altier, 2020). Countless urban legends start off or conclude this way. For centuries, these tales have cultivated society, and are frequently passed off as true, otherworldly accounts of real events (Bennett & Smith, 2013). However, with every new translation, these stories have the ability to shift and mutate until they hardly resemble their own creator’s anecdote (p. 314). Although the aim of each chronicle was to “gratify our desire to know about and to try to understand bizarre, frightening, and potentially dangerous or embarrassing events that *may* have happened,” it is debatable as to why these narratives alter or why they still continue to shift today (Brunvand, 1981, p. 12).

In the 21st Century, with the pervasiveness of radio, television and the internet, urban legends have endured. From the headless horseman in search of a new head, to the bloodied woman who appears in the mirror, and even to the man eating monster who stalks the forests, urban legends have burrowed their way into mainstream media (Kennedy, 2019; Fine & Dundes, 2002; Manguel, 2019). In the digital age, however, how and during what circumstances are urban legends most likely to change (Misner, 2008; Brunvand, 1981)?

To answer this question, three horror urban legends will be analyzed via narrative and historical context analyses through the lens of meme theory. The legends of “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” will be the main foci of this research due to their cultural narratives being a ubiquitous recurrence within various media forms such as, but not limited to, films, literature and television shows. Each of these urban legends will be treated as memes, otherwise known as a piece of cultural knowledge that circulate and mutate over time and audiences (Dawkins, 1976). With this, this study has the potential to uncover why the media

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would rather reiterate centuries-old urban legends, rather than create entirely new material for contemporary audiences.

Pertaining specifically to the analysis of this study, the overall objective and elements of each narrative will be analyzed for 30 artifacts, 10 per meme, in order to understand how the tales themselves have changed. In addition, when and where the artifacts were created will be noted, as well as any significant events that occurred contemporaneously to its creation to grasp how outside factors may have led to an urban legend's adaptation. From there, any specific use of language, ideas and terms will also be analyzed per artifact for additional context. This research has the potential to become a useful addition to the field of communication and folklore due to its findings regarding media and meaning-making. Through uncovering how "Bloody Mary," "Sleepy Hollow" and the "Wendigo" urban legends have changed over the past century, this study will establish how the media can alter and retell past stories in order for them to remain current and relevant in an ever-changing society. Also, this analysis will serve as a return to the study of communication in conjunction with folklore, and will seek to bridge the gap between rhetorical criticism, contemporary legend studies and history.

### **Literature Review**

In order to analyze the changes that occur within urban legends, this research will be exploring communication, folklore studies, and meme theory. These sections will provide necessary information regarding the study of horror urban legends, touch on their place within the media and establish the theory that will be used as the main framework in uncovering how they change over time. Additionally, sections regarding word of mouth communication, computer mediated communication and the most common themes found within horror urban legends have been incorporated as well for useful context.

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### **Oral Storytelling**

Oral traditions were the main means of storytelling prior to the 20th century (Ellis, 1975). Although a number of tales were collected and assembled into storybooks, orated methods were the primary means of reciting urban legends for the majority of human existence (Grimm, 1812; Ong, 1982). Initially the only form of communication, stories would be passed from individual to individual as a way of entertainment or cultural preservation through word of mouth (WOM). These messages were used to disseminate information onto its audience's ears, often creating them "to cope with and understand the ineffable" reality that existed around them (Misner, 2008, p. 5). Ancient storytellers would use this medium to pass on tales of triumph, heartache, and warnings to the next generation with the hopes that their stories and culture would live on long after they have passed. As described in his book, Ong (1982) explains that a rather large difficulty arises when using strictly WOM communication, with the main problem being that once a message is spoken, the story is gone once the last syllable is uttered. Because of this, ancient cultures placed an emphasis on listening and memory. It also explains why tales would often differ from storyteller to storyteller.

Following the widespread growth of literacy and note taking technologies, word of mouth communication slowly began to fade into the darkness. Cultures were soon able to preserve their stories in ways never before imagined, and the use of new techniques allowed for faster communication than ever before available (Ong, 1982). Through this, society no longer has to wait by the fire for a story to be told, but instead is able to turn on the television, attend a movie theater or even read a comic book to find an entertaining story. In addition, the recorded tales did not differ with each revisit of the recording, and as a result, became more trustworthy accounts of



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the events that unfolded (p. 58). As these tales were collected and placed into books, a new field of study was created: the field of folklore.

### **Folkloristic Studies**

According to folklorist Dan Ben-Amos (1971), folklore can be described as “the unifying thread that joins jokes and myths, gestures and legends, costumes and music into a single category of knowledge” (p. 3). Amongst scholars, the study of folklore, otherwise known as folkloristic studies or folk life studies, is a branch of the field of anthropology (Mills, 2020). It serves as an assembled anthology of the religions, traditions, beliefs and practices of a specific community’s culture, and is the academic home of urban legend studies (Ben-Amos, 1971). Folklore has the ability to transcend language, historical and ethnic barriers in order to continue to be spread, with the older generations being more likely to pass it onto the younger ones. A common example of this would be the practice of knitting or quilting, an ancient technique passed from generation to generation (Gaffglione, n.d.).

Beginning with the “fairy story” or fairytale as they are now more commonly known by, verbal folklore was first collected within European countries as a way to build and align with a national, cultural identity (Ellis, 1975; James, 1945). These stories were collected and sorted by whether or not they were a part of “high” or “low” society, with the most well-known collection of tales being those gathered by the Brothers Grimm (1812). Since this initial collection, theorists such as Antti Aarne (1910) and Stithe Thompson (1928) have expanded upon this classification system. Believing that the organization of folktales should be ordered by more than just class, the theorists recorded common motifs, structures and plot points that allowed for a more precise classification of various stories (Dundes, 1997). Categories introduced by the researchers include but are not limited to animal tales, fairy tales and tales of magic (pp. 196-197). Today,

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folkloristic artifacts no longer need to be strictly oral, but instead may be written tales, material items, traditional customs, children's stories or cultural beliefs (Ellis, 1975).

Artifact collection can be defined as an accumulation and categorization of tales, traditions and practices that were once common amongst a particular group or era (Ellis, 1975). Artifact collection is a large piece of the study of folklore, but not every aspect of life can be considered a folkloristic source. The process of an artifact becoming a piece of folklore involves a practice that was once vital to the survival of a people becoming a more novice, aesthetic attribute that serves as a reminder of the past (Gaffglione, n.d.). This can be displayed with examples of knitting, where today, most people would be able to make it through the winter without hand-stitched items, whereas four hundred years ago that may not have been the case (Rutt & Hughes, 1987). Folklorists trace these practices in order to understand why a tradition may persevere over time, and hope to uncover the deeper meaning within them that may shed light onto ancient societies (Ellis, 1975). Today, folkloristic studies seek to uncover the pieces that made cultures of yore who they were, and this research will continue to uphold this notion to understand how urban legends changed over time, from generation to generation, and what that means for media and meaning-making.

### **Major Forms of Folklore**

Folklore can be found in a number of different forms. Myths, legends and folktales are the most “basic terms in folklore” (Bascom, 1965, p. 3). Each of these structures are very different from one another and have been classified separately with the intention to diminish all contradictions that have been found within the field (Ben-Amos, 1984, p. 99). Additionally, these three forms have been classified as prose narratives, strictly to “differentiate them from proverbs, riddles, ballads, poems, tongue-twisters and other forms of verbal art” (Bascom, 1965, p. 3). In

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order to differentiate urban legends from other forms of folklore, the three story types will be dissected.

**Folktales** – As described by folklorist William Bascom (1965), folktales are “prose narratives which are regarded as fiction” (p. 4). These types of stories are never regarded as history and are never seriously believed. Folktales are often described without a certain date or location in mind, thereby making them timeless. These are most often attributed to nursery rhymes or fairy tales, but that does not mean they are only meant for children (Dundes, 1980). There are a variety of other forms of folktales, such as “human tales, animal tales, trickster tales, dilemma tales, formulistic tales, moral tales and fables” (Bascom, 1965, p. 4).

**Myths** – Myths, as described by Richard Dorson (1973), pertain to a specific type of orated tale regarding the supernatural and are fully believed by its storyteller. An example of a myth would be that there are Gods atop the Great Mount Olympus, or that the world is held up by the giant Atlas (Gerber, 2021; Norris & Norris, 2020). As Boscom (1965) states, “myths are prose narratives in which, in the society in which they are told, are considered to be truthful accounts of what happened” (p. 4). This form of folklore is largely accepted and believed within ancient societies and is held as a type of dogma. Myths generally circulate around non-human beings such as gods, nymphs or otherworldly beings.

**Legends** – Legends are considered to be prose narratives that, similar to myths, are believed by the narrator and their audience to be true, but are set in a much more recent time (Boscom, 1965). These types of stories often regard humans as the focal point of their narrative, and are viewed as being less sacred than myths. They speak of human ventures, such as “migrations, wars and victories, deeds of past heroes, chiefs, kings, and succession in ruling dynasties” (Boscom, 1965, p. 5). This was the earliest form of history to be passed from an

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individual to an individual in order to preserve a culture, but these tales also include stories of “ghosts, buried treasure, saints and fairies” (p. 5).

### **Understanding Urban Legends**

Branching off of the legend form, urban legends largely followed oral storytelling traditions before making their way into media. These types of tales, also known as contemporary legends, are described as “an often lurid story or anecdote that is based on hearsay and widely circulated as true” (Bennett & Smith, 2013; Croft, 2006). Despite their name, however, these tales do not always originate in an urban area. The term “urban legend” was first used in 1968 by Richard Dorson, the father of American folklore, to describe a modern tale “which never happened, told for true” (Brown, 1971). Prior to the introduction of this term, many folklorists did not recognize these types of stories as legends, and instead solely focused on “traditional legends,” otherwise known as pieces from more isolated, rural areas (Ellis, 1975). It was actually during the 1930s and 1940s that folklorists began to identify what seemed to be legends originating from populous cities, and thus led to the inclusion of this new sect of legend studies (Dorson, 1981).

Although the term urban legend suggests a focus on more modern times, there are a number of contemporary legends that can be traced back centuries. As previously stated, urban legends have the ability to mutate as they pass from person to person, or from one generation to the next. Because of this, although modern technology may be incorporated into a contemporary legend, that does not mean that this version is its initial form (Slay, 1986; Mikkelsen, 2017a; Mikkelsen, 2017b). Instead, it is likely that the tale has adapted in order to survive and continue its spread amongst a new generation. With this in mind, it is clear to see why it is necessary to study how urban legends change over time.

### **Contemporary Legend Studies**

Following its introduction into the field of folklore in the late 1960s, contemporary legend studies were predominantly associated with story-collection (Bennett & Smith, 2013). After Linda Dégh (1968), famed folklorist attributed to the first-wave of newfound contemporary legend studies, arrived to the United States from Hungary in 1968, the nature of urban legend studies shifted away from pure collection and classification, and towards a world of analyzation after she sought to understand the nature of ‘American belief legend’. She recorded the main themes found within the two popular urban legends “The Vanishing Hitchhiker” and “The Hook” in order to establish a national identity (Bennett & Smith, 2013). From there, she and her students’ later research evolved to include the presence of the storyteller and the role they play in being both the villain and victim of the tale, which Dégh (1983) deemed “ostension” (Langlois, 1978). Dégh (1968)’s understanding of urban legends pertained specifically to the supernatural and the world of horror, with these attributes later being expanded upon during the second wave of contemporary legend studies (Bennett & Smith, 2013).

Meanwhile, at the same time Dégh (1980) was publishing articles and teaching students, Jan H. Brunvand (1981)’s work introduced the second wave of contemporary legend studies in the early 1980s (Bennett & Smith, 2013). He attributed an urban legend to being a “realistic account told to fool the gullible” (p. 13). Brunvand introduced the idea of urban legends as practical jokes into the field, and popular tales pertaining to contaminated food and kissing rocks were incorporated into the study of urban legends (Brunvand, 1981). His main means of study returned to the idea of collection and classification rather than sole analysis, and Brunvand has since published many books containing urban legends (Bennett & Smith, 2013; Brunvand, 1981).

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Following Brunvand's presence in contemporary legend studies, urban legends exploded with popularity while the field as a whole began to suffer a fallout. Those who told or reiterated urban legends were often met with "arbitrary attitudes" and seen as practical jokers (Bennett & Smith, 2013, p. 14). Because of this, the third wave of contemporary legend studies appeared in order to try and reclaim the field during the mid 1980s. Still continuing on today, the third wave can be largely attributed to Gillian Bennett and Paul Smith (2013, p. 15). During this third wave, an emphasis was placed upon the varying perspectives found within urban legends. There has been a rather large return to the practice of analysis rather than solely collection in regards to the tales, and the field has since tried its hardest to return to the academic world after being "excluded by university curricula" by most institutions until recent years (p. 14).

Despite the decline in academic study of urban legends, the narratives still endure. Within the digital era, communication can now happen at a rate of speed never before imagined, and contemporary legend studies have had to take on various lenses shared by the field of communication (Bennett & Smith, 2013). Through the widespread availability of the internet, storytelling has reached a new level of accessibility with the introduction of social media (Lund et al., 2018). Focusing specifically on urban legends' relationship with communication, articles have been published with the intent to tackle the misleading narratives that have arisen as a result of urban legends being spread by computer mediated communication (CMC) (Zeng, 2020; Miletskiy et al., 2019).

### **Horror Urban Legends**

In regards to companies and branding, horror urban legends have been a prominent staple in the commercial world during the Autumn months. From alcoholic beverages sharing the same name as "Bloody Mary", to images of headless ghosts invading Snickers commercials, these

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contemporary tales have stood the tests of time (Liquor.com, 2020; Nudd, 2012). This is not where these types of legends originated, however, whereas many of today's urban legends are centuries old. Often told on Halloween or by a campfire, these ancient stories have transcended the medium of oral storytelling and have since nestled into countless other vessels (Ellis, 1994). Horror movies, TV shows, video games and comic books have all adopted a number of the creepy tales found under the horror urban legends umbrella. What constitutes a horror urban legend, however, is highly debated.

As most folklorists would argue, there is no such thing as a "horror urban legend" (Ellis, 1994; Klintberg 1990a; Tangherlini 1990;). As Bill Ellis (1994) describes, this is entirely due to the lack of consensus that was reached at the "series of special legend commission meetings ... held during the early 1960s" (pp. 61-62). These meetings were meant to address the multitude of legends coming out of urban areas, but nothing was reached in terms of what could and could not be classified. Prior to the introduction of the second wave of contemporary legend studies, urban legends solely regarded one common factor: the supernatural and grotesque. Aligning with the work done by folklorist Linda Dégh (1968), what will be referred to as a horror urban legend will instead be a reference to these earlier notions of what it means to be an urban legend. This will eliminate the entirety of kissing rock and contaminated food stories, to instead narrow in on the ghosts, ghouls, murderers and monsters that populate the urban legend genre.

### **Horror Urban Legends and Pop Culture**

In modern times, horror urban legends populate numerous areas of popular culture. From comic books, to video games, to films and television shows, these eerie tales have cemented themselves within the horror genre (McKechnie, 2010, p. 171). "Within the active and lithe world of popular culture, contemporary legends surfaced, resurfaced, are told, retold and

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reworked as partial or complete narratives, and remain vibrant and significant for the general population” (De Vos, 2012, p. 1). Seeing that this study will be analyzing pop culture reiterations of three horror urban legends, it is necessary to establish how horror urban legends are spread through the use of popular culture.

**Literature** – Starting with literature, horror urban legends are “easily located in all print formats and literary genres including graphic novels, short stories, poetry, picture books and novels intended for/appreciated by young-adult reading and listening audiences” (De Vos, 2012, p. 2). With this, there are a number of ways in which an author may utilize a horror urban legend within a written piece. One use may be to provide an insight into the concerns felt by a culture at the time the work was written. Another possible reason can be for the horror urban legend to “act as a communicative device within [an author’s] work, reflecting or foreshadowing one of the thematic story arcs in the storyline” (De Vos, 2012, p. 2). Collections of horror urban legends are common as well, especially those written by folklorists and appreciated by individuals who enjoy a scary story to tell in the dark. No matter the reasoning, however, horror urban legends have been found within the written format for decades upon decades, and literature serves as a useful tool in which to reiterate and disseminate a creepy tale.

**Film and Television** – Films and television shows are another way horror urban legends can be told, retold, and eventually spread amongst a society. As described by famed folklorist Stith Thompson in 1946, this form of popular culture has been identified to be “both a marvelous channel of tale dissemination and a kind of storytelling event,” at least in regards to fairytales (Thompson, 1977; Koven, 2008, p. 4). That being said, there has not been much academic focus placed on the relationship between the film and television industry and horror urban legends. As folklorist Paul Smith (1999) states, “There is perhaps an irony in the fact that, while such films



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such as *Candyman* (1992) recognize the role of the folklorist as [a] collector of contemporary legends, very little attention has been given by folklorists to the role of the film and television industry as users and disseminators of contemporary legends” (p. 138).

Despite the near absence of academic research associated with contemporary legend studies and the film and television industry, horror urban legends have been largely adopted and adapted by the horror genre. As the famous writer, director and visual artist Clive Barker states in relation to his film *Candyman* (1992), he asserts that “most horror films were developed through contemporary legends via short stories” (De Vos, 2012, p. 17). Some popular examples of this phenomenon include the films *Campfire Tales* (1997), *The Ring* (2002) and *When a Stranger Calls* (2006), while some television examples are episodes from *Supernatural* (2005-2020), *The Simpsons* (1989-present) and *Mythbusters* (2003-2016). Although there is not much research conjoining horror urban legends to film and television, it is safe to assert that the television and film industry is responsible for the proliferation of many horror urban legend reiterations. Additionally, the thoughts of Stithe Thompson (1946) in relation to this form of popular culture will likely carry onto the then undiscovered area of contemporary legend studies, particularly in regards to its ability to disseminate a given tale to a new group of audiences.

**Video Games** – Touching on the final form of popular culture that will be discussed within this study, video games are one of the newest forms of entertainment, with their creation happening at the end of the 20th century (Ivory, 2015). Despite being relatively new, they are oftentimes filled with referential material that pertain to horror urban legends. Companies have created entire video games that revolve around horror urban legend figures, and games that would not even be classified as horror have included smaller, hidden side objectives, otherwise known as Easter Eggs, that a player may choose to find to reveal a horror urban legend reference

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(Bauman, 2012). From *Silent Hill 3* (2003) depicting a bloodied woman in a mirror that will kill the main character almost instantly, to *Dead by Daylight* (2016) incorporating a Wendigo character into their online multiplayer mode, horror urban legends are a prominent installment across a multitude of video games.

Due to video games still being a relatively new and ever-evolving environment for study, there are no articles that have been published in regards to it and its use of contemporary legends. There have been, however, a few articles released on video games' ability to form folkloristic artifacts, in addition to certain gaming communities producing their own urban legends that pertain to the game they enjoy (Sherman, 1997). In relation to the field of communication, video games have shown to be an emerging field for social interaction, and a multitude of pieces have been released to show how the narrative of a video game may affect the player (Christy & Fox, 2016; Elson et al., 2014). As described by Dr. James D. Ivory, video games are a very unique medium compared to the other popular culture forms previously mentioned, and "provide individuals with thought-provoking and meaningful experiences beyond enjoyment" (Ivory & Kalyanaraman, 2007, p. 538). Because of this, video games are a powerful new tool that allow for the interactive dissemination of a tale across its players.

### **Examples of Horror Urban Legend Shifts**

Popular culture is an effective way to disseminate horror urban legends amongst a populus. After so many replications, disseminations and imitations, however, a horror urban legend has the potential to mutate. This is a phenomenon that has taken place over many centuries, and has affected a number of the horror urban legends that are still around today. From the tale of the exploding toilet to the legend of the hairy-armed hitchhiker, both of these stories have been traced back to reveal their true origins (Slay, 1986; Mikkelsen, 2017b). In terms of the

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exploding toilet, the narrative varies as to what causes the explosion, but centers around a man either dropping a cigarette or match into a toilet his wife had just poured paint thinner into. As for the hairy-armed hitchhiker, a male serial killer dressed in old lady drag is seen asking a woman for a ride home from the shopping mall, where the kind schaeffer is ultimately killed. In terms of the exploding toilet, it has been discovered to actually be a tale that dates back to a rural 1940s outhouse. As for the hairy-armed hitchhiker, it is possible that it is actually a mutated replication of the Brothers Grimm story of “Little Red Riding Hood” (Brunvand, 1987).

Michael Carrol (1988) suggests that the mutation that occurred in the hairy-armed hitchhiker may have been to reflect a more Freudian narrative within a traditional children's tale, otherwise shifting to adopt previously held beliefs. Meanwhile, according to Walter Ong (1982), these tales should not have shifted due to their narrative being recorded in some form of media. Following Richard Dawkins’ (1976) meme theory, however, it is possible to assert that urban legends are cultural pieces that exist outside of its initial creator’s interpretation, and instead have the potential to be imitated, replicated and ultimately mutate to take on a life of their own.

### **Typography of Urban Legends**

Urban legends have the ability to change over time, and their alterations may be due to their cultural significance. Using the theory of collective behavior, researchers Joel Best and Gerald Horiuchi (1985) suggest that there are three reasons for an urban legend’s presence. First, urban legends serve as a type of public service announcement regarding some form of unconstructed social problem. This means that there is something that is happening within society that is being unaddressed, and that the urban legend is the vessel in which to carry a message. Second, Best and Horiuchi (1985) offer another possibility, continuing on by stating “collective hysteria, urban legends, and social problems construction offer alternative responses

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to social strain” (p. 495). Here, the authors assert that urban legends have the chance to expand upon societal issues, and serve as a warning message to those who are a part of their in-group community.

Third, Best and Horiuchi (1985) state an urban legend may emerge to reflect the need for some form of social organization. The researchers explain this occurrence in relation to the legend of the razor blade in the candy apple which began to take off in the early 1970s (Poole, 2019). The days of one knowing every family in the neighborhood was gradually becoming a thing of the past, and isolationism was on the rise (Johnson, 2009). With this, the authors suggest that social tensions of the 1960s and 70s could have been to blame for the overall mistrust of one another’s neighbors, and ultimately, families began to fear that their children would fall victim to Halloween sadists (Fischer, 1982, Merry, 1981, Suttles, 1972). It is apparent that urban legends hold a meaning within their tales, but what is not addressed is whether existing urban legends are more likely to shift during times of civil unrest. Because of this, the following study regarding urban legends evolving over time will ultimately build upon decades of research.

### **Themes Within Urban Legends**

As researchers Joel Best and Gerald Horiuchi (1985) found, urban legends have common themes that drive their existence. It was not until years later, however, that the most common themes found within urban legends were compiled into one place, similar to the Aarne-Thompson classification system (Dundes, 1997). Joshua Misner (2008) organized 60 urban legends into three main categories in order to understand the most-common themes found throughout. The first of the three, encompassing 58% of the legends at hand, was a warning message. He explains that “the purpose of this message is to simply warn the reader of impending danger” (p. 24). Continuing on, the second message most commonly found within

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urban legends was a call to action. Making up 38% of the 60 tales, the goal of the narrative was for the person engaging with the contemporary legend to “start, stop, or alter a given behavior” (p. 19). Finally, making up less than 5% of the remaining urban legends studied, the last common theme that was found consisted of a pure shock value story. The sole purpose of the story was to leave those listening in awe and nothing more. With these patterns laid out, it prompts the question of whether or not the overall message or objective of an urban legend also has the potential to alter with each replication.

### **Meme Theory**

In order to understand how horror urban legends have changed over time, a theory from the sociological field and later adapted by visual communication scholars has been selected to locate these shifts. Using Richard Dawkins’ (1976) meme theory as the driving framework behind this study, it explains why each contemporary tale may alter from individual to individual. Initially coming out of the biology department, Dawkins (1976) explains that, similar to a gene, a piece of culture has the ability to replicate and mutate each time it is passed from one person to another. Considering the ancient storytellers who thrived off of the spoken word alone, all they had was their memory to help them hold onto a legend. Because of this, each time the story was told, fragments were lost as the words nestled into the ears of the listeners, thereby creating a new version of the story. Then, once the story was retold, reiterated or imitated, a new replication was born. Finally, the main way in which a meme alters is through cultural mutation, being described as a distinct change or “mistake in the imitation” of the meme (p. 190).

In order to predict the cultural survival of a meme, Dawkins (1976) outlined three main points that are needed to continue its life: longevity, fecundity and copying-fidelity (p.194). First, longevity can be attributed to how long the meme is able to be remembered. The memory of an

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urban legend can be held onto for an entire lifetime, thereby making the meme more likely to survive. Compared to a printed version of the tale, however, it may only last as long as the paper. Because of this, replications will have to be made in order for the meme to last both on paper and “in people’s brains for centuries to come” (Dawkins, 1976, p. 194). Then, fecundity, arguably more important than longevity, refers to the ability for a meme to spread amongst a populus (Dawkins, 1976). Fecundity is able to be measured by analyzing the number of people on the street that are familiar with the urban legend, or through media studies pertaining to an urban legend’s numerous uses within pop culture (Tali & Knaut, 2019; Dawkins, 1976, p. 194). Finally, copying-fidelity involves the way in which a meme is able to mutate and continue its journey, rather than staying static for eternity (pp. 194-195). An instance of this would be if an urban legend were to later be found in another country with a different title, or if the tale itself had a different antagonist than what was previously described.

Since its creation, meme theory has been expanded to include communication on the internet (Blackmore, 1999). Today, the colloquial understanding of a meme is attributed to an online image found and spread on social media, usually being used as a relatable, humorous commentary, but that is not all that they are (Vasquez & Aslan, 2021). Memes are still widely regarded in the academic world as pieces of a given culture, and are not limited strictly to the sphere of humor and satire. In relation to social movements, memes, and the creators of them, have the ability to “[dispense] digital social justice in absence of other alternatives by manipulating... iconic scene[s] to their advantage” (Mielczarek, 2018, p. 77). In doing so, the public has the ability to shame an individual or practice to wide degrees. Also, memes still have the ability to trace the history and development of a piece of culture, such as Chinese tea traditions as a result of the Silk Road (Zhao et al., 2020). Since the 1970s and Dawkins’s idea of

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a meme as a piece of cultural knowledge, the theoretical concept of a meme has been adapted to the digital environment to signify a cluster of self-referential images that adhere to a new world of participatory media (McLuhan, 1996; Milner, 2018).

Given the current gap in the literature, this research seeks to understand the extent to which meme theory can be applied to three contemporary tales: “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo.” Seeing as each of the three urban legends have met all of the requirements outlined by Dawkins (1976) to be highly survivable memes, they will each be fruitful tales for analysis. Because of this, through using narrative and historical context analyses, this study seeks to answer the two following questions:

**RQ1:** How do the horror urban legends of “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” change over time from the 1920s until the 2010s?

**RQ2:** How do the changes in “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” reflect contemporary societal attitudes and values?

### **Method**

This study utilized a qualitative narrative analysis and historical context analysis to study how horror urban legends changed over time between various decades, beginning in the 1920s and concluding in the 2010s. A qualitative analysis was chosen in order to develop a deeper understanding of the various media forms and contexts that engulf each artifact, as well as the overall historical bases that surround each. This method served as an effective way to conduct this research compared to one that is quantitative, given that it would not be able to apply various lenses in the same manner. Meme theory was the driving theoretical framework behind this study, with each horror urban legend representing a meme, and every reiteration of the tales equating to a memetic replication.

### **Meme Selection**

The first step in conducting this study pertained to the selection of the horror urban legend memes. As Dawkins (1976) describes, a meme is a piece of culture that has the ability to replicate and mutate as it disseminates amongst a populus. Seeing as urban legends are a piece of culture according to the field of folklore, meme theory served perfectly for this study (Ellis, 1975). Focusing specifically on three horror urban legends, “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” were the memes selected in order to understand how they have changed over time. Each of the horror urban legends were picked due to their longstanding pervasiveness in society, as well as because of their centuries of existence in this world. With this, each of the contemporary tales went through slight variations over the years, and that allowed for a richer analysis as to how exactly they shifted over time with each replication. In order to operationalize the term urban legend, this research aligned with the first wave of contemporary legend studies, being that these tales regarded the overall presence of supernatural forces. As Linda Dégh (1969) states, urban legends regard the “delight in, fear of [and] fascination with the supernatural and irrational,” thereby making the chosen horror urban legend memes the perfect choice for analysis (Bennett & Smith, 2013, p. 13).

**“Bloody Mary”** – Beginning with the first horror urban legend meme analyzed, the “Bloody Mary” ritual dates back to circa 1786 where it was first published in a footnote by Scottish poet Robert Burns in his poem titled *Halloween*. Within it, he describes a form of Halloween mirror divination ritual that aims to conjure a figure within the glass (Fine & Dundes, 2002). The person performing the ritual must walk up a flight of stairs backwards holding a lit candle, before approaching a mirror in a dark room. Once there, the participant, often a young woman, would peer into her own reflection in hopes of witnessing whom she may one day



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marry. According to the legend, there is a chance that the woman may see the face of Death or the Devil, which signifies she will die before ever marrying.

Although that is only one version of the urban legend, it is likely that this ritual dates back even further, so much so that there are traces of a similar practice in ancient Greece (Lee, 2017). Deemed “catopromancy,” the sick and dying would often seek out oracles in order to determine their fate (Nelson, 2000). While in the presence of the fortune teller, she would gaze into either reflecting pools or small mirrors to tell her customer their future. Upon peering into her own reflection, the oracle would then be met with either a ghastly sight or good news, signifying the likelihood of the customer’s passing (Ogden, 2005, p. 195).

Today, the horror urban legend that is “Bloody Mary” is better known to be a tale of summoning a vengeful spirit who will harm whoever summons her (Dundes, 1998). This tale has been widely circulated on the continents of North America, Europe and Asia, and numerous film, television and literary adaptations have been made as a result. Because of this legend’s centuries of longevity, fecundity and high levels of copying-fidelity, this meme was an excellent choice to analyze the ways in which it has changed over time.

**“*Sleepy Hollow*”** – Moving to the second horror urban legend meme that was analyzed through narrative and historical context analyses, “Sleepy Hollow” was selected to understand how it also changed over time. This contemporary tale has roots in the Middle-Ages, but is often believed to date back even further than then. Here, the traditional tale regards a Grim Reaper-esque horseman who rides through town carrying his severed head as he terrorized Dutch and Irish communities (Kennedy, 2019). The version being more closely focused on, however, was initially published in 1820 and was the first American book to ever become popular outside of the United States (“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” n.d.). This version of the tale focuses on a

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Hessian trooper during the American revolutionary war who was beheaded by an American-shot cannonball. From there, it is said that he haunts the grounds of Sleepy Hollow, New York, looking for a new head to replace his old one. Since this interition, there have been many other replications that have since risen to the surface. From the headless horseman being an American Civil War soldier, to a more modern version that paints him as a motorcyclist beheaded in an accident, this urban legend experienced very high levels of fecundity, while also exhibiting longevity and copying-fidelity (West, 2017; Mikkelson, 2017a). Because of this, in addition to its longstanding pervasiveness within society over the past centuries, “Sleepy Hollow” also served as yet another fruitful horror urban legend meme for analysis.

*The “Wendigo”* – Finally, the last horror urban legend meme that was analyzed was the legend of the “Wendigo,” also known as the “Windigo” or “Wíhtikôw” (Smallman, 2010). This legend dates back centuries within First Nation people’s culture, and has had a prominent life within North American society. Here, the “Wendigo” is described as an evil spirit that possesses the body of those who resort to cannibalism. As the urban legend goes, once a person consumes the flesh of another human, they then turn into a demonic, immortal being that has an insatiable hunger for human meat. Early versions of the tale claim that they are vulnerable to weaponry, however, and stories of Indigenous Wendigo hunters populated the 19th and early 20th centuries (Ferris, 2019). Today, fragments of the “Wendigo” urban legend can be found in various media forms with short stories, magazines, comics, television shows, movies and video games being made within the last century. Because of its high levels of longevity and equally balanced fecundity and copying-fidelity, this horror urban legend meme rounded out the analysis for how an urban legend may change over time.

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### **Artifact Selection**

The second step in performing this study involved selecting the artifacts, or replications, that were studied under each horror urban legend meme. Here, 10 replications of each contemporary tale were selected by performing an all-encompassing search on Google, IMDB and EBSCOhost in order to identify one pop culture artifact pertaining to each decade from the 1920s to the 2010s. This section of time was chosen since it can clearly plot any specific changes these horror urban legend memes have gone through over the past century. Additionally, the collection of artifacts are naturally spaced out with one major reiteration of the meme occurring per decade in the earlier half of the century. Because of this, this research was best studied through analyzing the artifacts along this proposed timeline.

Although some recent decades had more various pieces of media relating to the horror urban legend memes, the decades of the 1920s through the 2010s was still the most diversified timeline to track specific changes that occurred within each reiteration of the tale. In regards to these decades with multiple media forms pertaining to a given horror urban legend meme, the way in which a replication was selected was based upon the source's availability for analysis. Criteria for the sources included whether the film or television show could be found on streaming platforms such as, but not limited to, Hulu, Amazon or Netflix, or if copies of the books or comics were available online.

In relation to the "Bloody Mary" horror urban legend meme, 10 of the most dominant and prolific major media, pop culture adaptations were selected. Specifically, these artifacts were picked due to their narratives pertaining to a haunted mirror, cursed mirror, witch's mirror or summoning a figure through gazing at one's own reflection. This included, but was not limited to, mirror or water rituals that were meant to contact the land of the dead or tell one's future. The

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reason for the fluctuation of this meme's artifact criteria was due to the high copying-fidelity of the urban legend, signifying that it is one that has gone through many mutations. Because of this, what began as a mirror ritual now resembled what is commonly known today as the "Bloody Mary" horror urban legend meme, and each replication from the decades of the 1920s through the 2010s served as effective artifacts in analyzing how an urban legend changed over time. The artifacts chosen that pertained to the "Bloody Mary" horror urban legend meme were: the *Halloween Happenings* (1921) book by Lettie C. VanDerveer, the *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) film, the *Dead of Night - "The Haunted Mirror"* (1945) film anthology, the *Orphée* (1950) film, the *Witch's Mirror* (1962) film, the *Ghost of the Mirror* (1974) film, the *Boogeyman* (1980) film, the *Candy Man* (1992) film, the *South Park* "Hell on Earth 2006" (2006) episode and the *Oculus* (2013) film.

Regarding "Sleepy Hollow," 10 prolific major media, pop culture artifacts pertaining to the horror urban legend meme were also chosen. More specifically, one from each decade spanning from the 1920s to the 2010s were selected based upon how each artifact pertained to and revolved around the central theme that is a headless male figure riding a horse. Because this meme is high in fecundity rather than copying-fidelity, it has gone through a number of replications over the past century, with only a handful of mutations altering its tale. Due to this, the collection of artifacts pertaining to "Sleepy Hollow" had the ability to offer different results than the aforementioned "Bloody Mary" case study, and its unique memetic survival mechanic therefore justified its presence within the study of how urban legends change over time. The replications chosen for the "Sleepy Hollow" horror urban legend meme were: the *Headless Horseman* (1922) film, the *Headless Horseman* (1934) cartoon, the *Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949) film, the *Washington Irving's Sleepy Hollow* (1958) short film, the *Walt*

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*Disney's Uncle Scrooge* "The Heedless Horseman" (1966) comic book, the *Scooby-Doo Show* "The Headless Horseman of Halloween" (1976) episode, the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1980) TV film, the *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) film, the *Headless Horseman* (2007) film and the *Sleepy Hollow* (2013) TV pilot.

Finally, 10 major media, pop culture artifacts pertaining to the "Wendigo" horror urban legend meme were picked to conduct its analysis. In order to identify artifacts, one replication containing or relating specifically to the term "Wendigo" or variations of the word were identified for each decade from the 1920s to the 2010s and served as useful pieces in uncovering how the urban legend has changed over time. Being the meme that is highest in longevity, this horror urban legend has existed the longest in its current form and provided interesting data as to how it has changed over time in relation to its other two counterparts. The artifacts chosen for the "Wendigo" meme's analysis were: *Plains Ojibwa Tales* "Nänibozhu and the Windigo" (1920) short story by Alanson Skinner, the *Golden Book Magazine* "The Wendigo" (1933) short story by Algernon Blackwood, the *Capt. Marvel* "And the Slayer on Skis" (1942) comic book by Alfred Bester, the *Ottawa Journal* "Big Chief Nan-Bush and the Wicked Wendigos" (1950) newspaper comic story by Ja-Bega-Nene, the *Forest Rangers* "The Wendigo" (1965) episode, the *Wendigo* (1978) movie, the *Pet Sematary* (1983) book by Stephen King, the *Charmed* "The Wendigo" (1999) episode, the *Supernatural* "Wendigo" (2005) episode and the *Until Dawn* (2015) video game.

### **Narrative Analysis**

Narrative analysis proved to be the most effective method in uncovering how a horror urban legend meme changed over time. Through analyzing the overall objective and features of all 10 artifacts pertaining to each of the three horror urban legend memes, this method provided a

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clear view of how the specific contemporary tales have changed over the course of one century. Not only that, but this method also bridged rhetorical criticism and the field of folklore, and was a novel contribution to the field of communication by understanding why the media continued to refurbish older tales.

Aligning with the work outlined by McAllister et al. (2020) and Minkkinen (2021), the third step of this study involved rhetorical criticism. Focusing on narrative analysis, this study analyzed 30 artifacts in total (10 per urban legend) for the “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and “Wendigo” memes using the tables found on tables 1-3 in order to understand how their individual narratives changed over time. Standing with Richard Dawkins’ (1976) meme theory, each urban legend served as its own meme, with each artifact signifying a replication of the meme. Finally, mutations were noted following this step in order to track the shifts that occurred over time. As McAllister et al. (2020) stated while using this method, “storytelling provides an interpretation of an experience, thus revealing a phenomenon in human-centred and memorable ways” (p. 1) Because of this, the narrative analysis served as a means in which to understand the functions of each tale, and in conjunction with historical context analysis, proved useful in uncovering how urban legends changed over time.

To answer the research questions prompted within this study, narrative analysis was selected as one of the two methods of analyses. Narrative analysis, as created by Sonja K. Foss (2009), serves to understand what a story or narrative truly is (p. 307). In addition, through studying and understanding a narrative, one is able to know more about and participate within the social world in which that context exists (Bochner et al., 1997, p. 308). Narrative, as Foss (2009) describes, constitutes the basic form of most short stories, novels, graphic novels, comic strips, films, plays and songs. Here, she explains that narratives allow humanity to interpret

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reality, mainly because they help society decide what a particular occurrence is about and how various elements of each individual's experiences are connected. They help organize situations so that communities can make sense of the people, places, events and actions that are found within all of their lives. Foss states that the four main requirements of every narrative are that each artifact must have at least two events, that every event must be organized by time order, that every narrative must have a causal or contributing relationship among events in the story and lastly, that the narrative must be about a unified subject (pp. 307-308).

Reviewing these guidelines established by Foss (2009), each of the replications identified pertaining to the memes "Bloody Mary," "Sleepy Hollow" and the "Wendigo" met every one of the four characteristics required for an artifact to be considered a narrative. Each piece had at least two events, such as someone encountering something supernatural and trying to make sense of it, or even survive it. Foss's second qualification was also met because each artifact followed an entirely chronological sequence of events, which had a clear beginning, middle and end being identified within each work. Continuing forward, the third requirement for each artifact to be a narrative was also achieved because each has a well-defined causal relationship appearing throughout the piece. An example of this would be when one encountered a supernatural entity and felt the need to do something about it, whether that be to fight, run away or interact with it.

Finally, each artifact had a unified message, being that they regarded only a reflection-based paranormal occurrence, a headless horseman haunting or a humanoid, cannibalistic creature. Because of this, each of these artifacts accomplished the last requirement of Sonja K. Foss in order to make each artifact a narrative. Since the driving questions of this study regarded uncovering the ways in which an urban legend changed over time, Foss's method allowed for a precise way to identify the narrative features that distinguished one replication from the others.

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More specifically, the first procedure in a narrative analysis allowed for each artifact to be understood by determining its overall objective (Foss, 2009, p. 310).

**Objectives** – As Sonja K. Foss (2009) states, there are two primary procedures in analyzing an artifact. The first procedure involves “identifying the objective of the narrative,” or rather identifying what purpose the narrative was set out to accomplish (p. 310). In order to help identify what a particular narrative may be, Foss has created the following list of potential objectives that are most commonly found within stories:

*List of Objectives* - To help the storyteller or the audience function more effectively in the present, to encourage action, to defend or justify an act, to legitimize an act, to adjust to an event or condition, to repair or restore order, to heal from loss or disappointment, to comfort or bring relief, to teach, instruct or offer lessons, to convey truths and values about a culture, to socialize into a community, to inculcate obedience, to challenge perceptions of a situation, to clarify thinking or to make sense of something, to gain self-knowledge, to redeem or renew, to construct identity, to entertain, to maintain or create community, to counter received or conventional knowledge, to honor, memorialize or commemorate or to manage or resolve conflict (Foss, 2009, p. 312).

Through identifying the objective of the narrative, one would be able to establish to his or her best guess what the overall story was trying to accomplish through its presence in the world, and ultimately helped in determining how an urban legend changed over time. In order to gauge the overall objective of each artifact, each narrative was fully engaged, whether through reading or watching the given media, in order to cross reference the narrative with Sonja K. Foss’s list of objectives. After an objective was identified, it was then recorded within the correct artifact row in the column meant for objectives. A copy of the tables used for this study may be found in



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tables 1-3. Once done, this was repeated until each objective was identified for all 30 artifacts before moving onto the second step, being to define the features of the narrative (Foss, 2009, pp. 312-315).

**Settings** – The second procedure for analyzing a narrative artifact, as Sonja K. Foss (2009) describes, regarded “identifying the features of the narrative to discover how they accomplish the objective” (p. 310). Focusing on the setting, it was important to understand where the narrative physically took place. With this, Foss places an emphasis on whether or not the setting changes place over time, as well as how the physical locality of the plot relates to the characters within it. She finally wishes for the researcher to analyze “how the particular setting is created” and whether or not it is well developed (p. 312). In order to identify the setting, each time a new location was introduced within an artifact, it was recorded in the corresponding artifact row in the slot aligning with the setting column. This included all dates and locations that were made available to the audience. A copy of the tables being used for analysis may be found within tables 1-3, and each setting was analyzed for all 30 artifacts.

**Characters** – Moving to the second part of the second procedure in analyzing a narrative artifact, characters are equally as important as setting, if not more. Sonja K. Foss (2009) explains that the researcher should identify who the main characters are, as well as if they are static or dynamic, specifically pertaining to whether or not the character changes over time (p. 312). Physical and mental traits were examined in this section, alongside how the characters were presented overall. This was also the time to explain whether the character was flat or round, otherwise understood as whether the character is generally predictable or is rather filled with various traits. Characters were identified for each artifact by recording the name, as well as a brief description, of each individual who was present within the narrative. This was completed

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for each artifact, and was recorded within the “characters” slot aligning with the given horror urban legend meme artifact.

*Narrators* – Continuing to the third part of the second procedure for narrative analysis, Sonja K. Foss (2009) places importance on understanding who the narrator is (p. 312). This particularly relates to who the person is that is telling the story, or whose perspective the story is being told from. It is necessary to establish whether they are seen as reliable, meaning they understand everything and tell events as they are, or unreliable, meaning that they communicate what they specifically view through their own lens. Building off of this, there are also narrators who are omniscient, otherwise known as all-knowing, or limited, meaning they only understand as much as the audience. Finally, it is also important to state which focus the narration is in, whether that be first, second or third person (p. 313). In order to figure out the narrators for the 30 artifacts, the type of each narration was recorded within the tables found on tables 1-3. Specifics pertaining to the form, reliability and overarching knowledgeability of the events were noted. This was recorded in the corresponding slots that aligned with the correct artifact row and narrators column.

*Events* – Events pertain to what exactly is occurring within each artifact. As Sonja K. Foss (2009) describes, this regards all plotlines, changes and directions that occur within the piece. With this, there are two main distinctions found within each artifact, with the first being a kernel (a major event), and the second being a satellite (a minor event). Here, Foss describes a major event to be “events that suggest critical points in the narrative and that force movement in particular directions” (p. 313). As for minor events, they are simply seen as pieces meant to fill out and explain the kernels of the given artifact. In order to complete the fourth part of the narrative features analysis, every time an event occurred within an artifact, it was noted within

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the tables found on tables 1-3. To be exact, this was recorded within the slot that aligns with the correct artifact row and the events column. This was done for all 30 artifacts.

***Temporal Relations*** – Temporal relations relate to how time plays a role throughout the narrative. As Sonja K. Foss (2009) points out, this is the part that pertains to the ways in which the narrative unfolds (p. 314). This can be understood by looking at if the story takes place over several years, or just a few minutes. Another way to think of temporal relations is in regard to a linear storyline, or one that contains numerous time jumps and flashbacks. Other things to consider are if the narrative is one where someone is telling the future, or explaining something that has happened long ago. Finally, speed plays a role in this section as well, whereas some events may take place relatively quickly in relation to the entire piece, or how some moments last half the narrative. Regarding this study, this fifth part was analyzed by recording the time relations that occurred within each artifact, such as whether or not it was following a linear pattern and if there were jumps forward or backward in time. This was done for all 30 artifacts and was recorded on the tables found within tables 1-3. More specifically, this was noted on the correct slot aligning with the correct artifact row and the column titled temporal relations.

***Causal Relations*** – Casual relationships play a rather large role in pushing the story forward. Because of this, Sonja K. Foss (2009) establishes that it is necessary to understand the way cause and effect play a role within each piece being analyzed. More specifically, the method requires one to understand whether events are “caused largely by human action, accident, or forces of nature,” as well as in how much detail this exact relationship is addressed (p. 314). To accomplish the sixth part of this analysis, the overarching cause and effect relationship found within the artifacts was recorded onto the tables found on tables 1-3. Specifically, this was written within the slot corresponding to the correct artifact row and the causal relations column.

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This was completed by taking note of any and all cause and effect instances that occurred within the narrative, and explaining the relation between what happened prior and the action that occurred as a result. This was completed 30 times in order to do it for each artifact.

***Audiences*** – The seventh part for analyzing the features of the narrative relates to who the target audience is for a given artifact. Here, Sonja K. Foss (2009) places importance on whether the narrative is addressed to an “individual, a group, or the narrator themselves” (p. 314). With this, it is necessary to look for signs within the narrative for the ways in which an audience is referred, such as if the narrator makes any assumptions regarding the audience’s “knowledge, personality and abilities” (p. 314). To complete this, each artifact was fully engaged in order to suggest who the target audience may be. This was also accomplished by looking at the audience ratings for movies and television shows, in addition to making an educated guess as to who would be most likely to engage with that form of media. This was recorded in the tables found on tables 1-3, and was repeated for all 30 artifacts. To be precise, this was noted within the slot that aligned with the correct artifact row and the audiences column.

***Themes*** – The theme regards the “general idea illustrated by the narrative” (Foss, 2009, p. 314). This specifically relates to the intention or meaning behind the actions described within the overall artifact, and Sonja K. Foss (2009) requests each researcher to articulate how well a theme is conveyed. Some popular examples of themes include “love always wins,” “always listen to one’s gut” and “be careful what one wishes for” (Atwood, 2020). To accomplish this eighth part required by the method, each artifact was fully engaged in order to understand its overall theme. Only after the narrative concluded was this step possible. Once it finished, the theme was suggested through an educated guess as to what the overarching theme was. The findings were recorded in the tables found on tables 1-3, specifically in the slot which

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corresponded with the correct artifact row and themes column. This was repeated for all 30 artifacts.

***Types of Narratives*** – Finally, the last part of the second procedure of narrative analysis is to explain what type of narrative the artifact selected may be. As Northrop Frye (1957) explains in *Anatomy of Criticism*, the most common types of themes are “comedy, romance, tragedy and irony” (Foss, 2009, p. 314). Diving deeper, a comedy pertains to a narrative in which the main protagonist triumphs over a challenge and gains “happiness and stability” (p. 314). From there, a romance can be described as a narrative in which the protagonist vanquishes an enemy and “emerges victorious and enlightened” (p. 314). A tragedy pertains to a type of story in which the main protagonist is unable to conquer a challenge due to their own flaws and inability, and finally, an ironic narrative regards a tale of “chaos, confusion and sadness” where the protagonist’s situation is out of their own control (p. 315). This final part was completed by noting how the narrative began and how it concluded. After this was done, it was easier to suggest what the type of narrative the artifact was. These findings were then recorded into the tables found within tables 1-3, specifically in the slot aligning with the correct artifact row and types of narratives column. This was completed 30 times in order to understand the types of narratives for all artifacts in this study.

After the completion of the second procedure of narrative analysis, Foss (2009) explains the presence of two supplementary measures that can also be performed in order to analyze the effectiveness of a narrative's story and how it aligns with its overall objective. She states, though, that if those measures are unnecessary, then they do not have to be analyzed, saying one “may stop [their] narrative analysis with the first two steps – identifying the objective and discovering how the strategies enable the objective to be accomplished” (p. 315). Seeing as the effectiveness

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of the objective was outside of the realm of this study, this latter procedure was not performed. This research, instead, identified and explained the shifts that occurred within the retellings of an urban legend. In order to do so, after the completion of the second procedure of narrative analysis, the fourth step in this study was to reference the completed tables in tables 1-3 and mutations, or abrupt changes in the artifacts, were highlighted and recorded.

### **Historical Context Analysis**

In addition to McAllister et al. (2020) and Minkkinen's (2021) research, the works of Magistrale and Blouin (2020) and Joyrich (2018) also informed this study. Contributing to the realm of historical context analysis, the fifth and final step in this study pertained to all 30 artifacts being analyzed by using the tables found within tables 4-6. With this, a historical lens was applied to each artifact in order to uncover the deeper meaning behind the narrative of each piece. This allowed for a better understanding of the historical implications of each work, as well as the time of its creation and dissemination amongst a given culture, and answered what an urban legend changing may reflect about society. As Magistrale and Blouin (2020) state, "history ought to be considered within [broader] conversations" in order to grasp the full reality of a realized story.

Historical context analysis was chosen as a supplementary measure in order to understand if history contributed to the timing and mutation of each urban legend at the time of production and dissemination during each decade. Through this, historical context analysis shed light onto the state of society at the time of each urban legend's reiteration. Building off of historical criticism, often attributed to 17th century priest Richard Simon for its creation, historical context analysis aims to explain "the social, religious, economic, and political conditions that existed during a certain time and place" (Simon et al., 2013; Fleming, 2019; Roy, 2017). This allowed

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for a more conceptualized understanding of each given artifact, and without it, would have deprived the replications of their full meaning. A popular example of this notion can be found in the following expert: “Sally hid her hands behind her back and crossed her fingers before she answered” (Adcox, 2020). If one were to later find out that this was a quote from a historical document from the 1692 Salem witch trials, it would add a multitude of meaning behind the sentence and offer an insight into where society was at that time.

Aligning with the notion that historical context is necessary, famed folklorist Richard Dorson (1955) completely agreed that history needs to be considered when analyzing folklore. As folklorists Charles W. Joyner and Leslie L. Roos Jr. state (1975, p. 257):

If we are serious about developing locally defined, culture-specific categories and contexts, longitudinal data would seem to be not merely relevant, but essential. Any society has a life span extending beyond the life span of any of its members. The members at any given time cannot by themselves define the boundaries of social experience. So long as new generations are being born into the society, social context will remain a dynamic process, not a static setting. Events, such as folklore performance, if studied apart from their historical context, will remain only partially comprehended.

With this in mind, it is more than necessary to understand the historical context in which urban legends are retold. Through comprehending this, one may be able to uncover what an urban legend may tell about society during that given time.

To answer how the changes in “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” reflected contemporary societal attitudes and values, historical context analysis, as described by Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier (2001), was the best approach in understanding the deeper meanings that lay within each retelling of an urban legend. More specifically, four main pieces

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needed to be identified per artifact in order to gain historical insight: When an artifact was created, the location in which it was made, any historical events that would have taken place at that location at that time, and finally, whether or not there was any specific use of jargon, language, ideas or terminology (p. 101).

***When an Artifact Was Created*** – Touching now on the first piece that was analyzed, when an artifact was created allowed for an insight as to what was going on at that given time. An example as to why this is necessary may be in accordance to a phone call that took place 1876 (Alfred, 2017). Although today that may not seem like something of interest, but in the context that it occurred within the same year as the invention of the telephone, it suddenly adds more importance to the overall notion. Because of this, it was necessary to identify, to the closest ability, the date in which an urban legend artifact was created in order to understand it from a historical perspective. The date was noted for each artifact in the tables found on tables 4-6. In order to do so, the slot aligning with the correct artifact and date of creation column was filled in. This step was completed by researching the artifacts on the EBSCOhost database, IMDB or Google.

***Where an Artifact Was Created*** – Moving now to the second piece of historical context analysis, it was important to understand the location the artifact was created. This is specifically due to the circumstances that pertain to various groups of people, as well as how the location itself relates to each artifact. An example of this could be found when referencing a letter a woman wrote to her husband while aboard the Titanic (Hart, 1911). Because of this, the location served as another key element to the context of an urban legend artifact and could not be neglected during historical context analysis. Therefore, the location in which an artifact was created was recorded on the tables found within tables 4-6, specifically in the slot which



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aligned with the correct artifact and location of creation column. This was completed by referencing EBSCOhost, IMDB or Google.

***Significant Historical Events*** – Looking to the third piece of historical context analysis, significant historical events are a vital part of the human experience. As Howell and Prevenier explain, “all historical events are unique, and every fact about an event is unique” (2001, p. 84). An example of this assertion can be seen when looking at a picture of an elderly woman floating on a boat, only to realize the image was taken a day after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami that affected Japan (Gilhooly, 2011). Historical events could be used as a way to explain the underlying psyche of all those in a given region, and served as a beneficial point for the analysis of urban legends. This was completed by analyzing the major historical events of the location and decade that aligned with the creation of the artifact. In order to research this, various timelines provided by the ProQuest and EBSCOhost history databases were referenced. Then, the most culturally significant events were recorded onto the tables found in tables 4-6, specifically within the slot correlating with the correct artifact and significant historical events column. This was repeated for all 30 artifacts.

***Specific Use of Language, Ideas and Terminology*** – Finally, the specific use of language, ideas and terms used within an artifact were identified. With these, each applied a deeper understanding onto an interpreter’s knowledge of a given society. An example of this can be seen when reading through old texts on one’s phone and seeing slang such as “tffn,” “crunk” and “chillax” (Young, 2018; Heinrich, 2019). These phrases served as a screen shot into where society was at that time, and can once again proved to be a useful point for the analysis and understanding of urban legend memes. To complete this, each time an artifact uses any unfamiliar language, terminology or ideas, these were noted and cross referenced through the

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Merriam-Webster dictionary in order to fill in the gaps in knowledge with their true meanings. These specific uses of language, ideas and terminology were recorded onto the tables found within tables 4-6 in the correct artifact slot aligning with the terminology, ideology and language column. This was repeated for each artifact that was analyzed through this analysis.

Historical context had the ability to play a large role in uncovering the deeper meaning behind urban legends. Because of this, it could not be neglected and helped inform the research questions posed within this study. Through approaching each artifact with historical empathy, being through a non-judgement lens in relation to historical pieces, it was easier to understand where society was at the time of each urban legend's creation, as well as what significant cultural events occurred at that time that may have influenced them (Endacott, 2014).

### **Findings: “Bloody Mary”**

The “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend meme has gone through numerous changes and mutations over the past century. Originally a divination ritual, this tale now resembles something closer to a ghost story rather than a method in which to tell the future. Being incredibly high in copying-fidelity, mutations were found in abundance and may be used to explain how the tale has changed over time. In the following sections, each decade has been divided up into historical eras in order to demonstrate the narrative shifts, as well as explain the historical significance each of these alterations may hold. These findings may be found on tables 1 and 3.

#### **New Era & Great Depression (1920s-1930s)**

During the 1920s, otherwise known as the New Era, the Earth was recovering from the first World War and large parties were highly common, especially on Hallowe'en (Rogers, 2002). It was within a Hallowe'en party planning book that the first artifact for this study was written, being found within *Hallowe'en Happenings* (1921) by Lettie C. VanDerveer. Here, the

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author describes a divination ritual that requires a woman to walk backwards down a flight of stairs while gazing solely at her own reflection in a handheld mirror (p. 32). Through this, the image of the man she is supposed to marry is suspected to manifest within the reflection, assuming the woman does not break her neck. This version of the “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend meme seems to be the closest to the original ancient Greek source material, but things quickly alter as time goes on. The reason why this artifact may still be intact with the 1786 poem titled *Halloween* by Robert Burns could be due to the fact that mass communication was still in its infancy at this point in time, with the radio not even being in the White House until one year later (Berkman, 1987). With the availability of widespread communication, however, that is likely when this horror urban legend began to really mutate.

During the 1930s, American animation legend Walt Disney created the second “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend artifact to be studied: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). Within this piece, a witch can be seen gazing into a mirror for the purpose of obtaining information regarding the present and future, specifically pertaining to her own beauty. This is a direct reference to the 1786 divination ritual, with it even depicting a face manifesting within the mirror. What changes, however, is that the face speaks directly with the witch, making it seem as though the mirror itself held a spirit. This version seems to be mixing both the 1786 and ancient Greek versions of the horror urban legend together, and begin to turn the legend into something new. Similar to the last replication, the reason why this version still resembles the older tales is most likely due to the slower speed at which these stories could travel. Additionally, Halloween was growing into a more dangerous holiday, and the parties of the 1920s were no longer commonplace at this time (Best & Horiuchi, 1985). It is possible that this tale entered a stage of dormancy between these two replications, with Walt Disney then bringing it back into the public

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eye. This replication of the tale is the last of its kind to stay true to the original source material before facing a major mutation.

### **WWII Era (1940s)**

Now in the WWII Era, British horror media was halted in order to preserve the psyche of its people (Kermode, 2001). Seeing as the German Blitzkrieg was hailing bombs on the British almost nightly, the British government ordered more lighthearted productions to be made rather than those with scary stories. That is, until the third horror urban legend artifact to be studied was created: the 1945 British anthology film *Dead of Night*. Within this movie, fiancée Joan buys her husband-to-be Peter an antique mirror from Mr. Rutherford, an antique salesman. Unbeknownst to Joan at the time, however, the mirror had belonged to a man who strangled his wife before killing himself, all in front of the mirror. Over the course of the film, Peter becomes occupied with the mirror more and more, until he is no longer able to see Joan in the reflection at all, and instead sees a different room entirely than the one he is in.

Throughout this film, it is suggested that the soul of the previous owner was somehow attached to the mirror, and was attempting to convince Peter to enact the events of the past. This serves as the first major mutation within the “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend meme, with it being the first to do away with the divination ritual entirely and instead building off of the previous replication’s thought that a mirror may hold an entity. The reason this major mutation may have taken place could have been due to the exchange of stories by World War II soldiers of various cultures allowing for a mix of the tale, in addition to the success of the aforementioned Walt Disney film. With this in mind, what follows from this replication is a series of versions from numerous countries.

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### **Post-War Era (1950s-1980s)**

The Post-War Era was one of great technological advancement spanning the length of the Cold War. Notable accomplishments and historical events that occurred over this length of time include the Civil Rights Act, successful missions to the moon and the emergence of the second wave of Feminism (Thornham, 2004). Starting in the 1950s, the artifact that was chosen for this decade was the French film *Orphée* (1950). Basing itself on the Greek tale of Orpheus, this movie aligns itself with the previous artifact *Dead of Night* (1945) by focusing on the presence of mirrors being a conduit between the living and the dead. Here, the main protagonist Orpheus finds himself seeking his deceased wife by passing through a mirror into the world of the dead. Although not directly related to a haunting, this supernatural movie expands upon the idea that mirrors have a connection to the afterlife, and establishes that one may pass through them as a type of doorway. The reason this replication may have deviated from the ones prior may be due to the fresh wounds that were left following World War II. This replication not only revitalized “Bloody Mary,” but also a Greek tale of grief and mourning. By combining the two, both stories were able to be adapted into a new world and alter one another as they mixed. Never before had the mirror legend been attached to sorrow, but what follows from this point forward is purely that. Additionally, it is likely that this French replication was influenced by the previous British one, especially considering their proximity to one another.

For the decade of the 1960s, the horror urban legend artifact that was studied was the Mexican film *The Witch's Mirror* (1962). During this time, the Mexican Radiation Accident of 1962 had just occurred, and possible imagery alluding to this was found throughout the film. Within this piece, a housekeeper named Sara is known to practice black magic. After performing a mirror divination ritual, she discovers that her goddaughter Elena is to be murdered by Elena's

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husband, the famed surgeon Eduardo. Sara attempts to make a deal with a demon in order to save Elena's life, but the demon in the mirror denies her request. Upon Elena's death, Sara summons Elena's ghost who begins to haunt her husband and his new bride Deborah. Paranormal happenings take place, and Eduardo and Deborah find Elena's spirit emerging from a large mirror. Although Eduardo attempts to destroy the mirror, he instead ignites Deborah and horribly disfigures her. Eduardo then begins stealing corpses in order to try and repair Deborah's appearance and replace the scorched parts of her body. Meanwhile, Sara conjures the ghost of Elena once more, who possesses a pair of severed hands meant for Deborah. After the transplant, Deborah's new hands are hellbent on murdering Eduardo. Through this artifact, it is apparent that this film aligns with each of the previously mentioned replications, as well as establishes that ghosts have the ability to be summoned and pass through mirrors.

Now in the 1970s, the next horror urban legend artifact chosen for “Bloody Mary” was the Chinese film *Ghost of the Mirror* (1974). In order to help his dying mother, the main protagonist Young Noble is sent to an abandoned estate with his servant boy Ching in order to record Buddhist scriptures. While there, he spots what looked to be a woman in the well, but instead finds a mirror upon a second glance. He pulls the mirror out of the well, and Young Noble meets Su-Su, a woman who drowned in the well and is now bound to the mirror. She explains that she is forced to do evil things by the Dragon, a being who often takes the form of a witch. While writing the scriptures, Su-Su scares Ching who runs back to Young Noble's mother's village. Meanwhile, Young Noble and Su-Su fall in love. The dragon finds out about this, and vows to destroy both of them. Su-Su sacrifices herself for Young Noble, and the protagonist finishes his scriptures and returns home. This replication aligns with what had been established by the previous artifacts, and is highly reminiscent of *Orphée* (1950) in the way in

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which the living are able to interact with and have relationships with the dead. This piece was also released following the Zhaotong Earthquake of 1974, so it is possible that the themes of grief and mourning that were found in *Orphée* (1950) were once again relevant, thereby leading to the creation of this piece.

Closing out the Post-War Era, *The Boogeyman* (1980) was selected as the horror urban legend artifact to represent the decade of the 1980s. Here, A pair of siblings (Willy and Lacey) are traumatized after Willy kills their childhood abuser at a very young age. Then, 20 years after the murder, Willy is entirely nonverbal, and Lacey is married and has a son named Jake. Lacey's husband Kevin wants to help her work through her trauma following a letter from her birth mother prompting her to visit, and so after visiting the psychiatrist named Dr. Warren, they travel to her childhood home where the murder took place. Meanwhile, Willy accidentally strangles a woman who was coming onto him in the barn before catching a glimpse of himself mid kill. He promptly lets her go and she runs away, never to return. Back at their childhood home, Lacey breaks an old mirror that she believes she sees the reflection of the murdered boyfriend in. Shattering the mirror sets his spirit free, and he kills the owners of the childhood home, a pair of random teenagers, Lacey and Willy's uncle and a priest. He is able to do so by traveling through reflections, and killing those who are caught in one. His weakness is based around water, however, and the reassembled mirror is thrown into a well by the siblings. The film ends with Lacey's son dropping a piece of the mirror from the bottom of his shoe in a cemetery, with Willy no longer being mute but Lacey still being heavily traumatized.

This replication serves as the last building block before the “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend departs to where it is today. This version builds upon the notions that evil spirits can live inside mirrors, affect those in the outside world and have the ability to kill when they are

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released. Also, this piece is the first of the replications to depict a woman in a role outside of the typical seductress or damsel in distress, most likely due to the second wave of Feminism that had just taken place. Additionally, it is noted in Linda Dégh's research notes from 1980 that this is the point in time where stories began appearing on American playgrounds regarding Bloody Mary (Dundes, 1998). The replications that follow from this point forward align with the most widely accepted version of the "Bloody Mary" horror urban legend.

### **Contemporary Times (1990s-2010s)**

Contemporary times account for the period between the Post-War Era and present day. Such occurrences that have taken place over this span of time include the dismantlement of the USSR, the Iraq War and the Black Lives Matter movement. Beginning with the horror urban legend artifact that was chosen for the 1990s, *Candyman* (1992) is the first of the replications to resemble what is commonly understood to be the "Bloody Mary" ritual. Within this piece, Masters student Helen Lyle decides to do her thesis on a local urban legend: The Candyman. She, along with her friend Bernie, travel to the Chicago Projects in order to learn from those who say they have encountered him. Helen and Bernie learn that in order to conjure the Candyman, they must look into a mirror and say his name three times. Helen does so, and her life begins to be plagued by a series of murders she knows she did not commit. Blamed for the deaths regardless, Helen's husband leaves her and she is condemned to the insane ward in a local hospital. Helen ultimately breaks out and goes back to her apartment where her husband has been cheating on her. Then, running back to the Projects, she learns that she is the reincarnation of the woman Candyman loved and died for, and that they had a baby together who Candyman was currently searching for in order to reunite them all in the afterlife. Helen finds the child and saves him, but she herself dies.



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This replication establishes that through saying a ghost's name three times in a mirror, they will be summoned in order to enact revenge on those who called them. This mutation is the first in the line of "Bloody Mary" horror urban legend artifacts to resemble what is commonly understood to be the legend today. Additionally, this film does well to convey the racial tensions that still existed following the Rodney King trials in Los Angeles, as well as demonstrated where the American society had come from in terms of how they viewed race and interracial marriage. It is safe to assume that this replication resembles the "Bloody Mary" horror urban legend due to a similar story being told by American children at the same time. It is likely that the production team wished to keep the story relatively the same, but to incorporate strong African-American leads in order to depict a harsher narrative meant to communicate the racial injustices of the time.

For the decade of the 2000s, the horror urban legend artifact chosen was from the long-running television show *South Park* (1997-present), specifically focusing on the episode titled "Hell on Earth 2006." Here, the South Park boys are seen taking turns attempting to summon the spirit of Biggie Smalls by reciting his name three times in a mirror. None of them are able to say the name three times out of fear, until Butters goes home alone and summons Smalls' spirit. He immediately starts shooting a gun at Butters, and he runs outside to his parents, upset that he is still awake. Meanwhile, Satan is trying to throw a Super Sweet Sixteen style Halloween party called "Hell on Earth 2006" and requests a Ferrari cake which was meant to be picked up by Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy and Jeffery Dahmer. They kill each of the chefs uncontrollably in a Three Stooges-esque occurrence. Butters and Biggie Smalls run into each other once again in his bedroom, who threatens to kill Butters if he is not taken to the Halloween party in Los Angeles. He and Biggie Smalls take a plane, and Butters' friends and family think something terrible has

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happened to him. The boys hear that Butters conjured Biggie Smalls, so they go back to their bathroom and summon his ghost, teleporting him away from the plane and back to Colorado. Satan arrives at the Halloween party dressed as Britney Spears, and the bishops and Pope try to crash the party since they were not invited. Also, Satan is forced to kick out Steve Irwin because he was not wearing a costume. The three serial killers try to transport the Ferrari cake but end up mangling a pedestrian, destroying the cake and dismembering one another. Meanwhile, the South Park boys travel to the airport and buy a ticket for Biggie Smalls, who is then teleported back to Stan's house since his dad wanted to see if it worked. Back at the party, the Ferrari cake never made it so an Acura cake was the next best option. Satan throws a tantrum and acts like a "spoiled, rich girl on MTV" before realizing what has happened and apologizes. He then lets everyone into his party, and everyone celebrates. Back in LA, Butters summons Biggie Smalls to the party and it ends with the two of them partying together.

This replication aligned exactly with the rules and rituals set forth in *Candyman* (1992) for how to conjure a vengeful spirit through a mirror, and reestablished the previous notions of mirrors as conduits and doorways for the dead. Also, *South Park* (1997-present) did well to incorporate contemporary news, such as the death of Steve Irwin. From there, the *South Park* production team also chose to keep the "Bloody Mary" entity an African-American man rather than a ghastly woman, also aligning with the aforementioned *Candyman* (1992) depiction. This was likely due to the team wanting to parody the movie in a way, but in doing so, it kept the previous replication's depiction alive and, perhaps unintentionally, highlighted the gang violence between the Crips and the Bloods that ultimately lead to the death of the real life Biggie Smalls. This was also the first replication to have occurred during a time of heightened mass communication with the emergence of social media networks such as MySpace and Facebook,

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and allowed for widespread message dissemination which likely led to its next most recent mutation.

Representing the 2010s, the horror urban legend artifact that was analyzed for this decade was the 2013 film *Oculus*. Within this movie, siblings Kaylie and Tim are reunited years after the death of their parents, which Tim was arrested for. Believing her brother to be innocent, Kaylie buys the antique mirror she believes really killed their parents in order to destroy it and restore her brother's good name. Following this, Kaylie devises several safety precautions in their childhood home to track the activity of the mirror. Tim, not believing her, is skeptical in the beginning but Kaylie presents several documents explaining the previous deaths that have been caused by the mirror over the past hundreds of years. In the end, Kaylie attempts to destroy the mirror with an automated javelin, which instead impales her and ends her life. Tim is yet again arrested, this time for the death of his sister.

Found within this replication are a number of references to earlier films such as *Dead of Night* (1945) and *The Boogeyman* (1980) in terms of the way the mirror is seen as both an object and an evil spirit. This film also serves as a large mutation away from the “Bloody Mary” ritual that was depicted within the last two decades’ artifacts, whereas there was no ritual or conjuring of a specific entity. This departure from the ritual may be due to the pervasiveness of information found within the digital age, whereas one is able to research previous mirror monster movies before constructing a script. Another possibility is that the meme underwent a major mutation as a result of the tale being spread through various social media platforms such as but not limited to Reddit, Twitter and YouTube. From here, it is unknown where the “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend meme will alter next, but it is safe to assume that it will not stay the same for long.

### **Conclusion**

The “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend meme no longer resembles the same divination ritual it once had been. Instead, what is commonly found today are a collection of ghost stories regarding haunted mirrors and vengeful spirits. What is also found is that history often makes its way into a number of replications, possibly to show solidarity with those who are affected by the events or to stay current with what is happening in the world. No matter the reason, however, this tale has gone through several adaptations over the past hundred years, and it is likely to continue doing so through its high levels of copying-fidelity.

### **Findings: “Sleepy Hollow”**

The “Sleepy Hollow” horror urban legend meme has had several replications over the past hundred years. Each time, however, the overall narrative remained relatively intact due to its high level of fecundity. In the following sections, each horror urban legend artifact pertaining to “Sleepy Hollow” will be discussed in order to touch on any potential shifts that have occurred in its story. Additionally, any historically significant events that happened concurrently around the release of the pieces will be talked about in order to suggest how history plays a role in the mutation process. Each decade has been incorporated into historical eras in order to further demonstrate the changes in time and story. Tables 2 and 5 demonstrate these findings.

### **New Era & Great Depression (1920s-1930s)**

The 1920s was a decade filled with glamour and, unfortunately, racism. One year before the release of this first artifact was the Tulsa Race Massacre in Oklahoma which killed an innumerable number of Black Americans for the sole purpose of white supremacy. This is going to be a theme that will be discussed for the first few artifacts chosen for the “Sleepy Hollow” horror urban legend due to their gross depictions of the Black community. Beginning with the

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1922 film titled *The Headless Horseman*, the headless horseman phantom is immediately spotted riding on a horse. Shortly thereafter, Ichabod is seen coming into Sleepy Hollow, where he makes moves on Katrina, who at the time was being courted by Brom Bones. Once settled, Ichabod begins teaching at the schoolhouse and entirely dismisses the idea of a phantom haunting the town. Instead, Ichabod begins explaining scientific knowledge which was not accepted by the villagers. Also during this time, Ichabod whips a student. Hearing this, Brom spreads a rumor about Ichabod being in cahoots with the devil and witchcraft, and trashes his entire school house. After, Brom reports to the townsfolk about Ichabod's witchcraft and nearly gets Ichabod tarred and feathered, if not for a child coming forth and explaining that he saw Brom do the vandalism. In response to this, Katrina's father invites all of the townsfolk including Ichabod and Brom to their house for a party. They recite the legend of the Headless Horseman and they all return home. On his way back, however, Ichabod encounters the Headless Horseman who pelts him with an uncarved pumpkin, dismantling him from his horse. Ichabod's hat and the shattered pumpkin were found the next morning, but his body never manifested. This replication of the tale is similar to the original story written by Washington Irving in 1819, but places an emphasis on the Horseman being a true, real phantom. This mutation may be a result of the original book being an international bestseller, with the ending left up for interpretation as to whether the horseman was real or merely Brom playing a prank.

The 1930s were not much better in terms of race representation, and this next artifact displays exactly that. The children's cartoon short titled *The Headless Horseman* (1934) was the next horror urban legend artifact chosen for this study. Here, The headless horseman phantom is found riding on a horse prior to the introduction of the main characters. Next, Katrina is seen spinning a thread on a wheel, with Brom Bones and Ichabod Crane both stealing her heart back

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and forth. After this, Ichabod is found in the school house reading about the headless horseman when what looks to be a monkey riding in on a donkey with a letter for Ichabod invites him to Katrina's for a party. Ichabod can be seen getting ready in the school house and powdering himself with the eraser from the chalkboard. Ichabod then departs on horseback for Katrina's home, where he is met with Brom Bones also on the way. They race, and Brom slams the door in Ichabod's face. They arrive with other party goers and they all feast. Ichabod and Brom fight over Katrina for her heart, and at one point, the two men kiss by accident when they intend to kiss her. They begin to fight, before the atmosphere shifts to a dance. The two men take turns dancing with Katrina. Ichabod excels at this, and Brom becomes incredibly jealous. Next, they find themselves gathered around a campfire where an older man tells a tale of the Headless Horseman. After this, the clock dings and everyone begins leaving. Brom leaves without affection from Katrina, and Ichabod tries to force himself upon her before she ejects him from her home without a kiss. Ichabod sulks through a graveyard with his horse, where he is then trailed by what would appear to be the Headless Horseman. He is chased until he is hit with an uncarved pumpkin, dismantling him from his horse and requiring him to run into the nearby church. It was then revealed that the headless horseman was Brom Bones all along. Finally, the last scene showed the Headless Horseman attending Brom Bones and Katrina's wedding, scaring them and the attendants out of the chapel, before it was revealed to be Ichabod Crane. In this replication, the story seems to shift away from the Headless Horseman being a real, true villain and instead aims for a more prankster approach, representing a large mutation away from the previous one. A possible reason for the mutation may be that this artifact was intended for children, it is likely that the creators wanted to steer away from the supernatural element in order for its target audience to not be afraid following their engagement with the piece.

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### **WWII Era (1940s)**

During the 1940s, Walt Disney took a crack at the Headless Horseman with his own replication titled *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949). Being the next artifact selected for this study, this piece begins with the narrator opening a book and explaining the premise of Sleepy Hollow and Ichabod Crane. In this adaptation, he walked into Sleepy Hollow rather than riding on a horse, and Ichabod is described as a rather awkward man. Bram is portrayed as a hero type to the townsfolk, and everyone immediately breaks into song about the arrival of Ichabod Crane. He begins work at the school, but the story quickly jumps when Ichabod meets Katrina. At her family's house, everyone parties until the mood shifts to Bram telling ghost stories. He explains that the Headless Horseman will eat anyone's head he comes across, and the only safe passage is over the wooden bridge that spans the brook. The headless horseman is also depicted as having a Jack-O-Lantern for a head. Ichabod is terrified at even the thought of this. Everyone left Katrina's house, which sent Ichabod riding home on his horse and growing more and more scared of every tree that looked relatively like a person. As he crossed through the graveyard, his horse took a nap on one of the headstones but the sound of galloping did not stop. Ichabod leapt up and ran into a log, where he discovered cattails beating against the hollow base. He and his horse laughed, but a more menacing laugh was heard from the distance. The Headless Horseman rode up and swiped at Ichabod with a longsword. They ran for some time, with the two beings switching horses at one point. Ichabod successfully crossed the bridge, however, but was ultimately pelted by the flaming Jack-O-Lantern thrown by the Horseman. The next morning, there was no trace of Ichabod apart from his hat and a shattered pumpkin. Bram and Katrina married, and rumors persisted that Ichabod had married a widow in a distant county, but others believe he was taken by the Headless Horseman.

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Within this replication, it is apparent that there are a number of mutations that have occurred, with the main one being that the Headless Horseman is once again a real phantom. Also, he is now depicted as carrying a Jack-O-Lantern, rather than simply an uncarved pumpkin, thereby aligning this replication with the traditions of Halloween. This move towards a scarier Headless Horseman phantom may be due to the country having just emerged victorious from World War II. Children at this point had been used to hearing about war, so the thought of a supernatural being as an antagonist was most likely a welcome departure from the cruel acts of man. What appears to be absent in this replication entirely is the presence of a single character of color, still demonstrating the racial tension that were present at the time. Apart from that, the main storyline is kept intact as Bram and Katrina still marry and Ichabod is run out by the phantom.

### **Post-War Era (1950s-1980s)**

Now in the Post-War Era, the depiction of Black Americans within the “Sleepy Hollow” replications shifted entirely. Actually, it is possible to say that there was a major mutation within this era in terms of progressiveness. Within the artifact *Washington Irving’s Sleepy Hollow* (1958), the way in which the narrative is told mutated into a documentary-style piece rather than an entirely fabricated story. The narrator talks of the real life town of Sleepy Hollow, the impact Washington Irving had on it and the American people, as well as the story of the Headless Horseman and the real life location of the bridge Ichabod Crane disappeared on. Absent entirely are the minot squabbles between Ichabod and Bram, and what is found instead is a love letter to the 1819 original story and author in order to recement it in society 139 years later. It is possible that the creator of this artifact wished for individuals to know of the original source material, and



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through educating an audience of young people with a pre-show movie, it is likely that is what exactly happened.

The artifact chosen for the decade of the 1960s was that of Walt Disney's *Uncle Scrooge* children's comic book (1952-1984). More specifically, the comic "The Heedless Horseman" (1966) was chosen and surrounds a horse race that Scrooge McDuck enters. Here, Scrooge is seen trying to enter a horse race without a horse in order to win a trophy that would make him popular amongst the aristocrats. He is laughed at, and Donald and the nephews find him storming out of the registration office. They devise a plan to buy the winning horse, only to find out the horse has shellshock and leaps into nearby water anytime a mysterious loud boom goes off. After purchasing the horse anyway, the gang finds out that the horse is actually a robot. Believing that the previous owner had been cheating, Scrooge storms out while the nephews peep around the other horse stalls. There, the three boys realize every horse is a robot, so there is no cheating involved. Meanwhile, the loud boom is discovered to be an explosive being tested by escaped jail mates who are trying to break into Scrooge's money vault. They rig the explosive to go off at the exact time as the race, and decide to go see how it is setting up before hitting the vault. There, they mix up the explosive with a stick of chalk and the explosive is placed in Scrooge's horse's bag. Unbeknownst to this, Donald mounts the horse and begins riding, all while wearing the blinders and ear muffs given to him by Scrooge so he does not get distracted. The escaped convicts quickly return to the horse race to try and find the explosive, but the word quickly spreads that there is a bomb and everyone scatters, except for Donald who can't hear and can barely see, thereby making him essentially "headless". Luckily, the explosive is ineffective if it gets wet, so the nephews form a plan to break the trophy Scrooge was hoping for in order to cause a loud boom, enough to cause the horse to jump into the nearby water.

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This replication is by far the one with the most mutations, but this is most likely due to the “Sleepy Hollow” horror urban legend truly entering the public sphere. The meme became colloquial, and although Donald Duck was not necessarily headless, it still fits under the “Sleepy Hollow” umbrella due to the intention for it to be, as set forth by Disney. In terms of mutations, the setting, storyline, characters and time period are all drastically different from the previous replications. What is instead seen is a depiction of the 1960s, with women shown having large beehive hairdos and children present at horse races. Additionally, this piece showed the emerging fascination that the American people had with technology, whereas each horse was entirely robotic. Science fiction was on the rise, along with the Space Race, so it is likely that what may have initially been a “Headless Horseman” replication ultimately turned into one of futuristic technology.

As previously mentioned, the 1970s was a time for women’s liberation movements as a result of the second wave of Feminism. Within this next artifact, that becomes a bit more apparent, at least in comparison to the other replications. An episode from the American television series *Scooby-Doo* was chosen for this study, specifically one from the *Scooby-Doo Show* (1976-1978) titled “The Headless Horseman of Halloween” (1976). Here, Scooby and the gang are visiting Scooby's cousin Scooby-Dum at Mrs. Crane's house. Being the descendant of Ichabod Crane, the Crane family and the gang are quickly haunted by the Headless Horseman in search of a new head. Elwood Crane, Mrs. Crane's cousin, appears shortly thereafter to explain that the necklace she is wearing is cursed and that he will take it to protect her. His car then speeds off into fog, disappearing into the night. The gang then witnesses the Headless Horseman ride by, this time wearing Elwood's head. They quickly go outside to search for his car, worrying about something happening to him, and find it abandoned with a newspaper attached to the

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window speaking of a flying saucer. The gang splits up to look for clues and finds that the phone lines had been cut, and that the body of the real Headless Horseman is still in his burial site. Something clicks in Velma, and the gang rushes for the nearby airfield where they encounter the Horseman once more, this time taking off in a plane. Scooby and Shaggy end up on board, and the plane crashes. The gang attempts to unmask the headless horseman, but instead find the head to be real, and belonging to cousin Elwood.

This replication is yet another one with major mutations, also in terms of the setting, date and characters. The story does not take place in Sleepy Hollow, it is the 1970s and Ichabod and the “real” Horseman are merely referenced. Additionally, this is the first artifact for the meme to show women in a leading role rather than as an object for male affection. Similarly to the “Blood Mary” horror urban legend artifact, this is most likely due to the second wave of Feminism that took place in the United States from the 1960s through the 1980s. Women were fighting for representation in all aspects of their lives, and they did not want to be seen as merely homemakers or objects for male affection (Thornham, 2004). In this piece, that is apparent seeing as Velma is depicted as the most intellectual of the group and is able to solve the mystery.

The artifact picked to represent the 1980s is a television movie titled *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1980). Within this replication, Ichabod moves to Sleepy Hollow, NY and is informed of many ghosts that inhabit the area, including the old school teacher and the Headless Horseman. There is a love triangle between Brom, Katrina, Ichabod and Thelma. Despite Brom trying to trick Ichabod into thinking he is losing his mind due to multiple tricks, Brom and Thelma end up together and Katrina and Ichabod end up together. In the final chase, Ichabod came in contact with the ghost of the horseman after being chased by Brom and figuring out it was him all along. Palmer (the old school teacher) was also discovered to still be alive and

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playing a trick on Brom. Finally, Ichabod was depicted as someone all of the women lusted after, with both Thelma and Katrina being suitors for him with their fathers giving each of them away to Ichabod frequently throughout the film.

This replication served as a return to the original source material, and had mutations sprinkled throughout such as Thelma, Palmer and Thelma's father being written in, in addition to the chase scene where Brom was the Horseman, in addition to the Horseman actually being real. This is both true to the original book and a major mutation, seeing as this is something that has never been seen in any of the replications. Also, Brom does not end up with Katrina in the end, which is a first in relation to all of the aforementioned artifacts. Instead, Ichabod and Katrina end happily married to one another, being the first depiction of them living happily ever after. This is something that will be shown in each of the replications that follow. Last, it is necessary to include that despite this replication being a period piece, a titanic number of contemporary phrases were included that reflected the 1980s, possibly so that the 1790-set movie could be more easily accepted amongst a modern audience.

### **Contemporary Times (1990s-2010s)**

In the contemporary present, the "Sleepy Hollow" horror urban legend meme has far from departed from this world. In fact, the following artifact that will be discussed won 12 awards for its depiction of the tale. Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* (1999) was the next artifact to be analyzed during this study. Within this replication, Constable Ichabod Crane is sent to Sleepy Hollow, NY from New York City in order to deduce who the killer of several townspeople may be. He meets Katrina, Brom, Katrina's Father and her stepmother at a party one evening, and he is informed of the beheadings that have been going on. There were a handful of flashbacks regarding Ichabod's past and how his mother was executed for witchcraft, as well as flashbacks

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to demonstrate how the Horseman was killed. Back in the present, the horseman kills Brom and Ichabod suspects that the horseman is being controlled by a living person. He finds out that Katrina's step mother is the true witch controlling the horseman after he kills Katrina's Father, and the stepmother tries to kill Katrina next in order to get rich from the inheritance money. Ichabod retrieves the horseman's missing head and gives it back to him, which causes him to no longer listen to the witch and instead takes her with him back to hell. The movie ends with Ichabod and Katrina moving to New York City.

Similar to the last adaptation, this replication is rather true to the original story, but has a handful of mutations. The character of Katrina's stepmother is introduced, witchcraft is depicted, the Horseman is real and Brom dies. Ichabod Crane is also depicted as a detective in this version rather than a schoolteacher, possibly to make him appear as more of an authority figure rather than a scholar. Also, the time period was altered to reflect 1799, possibly to make the 1999 audience more engaged with the narrative. There were a number of references to the new century being just around the corner, and that would have been something individuals from the late 1990s would have aligned with. Last, the idea of witchcraft being present in this replication is something that would have also been welcomed by audiences of this time, seeing as shows like *Charmed* (1998-2006) and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003) were popular amongst this replication's target audience.

For the 2000s, the film titled *Headless Horseman* (2007) was analyzed. In this adaptation, seven college kids on their way to a Halloween party decide to take a shortcut. Their van gets a flat, and a young female tow truck driver (Candy) brings their van to Wormwood, an old country town. She explains that they are having a Headless Horseman celebration. Meanwhile, one of the kids (Seth) wanders off into the woods and gets beheaded by the horseman. Ava discovers Seth's

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body and tells the others. Candy explains that the horseman has been haunting their village since 1806 and was a serial killer who now rises up every seven years to get seven heads. She warns them to escape before dark. They attempt to leave on foot but a mysterious mist surrounds the forest and they are unable to see where they are going. Tiffany gets beheaded during this process and they all split up and are forced back towards Wormwood. Half of them try to get weapons to defend themselves while the other half search for a working car. Candy's dad shows up and ties up the remaining college kids in order to sacrifice them to the horseman, but Candy unties them shortly after and reveals she is not actually from that town and wants to escape like the rest of them. She explains that if the Horseman does not get his seven heads, the entire town of Wormwood would disappear forever. Lizzie is beheaded by the horseman and Candy steals her dad's tow truck, kills her dad and hooks the Horseman with the car cable, dragging him onto the bridge where he bursts into flames. Candy, Liam and Ava survive and the town fades away.

This replication mutated from the previous one by taking place in an entirely different town, with different characters in a different time period. Sleepy Hollow, Ichabod, Brom and Katrina were all removed, but the Headless Horseman stayed. This could be due to the Headless Horseman transcending the original source material and becoming a legendary monster similar to the vampire depicted in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1887) or the creature written about in Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (1818). Each of the legendary monsters have been found in numerous adaptations outside of their source material, and it is possible that during the 2000s, the Headless Horseman became associated with those horror icons. Additionally, it is important to note that this is the first adaptation of the "Headless Horseman" horror urban legend to explicitly state that the Horseman was not a beheaded Hessian trooper, but instead a demon that had been killing in

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the town since 1819. The film even showed him killing confederate soldiers during the Civil War.

In the 2010s, the horror urban legend of “Sleepy Hollow” made a rather large splash with its newest TV adaptation by the same name. Having come out in 2013, the show ran for four seasons before being cancelled due to the departure of one of the main actors. Focusing solely on the pilot, Ichabod Crane is a revolutionary war soldier on behalf of the American side, while the horseman is a British redcoat. Ichabod beheaded the horseman, and the horseman sliced through Ichabod's chest. Ichabod then wakes up in contemporary Sleepy Hollow, NY in a cave, and wanders out into nearby traffic and is arrested by police. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Abbie Mills and Sheriff Corbin encounter the headless horseman, and Sheriff Corbin loses his head. Back at the Sheriff's office, Abbie meets Ichabod, and the two of them begin to hunt for clues as to what is going on. It is revealed that Katrina, Ichabod's wife, was a good witch and she leads Ichabod on the path forward. She explains she is the keeper of the horseman's head, and that he is the first horseman of the apocalypse. Abbie and Ichabod attempt to retrieve the horseman's head and narrowly succeed after coming into contact with the horseman. Other officers encounter the horseman and Abbie and Ichabod are officially allowed to pursue him.

With this replication, there is a rather large mutation in the sense that the Horseman is no longer a demon, nor a Hessian soldier, but is instead a British Red Coat. Additionally, Katrina and Ichabod are already married, and he is not a schoolteacher. Now, Ichabod is a Revolutionary War soldier on the side of the colonies, possibly to show solidarity with American veterans. Also, Brom is nowhere to be found in this version of the story, making it two decades since his character had been seen. Katrina is once again a witch, aligning with the 1990s replication of the tale, and magic is of abundance in this latest adaptation. This may be due to the idea that modern

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audiences would rather focus on a tale of action and fantasy, rather than a story of pranks and fighting over the hand of a woman. From here, this tale is also brought into contemporary modern day, with the Headless Horseman firing machine guns from his horse. All of this could be attributed to the media possibly trying to bring this centuries old tale into a modern context for a new audience.

### **Conclusion**

The horror urban legend of “Sleepy Hollow” is one that has gone through many alterations over the past century. Every time, it has been able to remain mostly intact, with many of the same characters and storylines appearing and reappearing throughout its life cycle. This is mainly due to its high fecundity, but not even that could spare it from the real world in which the artifacts existed. As seen above, racism was able to make its way into the story in the earlier half of the century, before being removed and replaced with strong female leads, main characters of color and even beehive hairdos. It is difficult to determine where this horror urban legend will lead next, but there is a good chance of the Headless Horseman making an appearance wherever it may be.

### **Findings: The “Wendigo”**

The “Wendigo” horror urban legend meme has persisted for centuries. Having the highest level of longevity compared to the other two horror urban legends in this study, this tale predates even the discovery of the Americas. Having originally been a First Nations people’s story, the “Wendigo” has survived by being passed down through word of mouth and written stories. Through this analysis, mutations were identified and may be used to explain how the tale has changed over time. In the following sections, each decade has been placed into historical eras in



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order to demonstrate the narrative shifts, as well as explain the historical significance each of these mutations may tell. The findings for this section are found on tables 3 and 6.

### **New Era & Great Depression (1920s-1930s)**

The horror urban legend artifact chosen for the 1920s is that from the famed anthropologist Alanson Skinner, titled *Plains Ojibwa Tales: "Nänibozhu and the Wendigo"* (1920). In this story, having been transcribed from the mouths of the Plains Ojibwe tribe, Nänibozhu comes across a Wendigo while in the forest. He knew the Wendigo to be a cannibal, and was immediately terrified. The Wendigo required Nänibozhu to fetch a spit which Nänibozhu knows will be used to roast him. Nänibozhu fetches the worst spits he could find, which bought him time to devise a plan. While searching for more spits, he comes across his friend the Weasel, who Nänibozhu asks to crawl into the Wendigo's anus in order to bite his frozen heart: the only way to kill the beast. The Weasel does exactly this, and Nänibozhu rewards him by turning him white and giving him a black feather for a tail.

As found in this replication, this horror urban legend seems to have started as a type of myth before mutating into what would now be understood as a horror urban legend. It is identified that the only way to kill a Wendigo is by destroying its heart, and that its heart is made of ice. This would be a deviation from the previous tellings of the tales, whereas real life Wendigo hunters would be able to kill the beasts with bullets and knives (Ferris, 2019). Additionally, it is possible that this tale was told as a warning for First Nations people to never resort to cannibalism during the Winter months when food was scarce.

The next horror urban legend artifact, representing the 1930s, is unfortunately one that is highly racist in nature. The *Golden Book Magazine's* "The Wendigo" (1933) short story by Algernon Blackwood was selected, and contains an uncomfortable amount of slurs. Here, a

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hunting crew goes north (possibly to Canada) to find moose. Punk, the only First Nations person of the group, insists on staying at the base camp. They all agree, and the group splits up to cover more ground. Hank goes with Cathcart, and Hank's nephew Simpson goes with Défago. As they hunt, Défago smells something rotten in the wind and it makes him uneasy. He is an experienced French Canadian hunter, and Simpson knew that was not a good sign. That night, Défago screams from his tent and Simpson runs after him in the snow, tracking his footprints. They slowly begin to shift as Simpson tracks him, and eventually they disappear altogether. Simpson hears Défago scream in the sky that he is burning alive. Simpson makes it back to base camp where Défago also returns, but dies shortly upon arrival. Punk takes one look at him and runs, because he knows Défago had seen the Wendigo.

In this replication, it is expanded upon that the Wendigos live and thrive in Winter climates, and can be identified by the smell of rot on the wind. Also, Blackwood establishes that Wendigos tend to go after hunters. This idea could be in association to the First Nations people's belief that the Earth belongs to no one, and that harming the environment simply because one can could have dire consequences (Akiwenzie-Damm, 1996). Nothing is discarded from the previous artifact, except to mutate and expand upon the creature's ability to fly and harm humans. Last, the terribly abundant racism that was found in this piece could possibly shed light onto the thought process of a number of people during the rise of Nazi Germany.

### **WWII Era (1940s)**

Now in the 1940s, the horror urban legend artifact selected is from the comic book series *Captain Marvel* (1939-present), originally written by Alfred Bester. More specifically, the issue chosen is titled "Captain Marvel and the Slayer on Skis" (1942). In this piece, a snowy 'Spook Mountain' was being developed into a ski resort. Billy, aka Captain Marvel, discusses this

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occurrence within his radio show, before switching to describing the First Nations People's urban legend of the "Wendigo." Here, Billy describes the creature as a man-eating, unnatural beast. As time went on, Billy then hears the pleas of a movie star who was in trouble on the mountain, and transforms into Captain Marvel to save her. He springs into action, fighting a bear that threatened the young actress. Following this, Billy returns to his radio show the following day where Chief Blackheart, an Indigenous shaman, warns Billy about bears' relationship with the "Wendigo." He explains that, according to legend, messing with bears angers the demons that stir within the mountain. Before he could finish, however, a figure on skis and wearing a parka manifested and killed Chief Blackheart, stating that he is the Wendigo and that people should stay out of his affairs. After Captain Marvel confronts him, the Wendigo is later found out to be simply a man in a costume, hoping to mine diamonds on the mountain.

Within this version of the urban legend, the meme of the "Wendigo" mutated to include a relationship between bears and the First Nations demon. Also, the Wendigo creature is shown as still being widely associated with aboriginal culture. That being said, however, this artifact depicts the creature killing the only person of color without anyone mourning, which may reflect the racial dynamics that were seen during the 1940s by white individuals. Also, the Wendigo creature ended up being only a man, which may reflect the attitudes of early American involvement in the World War II efforts. The creature was simply an evil human, and those could be defeated.

### **Post-War Era (1950s-1980s)**

For the 1950s, the horror urban legend artifact that was analyzed was the short story from the *Ottawa Journal* titled "Big Chief Nan-Bush and the Wicked Wendigos" by Jabeganene. Within this story, Chief Nan-Bush is hunting for deer. The author describes the conditions as

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cold and the wind as harsh, which makes Chief Nan-Bush worry about Wendigos. Once, as he was taking aim at a large moose, a bear appeared, frightening away the beast. Associating this with the Wendigo, he knew they were drawing close to him. Still, he kept on towards the lake where he was hoping to catch fish, but in the distance he saw several Wendigos gathered, performing a war dance and preparing to attack. They start chasing him through the woods until Manitou, Chief of the Gods, saves Chief Nan-Bush by making rocks appear in the lake for him to run across. The Wendigos continued following until Nan-Bush was on the other side, and Manitou made the rocks vanish. They fell into the water and were never seen again. Today, in Trout River, it is said that one can still see the rocks.

As found within this replication, the characteristics from previous artifacts are found in abundance. From the Wendigo's cannibalistic nature (Skinner, 1920), to the hunter being hunted (Blackwood, 1933) and even to the bears working in association with the demons (Bester, 1942). The only visible mutation is that Wendigos may perform a war dance before attacking. This war dance may have been included to once again root the tale further in aboriginal culture, but it is likely that since the author is an Indigenous storyteller, that this may have been a part of the "Wendigo" meme that had been lost to time before this replication. It seems as though this tale may have been somewhere at the intersection of myth and legend, so it is likely that this story is much older than the 1950s, but was adapted to a contemporary audience. If that is the case, it is possible to assert that the author wished to keep the characteristic of the Wendigo's war dance alive in fresh minds in order for it to continue with future retellings.

Now in the 1960s, the horror urban legend artifact that was selected was an episode from the Canadian television series *The Forest Rangers* (1963-1966), specifically the one titled "The Wendigo" (1965). Here, a young First Nations girl named Emmasina runs away from school in

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order to look for her father, whom she believes to have been abducted by the Wendigo. While running through the brush, she encounters a forest ranger helicopter which flew overhead. She follows the helicopter to find the main characters of the show roughhousing outside. She asks for food, so they feed her and ask for her story. She explains that she thinks her father had been taken by a Wendigo, and that she must go into the woods alone to find him. She then leaves with their dog, back into the woods to find her father's house. Two of the boys follow her as Joe trails slightly behind. He gets to the cabin first, however, and is choked out by a mysterious arm. Emmasina and the boys quickly find her dad's house, as well as Joe unconscious on the floor. They wake him up and Emmasina hears the wind howling outside, believing it to be the Wendigo. She equips an anti-wendigo mask the boys made that morning, and runs outside to confront the monster who ends up being her dad. He explains that only a fool would believe in the Wendigo, and they lived happily ever after.

This replication does not add much new to the horror urban legend, although it suggests that aboriginal cultures may believe that masks can scare away Wendigos. Also, it is the first time a First Nations individual is seen throwing away traditional beliefs by saying that only a fool would believe in Wendigos. This may be due to the assimilation processes that many Indigenous cultures had to go through in North America, where First Nations people were made to adopt more Christian values and leave behind their old belief systems (Simonsen, 2002). Another possibility for this may be to reflect that science and facts were the main hype for children during the 1960s (Pernice, 2012). One other reason could be that, since *The Forest Rangers* (1963-1966) was a largely family oriented program, the creators may have wanted to keep the fear level to a minimum in its younger viewers, and simply included that piece to end all worries about Wendigos. Last, this replication depicted white actors dressed in brownface in

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order to represent First Nations people, which highlights the racial issues that are still faced within Canadian society today in relation to the Canadian treatment of Indigenous persons.

The next horror urban legend artifact to be looked at is the one that will be representing the 1970s: *Wendigo* (1978). This film was created during the height of gory slasher movies and it did not age well. This is another artifact filled with slurs and racial stereotypes. In this piece, a group of campers and hunters go into the Canadian wilderness. While there, they discover an island rumored to be an Indigenous burial ground holding some form of treasure. Unbeknownst to them, however, the Wendigo live there and they begin picking off the main characters one by one. This film was directly inspired by the Blackwood (1933) piece, but although having claimed to be based on the short story of the same name, this adaptation added numerous elements to the tale that were not found in the original. Examples of this are that there were no marijuana users in the original, nor was there a randomly exploding body. These were likely added since marijuana use during the 1970s was on the rise amongst the target audience for this film, in addition to slasher movies becoming the new rage as a result of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974). Those parts aside, this replication also mutated to establish that Indigenous burial sites may be dangerous or haunted, thereby adding a new notion to the Wendigo lore. This in itself, however, was likely added due to the recent success of *The Amityville Horror* (1977) book that was published one year prior to the release of this replication. On the subject of haunted Indigenous burial sites, there may be a reason behind the phenomenon as author Colin Dickey (2017, p. 45) states:

The narrative of the haunted Indian burial ground hides a certain anxiety about the land on which Americans — specifically white, middle-class Americans — live. Embedded

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deep in the idea of home ownership — that Holy Grail of American middle-class life — is the idea that we don't, in fact, own the land we've just bought.

What this may demonstrate is that one cannot escape the history of a blood-soaked land. Guilt may be felt in response to the knowledge of what America's forefathers did, and that is displayed in this film by a handful of characters. This may be in response to the changing political climate and attitudes towards Indigenous people, whereas in 1972 Marlon Brando had First Nations person Sacheen Littlefeather speak for him after his Oscars win for the Godfather (Magnien, 1973). There, she declined to accept the award for him and spoke of the rights that were still needed for her people. Although this film may seem progressive for the attitudes of some of the characters in regards to the burial ground, the use of racial stereotypes and slurs within this film may demonstrate that although Civil Rights efforts won one decade prior to the release of this movie, there is still work to be done in order to fight racism.

Now in the 1980s, the next horror urban legend artifact to be discussed is Stephen King's highly acclaimed novel titled *Pet Sematary* (1983). Found in this book, Doctor Louis Creed moves to Ludlow, Maine with his wife Rachel, daughter Ellie and son Gage. He quickly befriends his neighbor Jud Crandall, who warns of the highway next to his home. It is mainly used by truckers leaving a chemical plant that speed by. Jud becomes a father figure to Louis since he lost his dad at three years old. A few weeks go by and Jud takes the Creed family on a walk in the woods on a well treaded path to a "Pet Sematary," misspelled to mean cemetery. The next day, Rachel and Louis have an argument over death and Rachel worries it may traumatize Ellie at a young age if she were to know what it was. She then explains about the traumatic experience she endured while taking care of her dying sister Zelda, and Louis apologizes and promises to be more understanding of her situation. After this, Louis has a traumatic experience

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when a student hit by a car, Victor Pascow, addresses him by name without knowing who Louis was. That night, Louis dreams of Victor, who was explaining that Louis must not go to the Deadfall at the back of the Pet Sematary, no matter what happens. Louis wakes up covered in dirt and pine needles, but convinces himself that he must have dreamt it all. While Rachel and the kids are away, Ellie's cat Church is hit by a car, and Jud and Louis take it to the burial ground behind the cemetery to resurrect him. He comes back altered, but alive. In the few short weeks after, Gage is hit by a truck and dies. Louis fights with his in-laws who blame him for Gage's death, and Louis buries Gage in the same Indigineous burial ground. Gage kills Jud with a scalpel and then his own mother, and Louis kills Gage and Church with morphine while crying. Louis then buries his wife in the burial ground and burns down Jud's house.

Within this replication, it continues the idea that Indigineous burial grounds are haunted by the Wendigo. There are some slight mutations, however, where it establishes that the Wendigo have the ability to possess the corpses of the dead. Also, another shift in the narrative is that the Wendigo are able to be killed with morphine, rather than having to destroy their heart. A possibility for the change in the way in which the Wendigo could be killed could be in response to how the audiences would perceive the bodies of a toddler and pet being taken out through more violent means. This probably reflected a “being put to sleep” type scenario, rather than a father having to mutilate two tiny family members. Additionally, this book places emphasis on the Pet Sematary belonging to the MicMac tribe, however, there are historical reasons as to why that was not actually the case. As mentioned by Jud in the book, the MicMac people were in the middle of a court battle with the state of Maine over land. In actual history, however, the MicMac people were located in Canada and had no relation to Maine (Dickey, 2017, p. 44). Instead, what was happening in real life as Stephen King wrote this book was a land dispute



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amongst the state of Maine and the Wabanaki Confederacy (Dickey, 2017). Regardless of the switch in Indigenous tribes, which may have been for legal reasons, historical events directly influenced and took place within this replication, which is a first in the replications of the “Wendigo” meme.

### **Contemporary Times (1990s-2010s)**

The horror urban legend artifact chosen to represent the 1990s is the episode titled “The Wendigo” from the American television show *Charmed* (1998-2006). In this episode, Piper's car breaks down and she is hunted by a Wendigo while she is trying to fix it. She gets scratched by the beast and is then taken to the hospital. Her sisters Prue and Phoebe, meanwhile, are selling an antique bracelet at an auction and Phoebe has a premonition regarding who the owner was. Piper begins to turn into a Wendigo due to the scratch, so her sisters must find the original Wendigo and kill it in order to save her. Inspector Andy and FBI Agent Fallon try to track down the Wendigo, who ends up being Fallon. Fallon tries to kill Andy in the park the following night, but is interrupted by Phoebe and Prue, who end up killing her with a shot to the heart with a flare gun.

This replication expands on the previously held idea that Wendigos’ hearts are made of ice and that fire is their one true weakness. There is a mutation as well, where this artifact adds that there is an infection element that one must account for when encountering a Wendigo. If one is scratched by them, there is a chance he or she will turn into a beast as well. Another slight change is that the Wendigo are seen wanting to destroy the love those have for one another. This may be in relation to the Wendigo having a “cold heart,” which in itself feels like a pun. The Wendigo character even makes a number of references as to how they will never get their heart broken again. This mutation worked well for *Charmed* (1998-2006) and made sense with its

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overall story arc, especially seeing as a number of their narratives revolve around love, family or heartbreak.

For the 2000s, the next artifact chosen to be analyzed was the episode of *Supernatural* (2005-2020) titled “The Wendigo” (2005). Here, brothers and monster hunters Sam and Dean, while on their drive across the country to find their father, stop in Colorado. There, they hear about the abduction of a local teenager at a campsite, or so the teenager's sister reported. Sam and Dean go to the sister’s home to find out more about it, as well as to uncover why a large X would be on one of their father's maps in the same location. After speaking with her, Sam, Dean, an experienced hunter, the sister and her youngest brother go into the woods the next morning to find the missing teen's campsite. When they find it, they are immediately caught off guard by a scream, which they later deduce is the Wendigo trying to lure them away. The Wendigo kills the experienced hunter, and the next morning the gang devises a plan to kill it with fire. Instead, Dean and the sister end up being kidnapped by the Wendigo and taken back to its lair. Sam and the sister's youngest brother figure out that the Wendigo must hibernate and comes out every few years to feed. After searching, Sam and the sister’s youngest brother find Dean and the sister in an abandoned mining cave, and Dean shoots the Wendigo with a flare gun. The wendigo dies and they survive, finding the missing teen.

Within this artifact, many characteristics are carried on from previous “Wendigo” horror urban legend retellings, however, some pieces are left behind. For example, the general consensus that fire harms Wendigos is intact, in addition to them hunting hunters, while it also mutated to introduce the notion that the Wendigo creatures need to hibernate. This may have been in order to mix their narrative with that of bears, whereas in the episode it is said that one of the Wendigo attacks was attributed to a Grizzly. In doing so, it kept the characteristic of bears

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interacting and being a part of the Wendigo lore, while also explaining that Wendigos share a lot of the same characteristics as bears.

During the 2010s, the 2015 video game *Until Dawn* expanded upon the “Wendigo” horror urban legend meme with its highly detailed storyline. Inside this adaptation, the story of the “Wendigo” spirit is largely adapted from Indigenous Cree tribe’s tellings of humans transforming into eternally-hungry beasts upon consuming human flesh (*Until Dawn*, 2015). Following the game’s lore, the First Nations people who inhabited the mountain in which the game takes place believed the mountain to be too pure to hunt on. They claimed the mountain must be respected, and therefore no harm should come to it or its creatures. This was the case until 1893, when a mine was erected on the site to obtain tin and radium ore. The Cree warned excavators of the dangers of destroying the mountain, but they did not listen. In 1953, a failure in the mine’s structure trapped 30 miners within the shafts, and by the time rescue arrived, only 12 of the miners remained alive as a result of cannibalism. As the miners slowly began to shift into Wendigos, they were transported to a nearby sanatorium to be analyzed. They were each confined, until one broke out and began to slaughter the staff. The entire occurrence was covered up, however, and both the sanatorium and the miners were closed indefinitely.

Jumping to the events actively taking place in the video game, a party was seen taking place amongst high school kids at a beautiful house. Here, a cruel prank leads Hannah, a twin, to run out into snowy winter conditions in order to get away from the other characters. As her twin sister Beth followed, they felt themselves being stalked by something in the forest. Running, they found themselves with their back towards a cliff, where Hannah slipped and fell. Grasping onto Beth, she accidentally pulled her down along with her, where they landed within an abandoned mine shaft. While there, Beth died from her sustained injuries, and after weeks alone in the dark,

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Hannah was ultimately forced to eat her sister, thereby becoming possessed by the evil spirit in the mountain and transforming into a Wendigo. A year later, the remaining teenagers are unaware of what happened to their missing friend, and ascend the mountain where the events took place for a reunion. While there, they start being stalked by creatures in the night that hunger for them. Ultimately, they find out what had happened to their two missing friends and, depending on the player's decisions, survive the night and make it to safety.

In this replication of the “Wendigo” meme, the Wendigo spirits are understood to track their prey for hours. Similar to the previous artifact, they are able to mimic human voices in order to trick and lure their meals into the palm of their hands. There is also a slight mutation, where it is explained that it is better for a Wendigo spirit to be trapped within a body than to be able to roam freely upon its own accord. This could be due to it being possible for the free roaming entity to be imprisoned while in a vessel, which would make sense. Regardless of one’s actions in the game, however, there did not seem to be any consequences from killing the beasts, which aligns with all of the previously mentioned replications.

### **Conclusion**

The “Wendigo” horror urban legend meme has seen many new adaptations over the course of the last century. With each new replication, it seemed as though every creator of the piece was playing a game of “yes, and,” whereas most, if not all, characteristics from previous replications were kept, with subtle changes added in to make their retelling unique. This led to several minor mutations that, as a whole, made the “Wendigo” horror urban legend meme grow and adapt. Also, this meme was slightly mutated by the presence of historical events and periods, such as the use of racist commentary towards the beginning of the century, and one particular

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replication taking after the gory slasher fad. This meme has lasted numerous centuries due to its high levels of longevity, and it is likely to continue to do so well into the foreseeable future.

### **Discussion**

Over the course of this study, three horror urban legends were analyzed via narrative and historical context analyses through the lens of meme theory. The legends of “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” were the main foci of this research due to their cultural narratives being a ubiquitous recurrence within various media forms such as, but not limited to, films, literature and television shows. Each of these urban legends were treated as memes, otherwise known as a piece of cultural knowledge that circulate and mutate over time and audiences. With this, this study established how the media can alter and retell past stories in order for them to remain current and relevant in an ever-changing society.

Regarding the analysis of this study, the overall objective and elements of each narrative were analyzed for 30 artifacts, 10 per meme, in order to understand how the tales themselves changed. In addition, when and where the artifacts were created were noted, as well as any significant events that occurred contemporaneously to its creation in order to grasp how outside factors may have led to an urban legend’s mutation. Also, any specific use of language, ideas and terms were analyzed as well per artifact for additional context. This research had the potential to become a useful addition to the field of communication and folklore due to its findings regarding media and meaning-making. Through uncovering how “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” urban legends have changed over the past century, this study established how the media alter and retell past stories in order to engage a new audience. Also, this analysis served as a return to the study of communication in conjunction with folklore, and was able to bridge the gap between rhetorical criticism, contemporary legend studies and history. What follows from

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here is a discussion of how these memes changed over time, as well as how societal changes influenced a number replications.

### **How the Memes Changed Over Time**

Over the course of this study, the memes of “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” have shown a great amount of change over one century. Aligning with meme theory, not one horror urban legend remained stagnant, and that likely helped each of their tales live on in an ever-changing world. Each of the memes demonstrated all three memetic survival mechanics outlined by Richard Dawkins (1976), with each horror urban legend being chosen due to it identifying closely with a different mechanic. Because of this variance, the memes were able to demonstrate within this study how societal attitudes may influence the changes that each tale underwent regardless of mechanic. Here, the three memetic survival mechanics, being copying-fidelity, fecundity and longevity, will be touched upon in order to explain how the meme with each highest level was able to change, adapt and mutate over time through society’s influence.

***Mememes with High Copying-Fidelity*** – As Richard Dawkins (1976) explains, copying-fidelity involves the way in which a meme is able to mutate and continue its journey, rather than staying static for eternity (pp. 194-195). Because of this, it is likely that memes with a high level of copying-fidelity are subject to a great amount of change. In relation to the “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend meme, the story was able to mutate so often and so drastically that today, it no longer resembles its original tale at all. With this in mind, it is possible to suggest that other memes with high levels of copying-fidelity would follow in a similar fashion. Over the course of one century, a meme with high copying-fidelity is likely to undergo so many changes that it will resemble a new story entirely, and only when one traces its narrative backward in time would he or she uncover its origin. Thinking to the future, it is likely that memes that have a high level of

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this survival mechanic will continue to change and adapt with each replication, thereby keeping the tale fresh each time the meme is rereleased.

***Memes with High Fecundity*** – Fecundity refers to the ability for a meme to spread amongst a populous (Dawkins, 1976). This means that memes with high diffusion rates administer this form of memetic survival mechanic. For “Sleepy Hollow,” despite a handful of mutations, the tale remained largely the same, even with the same characters making numerous appearances in various replications. This can be attributed to the meme’s high level of fecundity, mainly due to “Sleepy Hollow” being a classic American novel. It was the first American book to ever see success internationally, and because of this, it is likely that a great number of people are familiar with the horror urban legend’s original source material, or at least its general premise. With this, it is possible that other memes that show high levels of fecundity are also likely to remain somewhat the same, with references to the original likely being shown within the replication. That is not to say that the meme will not mutate, but instead, could alter to better convey the themes from the original story in a changing society.

***Memes with High Longevity*** – Longevity can be attributed to how long a meme is able to be remembered. It is said that replications must be made in order for a meme to remain “in people’s brains for centuries to come” (Dawkins, 1976, p. 194). This is not to say that mutations will not occur, but rather, each mutation will instead serve as a continuation of the story. The “Wendigo” horror urban legend meme changed over the past century through each replication adding something new to the Wendigo lore. Rather than erase the characteristics established by the previous replications, each new adaptation built off of the previous one in order to expand upon the original tale. Following this, it is likely that other memes with high levels of longevity could evolve similarly. By building upon itself, what can be found is a story rich with culture

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and various characteristics, thereby making each replication a new episode in a longstanding series. Memes with high longevity will likely continue to build upon themselves in the future, with each change being slightly different in order to continue the meme's overall existence and keep the story going.

### **Societal Changes**

As found in this study, it seems that history had a way of bleeding into all of the replications analyzed, with some being more apparent than others. From racial stereotypes and changing depictions of women, to several cultural shifts that took place, it seems that the media, or at least media productions, are largely influenced by contemporary society. This section will explain the societal changes that were witnessed through various mutations across the horror urban legend artifacts analyzed, as well as offer statements as to why they may have been included within media replications. Social movements and changing attitudes towards certain practices will be discussed as well in order to demonstrate the hold that history and significant events may have on various media forms.

***Racial Stereotypes*** – It is no secret that racism has a heavy hand in much of the works of the past. From slavery to segregation, racial injustice has been a parasite within American society for 400 years. That is why it came as no shock when several American-made artifacts from the 1920s and 1930s included racial slurs, animalistic depictions of African-Americans and blackface. For both the “Wendigo” and “Sleepy Hollow” memes respectively, the decade of the 1930s saw very harsh, racist depictions of white supremacy. Of course, this unfortunately reflected the attitudes and values of the time, especially seeing as the Ku Klux Klan held a march in DC only a few years prior (Krull, 2013). This may demonstrate where the world was in terms of ideology, and paints a better picture as to how the likes of Adolf Hitler was able to rise to power in Nazi Germany. As for the “Bloody Mary” artifact for the 1930s, it neglected the



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presence of any persons of color, almost acting as if they did not exist. This may depict a subtle change in attitude at this point in time towards a world of inclusivity, whereas it is may have been better to simply not say anything if it were to be unpleasant. An alternative reason for this may have been that segregation was in full swing, and white cartoonists such as Walt Disney may not have felt the need to integrate their work (Lehman, 2020). By the 1940s and 1950s, all the replications of the horror urban legend memes leaned off of crude slurs and depictions entirely, and instead followed the “Bloody Mary” approach by neglecting the presence of any and all characters who were not white.

The 1960s and 1970s showed that the world was approaching a more inclusive environment in relation to race, but there was still so much to improve upon. For the “Wendigo” horror urban legend replication for the 1960s, the *Forest Rangers* episode titled “The Wendigo” (1965) saw several white actors in brownface portraying First Nations people. This may have been due to network television preferring white actors on Canadian television at this point in time, even though the country’s segregation laws were already terminated (Coe & Kuttner, 2018). In the following decade, however, the *Wendigo* (1978) film depicted a bit more of an understanding nature towards First Nations people by a handful of the characters, possibly as a result of the changing attitudes towards Indigenous persons (Magnien, 1973). The *Wendigo* (1978) still had numerous racial stereotypes depicted, however, so it is not entirely off the hook in terms of representation. Additionally, the “Sleepy Hollow” artifact from the 1960s did not include persons of color at all, nor did the one from the 1970s. As for “Bloody Mary,” two international films were analyzed for the 1960s and 1970s, so representation was present, although not entirely inclusive of those who were not from that given country. This could be attributed to the countries not having a large multicultural community at this point in time, however, rather than a result of racism (Walton, Harris & Iwabuchi, 2020; Perraudin, 2018).

The 1980s and 1990s was when one meme in particular made a large shift towards a

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world of representation. The 1980s artifacts for “Bloody Mary,” “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” saw no characters of color at all, and that would remain the same in the 1990s for “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo.” The 1990s artifact chosen for “Bloody Mary,” however, was created in response to the Rodney King trial in Los Angeles. This would align with the ideas set forth by Best and Horiuchi (1985) where real life situations largely affected the dispersal of a horror urban legend narrative. The 1992 film *Candyman* largely embraced the dynamic between Black and White Americans in order to deliver an impactful thriller. This was the first time in the “Bloody Mary” history that a Black man portrayed the lead villain in a film adaptation, and strong, Black characters were found in abundance throughout the entire piece. These characters were most likely included in order to depict the culture and environments African Americans were living in within America, as well as to possibly show the injustice this community had been facing since the 1600s (Roediger, 2019). The characters within this film were not shown merely as stereotypes, but were instead highly dynamic in their portrayals. This film was a landmark victory in representation and led to several spin offs, including a remake coming to theaters this Fall (Donaldson, 2011).

In the 2000s, the “Sleepy Hollow” and the “Wendigo” horror urban legend replications were lagging behind “Bloody Mary” in terms of representation. The artifact chosen for “Bloody Mary” included another depiction of an African-American man as the lead villain, in addition to including characters of various other races as well. Meanwhile, the “Wendigo” and “Sleepy Hollow” replications still had no people of color at all. It is possible that this was due to the “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend meme mutating at a more rapid speed than the other memes selected, thereby allowing it to include more contemporary ideas than the others. By the 2010s, however, things shifted largely in relation to representation. The “Sleepy Hollow” artifact for this decade had an African-American woman cast in its leading role, and the “Wendigo” artifact had several persons of color as its main leads, all of which the gamer got to play as. With this,

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finally, the memes that demonstrated a high level of racism were able to be replicated in a way that allowed for strong persons of color to take the reins, and possibly rewrite the problematic nature of the past. This shift may have been in response to the 2000s seeing a push for racial diversity within workspaces, which may have led to people of color being able to write more accurate narratives than ever before witnessed and allowing for more inclusive media productions to be made (Cádima, 2017). Surprisingly, though, the “Bloody Mary” artifact for the 2010s did not have any persons of color at all, which was a step backwards in terms of representation.

From here, it is unclear where racial depictions will go in the future. The hope is for the world to continue towards an environment of inclusivity, whereas any young person can look at a screen or read a book and find characters that look like them. As the world continues to progress, it is likely that the media will too, and it is possible that other memes that previously had racist content will be rewritten in order to serve a changing society.

***Depictions of Women*** – Prior to the 1960s, it seems that the primary reason for women to be in each of the memes studied was for them to either be a damsel in distress, an object to be lusted after or finally, an evil seductress. Within the realm of “Sleepy Hollow,” Katrina was shown as someone who Ichabod must steal away from Brom. She had next to no agency, apart from the ability to say yes to a suitor. This may simply be due to the way in which women were seen by men at that point in time, whereas women did not have agency over their bodies until the 1970s (Murray, 2020). Even found within a number of depictions, such as the one from 1934, it does not even matter if Katrina says no to either of the men, because each of them will still force themselves upon her anyway. In relation to “Bloody Mary,” it seems as though the main female leads are either that of the damsel, such as Snow White, or an evil seductress, such as Death in *Orphée* (1950). With that, the “Wendigo” meme did not even include the presence of women

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until the 1960s. It is likely that these stereotypes and harsh depictions are a result of the media industry lacking women in leadership roles at this point in time, thereby allowing men who had little to no understanding of the intricacies that went along with being a woman writing female narratives (Morgan, 1994). Additionally, it is likely that the men writing these stories viewed women as an object for their affection, possibly someone that they needed to save and, if she were to reject his advances, then the man would most likely see her as an evil seducer. These stereotypes lasted all the way until the second wave of Feminism, which is believed to begun in the 1960s, but became apparent in replications during the 1970s and 1980s (Thornman, 2004).

Following the second wave of Feminism, the presence of strong female leads arose in all of the memes, as seen in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1980), *The Boogeyman* (1980) *Wendigo* (1978) and the “Headless Horseman of Halloween” episode from *The Scooby-Doo Show* (1976). For the first time, women were being viewed as having in-depth knowledge and dynamic emotions that were far outside of the three boxes they were previously put into. Velma was the one who ultimately solved the mystery in the “Headless Horseman of Halloween” episode from *The Scooby-Doo Show* (1976). Lacey was the one who put an end to the Boogeyman’s reign of terror in *Boogeyman* (1980). Connie was the one who was well-versed on the Wendigo legend in *Wendigo* (1978), and most importantly, Katina was in charge of her own destiny in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1980). There, she was no longer someone who simply wished to stand aside and wait for someone to ask her father for her hand in marriage, but rather she asked for Ichabod’s hand and defied her father in order to arrange the marriage for herself. These alterations were most likely included in order to align with the new wave of thinking that was being spread across the world (Thornham, 2004). Women were no longer forced to be merely secretaries and receptionists, but instead were able to be who they wanted to be. Additionally, women’s ideas were gradually more welcome in the writing room, which led to deeper narratives by actual women (Thornham, 2004). What follows from here were a number of strong

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female leads across all three of the memes analyzed, with a woman playing the role of a tow truck driver in the 2000s replication of the “Sleepy Hollow” horror urban legend, and also a woman playing a sheriff in the 2010s adaptation. No longer are women confined to a few set roles, but instead, they can be whatever they want to be and act however they wish to act.

**Cultural Shifts** – Culture found its way into each and every replication studied, whether the initial creator of the replications wanted it to or not. There are a number of examples of this, such as but not limited to hairdos, slang, fashion, make-up and trends of particular decades invading the retellings. Although not entirely vital to the stories being told, these minor additions and inclusions were most likely added in order to help these centuries-old horror urban legend memes adapt to a more modern society (Rohrer, 2004). Beginning in the 1920s, lavish parties were all the rage, especially on “Hallowe’en” (Rogers, 2002). That is a phenomenon that found its way into the first “Bloody Mary” artifact studied, whereas the divination ritual was found within a Hallowe’en party planning book. This carried onto “Sleepy Hollow” as well, where the town is gathered for a party at Katrina’s home where they all tell ghost stories. The 1930s is when Halloween actually became a celebration for children, which aligns with the second “Sleepy Hollow” artifact being a cartoon made for kids (Rogers, 2002). The hair that Snow White fancied at this point in time was also influenced by the 1930s, seeing that it is a simple up-do that was sported by most young women at the time (Harvey, 2020). By the 1940s, children began carving Jack-O-Lanterns, which explains why the Headless Horseman threw a carved pumpkin at Ichabod in the 1949 film *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (Ott, 2012). Additionally within the same film, musical numbers resembled that which was popular at the time, being female vocals laid over jazz instruments (Fauser, 2013). As for the “Wendigo,” its 1940s artifact “Captain Marvel and the Slayer on Skis” (1942) spoke of silver-screen movie stars in addition to the main character running a radio news program, both of which would have been

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largely popular before the widespread availability of television (Anderson, 1999).

The 1950s saw the rise of pre-movie programs, as became apparent with the “Sleepy Hollow” artifact *Washington Irving’s Sleepy Hollow* (1958). Within it, several 1950s cars are shown, as well as fashion and hairstyles that would have made sense for the time. It also demonstrates that wooden bridges were being replaced with concrete at that time if they had not been already. As for the “Wendigo” piece from the same decade, it shows how ads were sold to children in the newspaper alongside the comic strips. The “Sleepy Hollow” artifact of the 1960s depicts women with beehive hairdos, something that would have been attributed to first lady Jackie Kennedy. The 1970s depiction of the “Wendigo” horror urban legend meme showed marijuana use and the term “smoking pot” being attributed to it. Also, hairdos, makeup and fashion were all reflections of the time period due to it being a contemporary piece. The “Sleepy Hollow” artifact of the same decade also had hairdos, makeup and fashion that reflected the decade, in addition to 1970s dance music. Also, the term “jeepers” was being used in order to communicate that someone was scared.

The 1980s saw the use of other terminology, particularly in the “Sleepy Hollow” artifact. Here, the main protagonist used phrases such as “clumsy as a pig in a parlor” to communicate that one is very clumsy, “funny in the loft” to mean that one is a little crazy and “go jump in a river” to say something along the lines of “leave me alone.” The 1990s saw the theme of the new millennium on the horizon, as depicted in the 1999 film *Sleepy Hollow*. Also, the “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend replication for the decade depicted projects buildings, otherwise known as subsidized housing in urban areas. The “Wendigo” artifact for the 1990s showed flip cell phones, which was the newest technology next to their dial-up computer. The 2000s “Bloody Mary” artifact depicted a variety of slang, such as “Yellow” to mean scared, “Bust a cap” to mean shoot

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and “Please don't ice me homie” to mean “please do not kill me.” Last, in the 2010s, technology such as smartphones and laptops were introduced in all three of the memes.

As discussed, history and contemporary societal attitudes and norms seem to bleed into every facet of media productions. From racial stereotypes and depictions of women, to the fashion, technology and terminology of specific time periods, it seems that the media, or at least media productions, are largely influenced by contemporary society. It is possible that these contemporary ideas and other pieces of culture are included into each of the replications studied in order to help a centuries-old tale function more effectively in the modern world (Rohrer, 2002). It seems that social movements and changing attitudes towards certain practices may play a large role in the mutation of a horror urban legend meme, but they are most likely not the sole reason for its change. Another influence may be the presence of authentic individuals bringing narratives about their own cultures and experiences into the fold, thereby making for a new, more inclusive replication. All in all, these findings align with the notions put forth by Best and Horiuchi (1985), and will serve as an excellent addition to the field of communication and folklore.

### **Considerations for Future Research**

For the future of this type of research, it could be beneficial to analyze three horror urban legend memes with the same highest survival mechanic. In doing so, it would be easier to predict with greater certainty where those types of memes may depart to in the future. Also, it may be worth revisiting this study several decades in the future in order to see if the horror urban legends have continued to evolve. Last, one other possible avenue for research could be to retest this study using a quantitative narrative analysis.

### **Implications & Limitations**

The implications of this study serve the field of communication, in addition to folklore

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and history. Through understanding the way horror urban legend memes have changed over time, it is possible to predict how the media will replicate centuries-old horror urban legends in the future. Although it is uncertain why particular horror urban legends are chosen over others to be replicated, it is clear that certain tales need to be refurbished in order to not be lost in the past. Additionally, those with overtly racist undertones will need to be reworked in order to exist within a more modern environment. It is also possible to say that contemporary attitudes and values have a high chance of making their way into future replications, such as if there is a rather large social movement. With this, it is likely that the themes of the movement will be present in a future adaptation. After engaging with the “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend meme, it is possible to predict that tales with high levels of copying-fidelity will be likely to morph and shift at high rates with each replication. Because of this, it is safe to assume that what the “Bloody Mary” horror urban legend meme resembles today is not what it will be 30 years from now. Learning from the “Sleepy Hollow” horror urban legend meme, it is likely that tales with high levels of fecundity will remain mostly intact, possibly with the same characters and settings in several replications. That is not to say that they will not mutate, but they may retain a large amount of their original story. Finally, what may be predicted with the “Wendigo” horror urban legend is that other stories with high levels of longevity will likely build upon its own lore with each replication, rather than change entirely. These findings regarding media and meaning-making have the ability to explain why centuries old tales are revitalized, and provide clarity as to where these tales may continue in the future.

In regards to the limitations of this study, there are very few that truly affected the research. There were a number of paywalls in front of some of the films that were analyzed, but those were easily overcome. Another limitation was that there was generally not a lot of research in regards to a qualitative narrative analysis in conjunction with meme theory, which made the



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research process a bit more difficult. Also, seeing as urban legends have not been studied in a similar fashion for nearly 35 years, it was difficult to produce relevant, recent literature. Finally, seeing that there was only one researcher on this project, the analysis could have been quicker had there been more than one person to engage with 30 artifacts, some of which were two hours long movies or entire novels. All things considered, this project produced interesting results regardless of the limitations.

### **Conclusion**

Horror urban legends have been around for centuries. With the pervasiveness of radio, television and the internet, many have endured the tests of time and adapted to new environments. Tales that used to be isolated to certain parts of the globe can now reach new audiences on the other side of the world in entirely different languages. With every new translation, these stories have the ability to shift and mutate until they hardly resemble their own creator's anecdote (Bennett & Smith, 2013, p. 314). Through this research study, it was found that horror urban legends do indeed have the ability to change over time, and that history and social movements play a partial role in this occurrence. It was also found that by adapting, these horror urban legends were able to survive and endure within an ever-changing world. Although it is uncertain where horror urban legends will continue from here, it is possible to say that they will not depart from this world anytime soon.

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Table 1

## Narrative Analysis of "Bloody Mary"

Artifact Name	Year Created	Type of Media	Objective	Settings	Characters	Narrators	Events	Temporal Relations	Causal Relations	Audiences	Themes	Types of Narratives
1. Halloween Happenings by Lettie C. Vanderveer	1921	Book	to teach, instruct or offer lessons; to socialize into a community; to gain self-knowledge; to entertain	Home (int.), Home (ext.)	Female participant, male apparition	One is present to describe the act	a divination ritual that requires a woman to walk backwards out down a flight of stairs while gazing solely at their own reflection in a handheld mirror, the image of the man she is supposed to marry is supposed to manifest within the reflection.	Purely chronological, no time jumps.	Woman performs ritual, Woman sees apparition	Young adults; intended for a dinner party	Be careful what you wish for	Comedy
2. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	1937	Film	to entertain	castle (int.), castle (ext.), woods, dwarves' home (int.), dwarves' home (ext.), rocky cliffs	Evil Queen, Snow White, Huntsman, Prince, Grumpy, Dopey, Doc, Happy, Bashful, Sleepy, Sneezy	Absent	An evil queen places a bounty upon her step daughter's head (Snow White). When she is found to still be alive and living amongst seven dwarves, the queen casts a spell in order to appear as an elderly hag. The queen gives Snow White a poisoned apple, which puts her into a death-like state until a prince can come and rescue Snow White with a kiss. The prince battles the evil queen who transforms herself into a dragon, and saves Snow White in the end.	Chronological, occasional jumps forward to push the story along	Evil Queen asks the magic mirror a question, the mirror tells her she is not the most beautiful. Evil queen tries to kill Snow White, Snow White escapes. Snow White eats apple, she falls into a coma. Some causal relationships, although Snow White did nothing but exist for this all to happen to her.	Children	Good triumphs over evil	Itoric romance
3. Dead of Night - The Haunted Mirror	1945	Short Film	To entertain	Antique store (ext.), Antique store (int.), Cortlands' living room	Peter Cortland, Joan Cortland, Mr. Rutherford	Absent	Joan buys Peter an antique mirror from Mr. Rutherford, an antique salesman. Unbeknownst to Joan at the time, the mirror had belonged to a man who strangled his wife before killing himself, all in front of the mirror. Peter becomes obsessed with the mirror more and more, until he is no longer able to see Joan in the reflection at all. Instead, he sees a different room entirely than the one he is in. The main protagonist of the anthology film wakes up, which concludes the short film	Chronological, occasional jumps forward to push the story along	Joan buys the mirror for Peter, Peter grows obsessed with it	Young adults, horror fans	Not everything is as it seems	Itoric tragedy
4. Orphée	1950	Film	To renew. To justify how an ancient tale can still be relevant. To comfort or bring relief to those in the audience that may have been adulterers, per the ending. To convey truth and values about a culture. To entertain.	Café de Poesies. Town car. Abandoned manor. Baren room. Bedroom? Mirror. Hotel. Thermes. Orpheus' home ext., int., bedroom, garage. Police headquarters. Police investigation office. Realm of the dead. Interrogation room.	Orpheus. Eurydice. Herutibise. Death. Cegeste. Two motorcyclists. Two East-Asian assistants. Aglaonice. Investigator. Friend. Bystanders at the police headquarters. Witnesses of the accident. Mailman. Man in underworld. Room of interrogators. Dead in the underworld.	A narrator was present, possibly the shaffer but never identified, that told the story of the original tale at the beginning and in the center of the artifact.	The main character, Orpheus, is an aging playwright. He witnesses the death of a younger playwright, and his life begins to spiral. He falls in love with Death herself, and begins to neglect his own, living wife. Death, also smitten with Orpheus, arranges for his wife to die, and takes her into the world of the dead by traveling through a mirror. Orpheus then resolves to save his wife, whom of which he is unable to look at lest he be lost forever. He lives for some time like this, but hates his existence. He arranges to meet with Death one final time, who restores everything to the way it used to be, even though it means for her to never see him again.	time jump in the beginning in regards to the legend of orpheus, before jumping to the artifact's contemporary time. Jump forward in time after Orpheus "falls asleep". Time goes in reverse once Orpheus is dead in the underworld.	Fight breaks out, police are called. Orpheus plays with radio, mirror breaks. Orpheus neglects his wife, his wife is taken by Death.	An older audience. Those who like horror, history and mythology. Possibly aimed towards those who like poems and poetry. Also possibly aimed at a married crowd per theme of adultery throughout the film. Finally, this may be good for those who feel to be "washed up".	Listen to your gut, what you see isn't always the truth, actions have consequences	Itoric tragedy, Elements of romance but there is not necessarily an enemy that is "vanquished" in regards to Orpheus.
5. The Witch's Mirror	1962	Film	To entertain	Castle in Mexico	Eduardo Ramos, Deborah, Sara, Elena, Gustavo, Inspector	Absent	A housekeeper (Sara) practices black magic. After performing a mirror divination ritual, she discovers that her goddaughter (Elena) is to be murdered by her husband, the famed surgeon Eduardo. Sara attempts to make a deal with a demon in order to save Elena's life, but the demon in the mirror denies her request. Upon Elena's death, Sara summons Elena's ghost who begins to haunt her husband and his new bride (Deborah). Paranormal happenings take place, and Eduardo and Deborah find Elena's spirit emerging from a large mirror. Eduardo attempted to destroy the mirror, but instead ignited Deborah and horribly disfigures her. Eduardo then begins stealing corpses in order to try and repair Deborah's appearance. Meanwhile, Sara conjures the ghost of Elena once more, who possesses a pair of severed hands meant for Deborah. After the transplant, Deborah's new hands are hellbent on murdering Eduardo.	No jumps backwards, only forwards.	Elena is murdered, Eduardo is haunted. Eduardo tries to break the mirror, he accidentally scares Deborah's entire body. He robs graves, the hands he stole are possessed and attempt to murder him.	Older audience, those who like horror.	Actions have consequences	Tragedy
6. Ghost of the Mirror	1974	Film	To heal from loss or disappointment, to entertain	Abandoned manor, mother's house, mother's village, rocksides, lake	Chan Yi, Su-Su/Yai Ying, Young Noble, Mother, Ching, Dragon	Absent except for title screens such as "the end"	In order to help his dying mother, the main protagonist (Young Noble) is sent to an abandoned estate with his servant boy Ching in order to read Buddhist scriptures. While there, he spots what looked to be a woman in the well, but instead finds a mirror upon a second glance. He pulls the mirror out of the well, and Young Noble meets Su-Su, a woman who drowned in the well and is now bound to the mirror. She explains that she is forced to do evil things by the Dragon, a being who often takes the form of a witch. While writing the scriptures, Su-Su scares Ching who runs back to Young Noble's mother's village. Meanwhile, Young Noble and Su-Su fall in love. The dragon finds out about this, and vows to destroy the both of them. Su-Su sacrifices herself for Young Noble, and the protagonist finishes his scriptures and returns home.	No time jumps, chronological sequence, only forwards	Young Noble falls in love with Su-Su, the dragon kills her	Unknown. Older audience, those who like horror.	Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all	Tragedy
7. The Boogey Man	1980	Film	To entertain, To help the storyteller or the audience function more effectively in the present	Childhood home (int.), Childhood home (ext.), Childhood bedroom, Childhood living room, Childhood bathroom, psychiatrist's office, Lacey's house (int.), Lacey's house (ext.), Lacey's kitchen, barn, cemetery, church, lake, abandoned house, car (ext.), car (int.)	Lacey, Jake, Dr. Warren, Willy, Kevin, Aunt Helen, Uncle Ernest, Father Rally, Lacey and Willy's Mother, the Lover, Jane, Susan, Timmy, teenagers, Katy	Absent	A pair of siblings are traumatized after Willy kills their childhood abuser at a young age. 20 years later after the murder, Willy is entirely nonverbal and Lacey is married with a son named Jake. Lacey's husband Kevin wants to help her work through her trauma following a letter from her birthmother prompting her to visit, and so after visiting the psychiatrist Dr. Warren, they travel to her childhood home where the murder took place. Meanwhile, Willy accidentally strangled a woman who was coming onto him in the barn before catching a glimpse of himself mid kill. He lets her go and she runs away. Back at their childhood home, Lacey breaks an old mirror that she sees the reflection of the murdered boyfriend in. This sets his spirit free, and he kills the owners of the childhood home, a pair of random teenagers, Lacey and Willy's uncle and a priest during his time back on Earth. He is able to do so by traveling through reflections, and killing those who are caught in one. His weakness is based around water, however, and the reassembled broken mirror was thrown into a well. The film ends with Lacey's son dropping a piece of the mirror from the bottom of his shoe in a cemetery, with Willy no longer being mute but Lacey still being heavily traumatized.	Major jump forward to illustrate the children now being teenagers	Evil boyfriend is murdered, he returns from the grave for revenge. Children witness murder, they are now traumatized	R	Don't let your past haunt you	Romance
8. Candy Man	1992	Film	To entertain, to defend or justify an act, to heal from loss or disappointment, to convey truths and values about a culture	Projects building (ext.), Projects building (int.), university, Helen's apartment, abandoned attic, mental institution, empty apartment, police station, teenager's home, hospital	Helen Lyle, Candyman/Daniel Robitaille, Trevor Lyle, Bernadette 'Bernie' Walsh, Anne-Marie McCoy, Jake, Clara, Billy, Student, Monica, Diane, Danny, Harold, Stacey, Henrietta Moseley, Kitty Culver, Baby Anthony, Prof. Philip Parcell, Archie Walsh, Mother, Castrated Boy, Tough Guy, Gang Leader, Detective Frank Valeno, Police, Attorney, Nurses, TV reporter, Dr. Burke, priest	Absent	Masters student Helen Lyle decides to do her thesis on a local urban legend. The Candyman. Her along with her friend Bernie travel to the Projects in order to learn from those who say they have encountered him. They learn that in order to conjure the Candyman, they must look into a mirror and say his name three times. Helen does so, and her life begins to be plagued by a series of murders she knows she did not commit. Blamed for the deaths regardless, Helen's husband leaves her and she is commended to an insane asylum. She breaks out and goes back to her apartment where her husband has been cheating on her. Then, running back to the Projects, she learns that she is the reincarnation of the woman Candyman loved, and that they had a baby together whom Candyman was currently searching for in order for them to all be together in the afterlife. Helen finds the child and saves, but she herself dies.	Some flashbacks to demonstrate how the Candyman came to be	People say Candyman's name three times, the ghost is summoned and kills them.	R	You can't escape the past. Curiosity killed the cat	Tragedy
9. South Park "Hell on Earth 2006"	2006	TV Show Episode	To entertain	South Park, CO, Airplane (int.), Airport (ext.), Airport (ext.), Butters' house (ext.), Butters' house (int.), Butters' bathroom, Satan's chamber, cake shop, W Hotel party venue, Hell, Stan's home's bathroom, Cathedral (ext.), Cathedral (int.)	Stan Marsh, Eric Cartman, Satan, Demonus, George Burns, Jimmy Valmer, Cardinals, Priests, Stephen Stotch, Organizers, Demons, Ted Bundy, Baker, Randy Marsh, Hitler, Man Dressed as Vampire, Steve Irwin, Helpful Man, Party Guests, Security Guards, Kyle Broflovski, Gandhi, Butters, Bishops, Jeffrey Dahmer, John Wayne Gacy, Policeman, Biggie Smallz, Linda Stotch, Princess Diana, Airport Ticket Woman, Twink, Token.	Absent	The South Park boys are seen taking turns attempting to summon the spirit of Biggie Smallz by reciting his name three times. None are able to do so, until Butters goes home alone and summons his spirit. He immediately starts shooting a gun at him, and he runs outside to his parents, upset he is still awake. Meanwhile, Satan is trying to throw a super sweet sixteen Halloween party called "Hell on Earth 2006" and requests a Ferrari cake which was meant to be picked up by Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy and Jeffrey Dahmer. They kill each of the chefs uncontrollably in a Three Stooges esque occurrence. Butters and Biggie Smallz run into each other once again in his bedroom, who threatens to kill Butters if he is not taken to the Halloween party in LA. He and Biggie Smallz take a plane, and his friends and family think something terrible has happened to him. The boys hear he captured Biggie Smallz, so they go back to their bathroom and summon his ghost, teleporting him away from the plane and back to Colorado. Satan arrives to the Halloween party dressed as Britney Spears, and the bishops and pope try to crash the party since they were not invited. Satan kicks out Steve Irwin because he was not wearing a costume. The three serial killers try to transport the Ferrari cake but end up mangling a pedestrian, destroying the cake and dismembering one another. Meanwhile, the South Park boys travel to the airport and buy a ticket for Biggie Smallz, who is then teleported back to Stan's house since his dad wanted to see if it works. Back at the party, the Ferrari cake never made it so an Acura cake was the next best option. Satan throws a tantrum and acts like a "spoiled, rich girl on MTV" before realizing what has happened and apologizes. He then lets everyone into his party, and everyone celebrates. Back in LA, Butters summons Biggie Smallz to the party and it ends with the two of them partying together.	No flashbacks, just jumps forward to push the story along	Butters says Biggie Smallz three times in the mirror, Biggie Smallz is conjured. Since Butters summoned Biggie Smallz, he has to fly him to the party in Los Angeles	TV-14	Stay true to yourself	Itoric comedy
10. Oculus	2013	Film	To entertain, to heal from loss or disappointment	Auction, antiques warehouse, Russel residence (int.), Russel residence (ext.), Alan Russel's home office	Kaylie Russel, Tim Russel, Marie Russel, Alan Russel, Michael Dumont, Dr. Shawn Graham, Mariel Chavez, Warren, Security Guard, Neighbor, Officers, Phone Store Clerk	Absent	Kaylie and Tim are reunited years after the death of their parents, which Tim was arrested for. Believing Tim to be innocent, Kaylie buys the antique mirror she believes killed her parents in order to destroy it once and for all in order to restore her brother's good name. She devises several safety precautions in their childhood home. Tim, not believing her, is skeptical in the beginning but Kaylie presents several documents explaining the previous deaths that have been caused by the mirror over the past hundreds of years. In the end, Kaylie attempts to destroy the mirror with an automated javelin, which instead impales her and Tim is yet again arrested, this time for the death of his sister.	Constant shifts between old and young Kaylie and Tim Russel	Mirror kills Kaylie and Tim's parents, Tim goes to jail. Kaylie tries to destroy mirror, mirror kills her instead	R	You can't escape the past	Tragedy

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Table 2

## Narrative Analysis of "Sleepy Hollow"

Artifact Name	Year Created	Type of Media	Objective	Settings	Characters	Narrators	Events	Temporal Relations	Causal Relations	Audiences	Themes	Types of Narratives
1. The Headless Horseman	1922	Film	To entertain	Sleepy Hollow, NY, School house, woods, Katrina's house	Ichabod Crane, Katrina, Brom Bones, School children, townsfolk, Katrina's father, Headless Horseman	Incredibly present (The film is silent)	The headless horseman phantom riding on a horse is seen. Ichabod is seen coming into Sleepy Hollow shortly thereafter. Ichabod immediately makes moves on Katrina, who at the time was being courted by Brom Bones. Ichabod began teaching at the school house and immediately dismissed the idea of a phantom haunting the town, and instead begins explaining scientific knowledge which was not accepted by the villagers. Brom spreads a rumor about Ichabod being in cahoots with the devil and witchcraft, and trashes his entire school house. After this, Brom reports to the townsfolk and nearby gets Ichabod tarred and feathered, if not for a child coming forth and explaining that he saw Brom do the vandalism. In response to this, Katrina's father invites all of the townsfolk including Ichabod and Brom to their house for a party. They recite the legend of the headless horseman and they all return home. On his way back, however, Ichabod encountered the headless horseman who pelted him with a pumpkin, dismantling him from his horse. Ichabod's hat and the shattered pumpkin were found the next morning, but his body never manifested.	No time jumps, only forward for the sake of pushing the story	Ichabod encroaches on Katrina. Brom gets mad. HOWEVER: Brom nearly gets Ichabod tortured to death and does not receive any type of punishment.	Adults	Stay in your lane	Tragedy
2. The Headless Horseman	1934	Cartoon	To entertain. To challenge perceptions of a situation?	Night time ext. Sleepy Hollow. Katina's home. Graveyard. Chapel.	Headless horseman phantom, Ichabod, Katrina, Brom Bones, School children, Partigoes, Katrina's servants	Absent.	The headless horseman phantom riding on a horse. Katrina spinning a thread on a wheel, with Brom Bones and Ichabod seen both stealing her heart back and forth. Ichabod in the school house reading about the headless horseman. A man riding on a donkey with a letter for Ichabod inviting him to Katrina's for a party. Ichabod can be seen getting ready in the school house and powdering himself with the eraser from the chalkboard. Ichabod then departs on horseback for Katrina's home, where he is met with Brom Bones also on the way. They race, and Brom slams the door in Ichabod's face. They arrive with other partigoes, and they all feast. Ichabod and Brom fight over Katrina for her heart. At one point, the two men kiss by accident when they intend to kiss her. They begin to fight, before the atmosphere shifts to a dance. The two men take turns dancing with Katrina. Ichabod excels at this, and Brom becomes incredibly jealous. Next, they find themselves gathered around a campfire where an older man tells a tale of the Headless Horseman. After this, the clock dings and everyone begins leaving. Brom leaves without affection from Katrina, and Ichabod tries to force himself upon Katrina before she rejects him from her horse without a kiss. Ichabod walks through a graveyard with his horse, where he is then trailed by what would appear to be the headless horseman. He is chased until he is hit with an uncurved pumpkin, dismantling him from his horse and requiring him to run into the nearby church. It was then revealed that the headless horseman was Brom Bones. Finally, the last scene showed the headless horseman attending Brom Bones and Katrina's wedding, scaring them and the attendants out of the chapel, before it was revealed to be Ichabod Crane.	Time jump between Brom and Katrina's wedding following scaring Ichabod.	Katrina ejecting Ichabod for being forceful. Brom scaring Ichabod away from Katrina, and Ichabod scaring the churchgoers at their wedding in the same manner	Children.	Not everything is as it seems.	Closest to a comedy, but not a perfect match.
3. The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad	1949	Film	To entertain	Sleepy Hollow, NY, School house, woods, Katrina's house, Ye Olde Schooner and Schnapps Shoppe, Graveyard	Ichabod Crane, Katrina, Brom Bones, School children, townsfolk, Headless Horseman, Sleepy Hollow Boys, Horses, Partigoes	Present, all knowing	Narrator opens book and explains the premise of Sleepy Hollow and Ichabod Crane. He walked in to Sleepy Hollow rather than riding on a horse, and Ichabod is described as a rather awkward man. Brom is portrayed as a hero type to the townsfolk, and everyone immediately breaks into song about the arrival of Ichabod Crane. He begins work at the school, but the story quickly jumps when Ichabod meets Katrina. At her family's house, everyone parties until the mood shifts to Brom telling ghost stories. He explains that the Headless Horseman will eat anyone's head he comes across, and the only safe passage is over the wooden bridge that spans the brook. The headless horseman is also depicted as having a Jack-O-Lantern for a head. Ichabod was terrified. Everyone left Katrina's house, riding his horse and growing scared of every tree that looked relatively like a person. As he crossed through the graveyard, his horse took a nap on one of the headstones but the sound of galloping did not stop. Ichabod leapt up and ran into a log, where he discovered cattails beating against the hollow base. He and King Scrooge laugh as they see a mannequin hanging from a tree. The headless horseman is seen from a long way off. Ichabod and Katrina run for some time, with the two beings switching horses at one point. Ichabod successfully crosses the bridge, however, but was ultimately pelted by the flaming Jack-O-Lantern thrown by the horseman. The next morning, there was no trace of Ichabod apart from his hat and a shattered pumpkin. Brom and Katrina married, and rumors persisted that Ichabod had married a widow in a distant county, but others believe he was taken by the Headless Horseman	Time jumps chronologically for the sake of pushing the story forward	Ichabod ran across the bridge so the Horseman could not pass	Children.	Bad things can happen to good people	Ironic tragedy
4. Washington Irving's Sleepy Hollow	1958	Documentary	to honor, memorialize or commemorate	Sleepy Hollow, cemetery, Hudson river, windmill, Sunnyside Home, Irving's Office, Headless Horseman Bridge	Washington Irving, Ichabod Crane, Headless Horseman, Rival, Maiden	Present, all knowing	Talks of the town of Sleepy Hollow, the impact Washington Irving had, the story of the Headless Horseman and the real life location of the bridge Ichabod disappeared on	N/A	Rival scaring Ichabod out of town, rival looking frightened upon when his legend is brought up	All audiences, those who enjoy English, History and/or Horror	Remember your roots	Closest to a Comedy
5. Walt Disney Uncle Scrooge #66 The Headless Horseman	1966	Comic Book	To entertain, to renew	Horse race track (ext.), Horse race track, registration office, downtown Duckburg, mansion, horse stable	Uncle Donald, Uncle Scrooge, Huey, Dewey, Louie, townsfolk, escaped prisoners	Present, mainly does transitions	Scrooge McDuck is seen trying to enter a horse race without a horse in order to win a trophy that would make him popular among the aristocrats. He is laughed at, and Donald and the nephews find him storming out of the registration office. They devise a plan to buy the winning horse, only to find out the horse has shellshock and leaps into nearby water anytime a mysterious loud boom goes off. After purchasing the horse anyway, the gang finds out that the horse is actually a robot. Believing that the previous owner had been cheating, Scrooge storms out while the nephews peep around the other horse stalls. There, the three boys realize every horse is a robot, so there was no cheating involved. Meanwhile, the loud boom is discovered to be an explosive being tested by escaped jailmates who are trying to break into Scrooge's money vault. They rig the explosive to go off at the exact time as the race, and decide to go to see how it is setting up before hitting the vault. There, they mix up the explosive with a stick of chalk and the explosive is placed in Scrooge's horse's bag. Unbeknownst to this, Donald mounts the horse and begins riding, all while wearing the blinders and ear muffs given to him by Scrooge so he does not get distracted. The escaped convicts quickly return to the horse race to try and find the explosive, but the word quickly spreads that there is a bomb and everyone scatters, except for Donald who can't hear and can barely see. Luckily, the explosive is ineffective if it gets wet, so the nephews devise a plan to break the trophy	The story was entirely interrupted halfway through with a short comic strip, but other than that there were no flashbacks and only hops forward	Boom goes off, horse dives into water; Word of a bomb spreads, everyone flees the race	Children.	Not everything is as it seems.	Comedy
6. The Scooby-Doo Show - The Headless Horseman of Halloween	1976	TV Show Episode	To entertain, to renew	Crane Manor (ext.), Crane Manor living room, Elwood's car, airplane field, airplane hanger, airplane (int.), pond	Scooby-Doo, Daphne, Freddy, Shaggy, Velma, Headless Horseman, Scooby-Dum, Mrs. Crane, Beth Crane, Ichabod Crane, Elwood Crane, Tartif	Absent.	Scooby and the gang are visiting Scooby's cousin Scooby-Dum at Mrs. Crane's house. Being the descendant of Ichabod Crane, the Crane family and the gang are quickly haunted by the Headless Horseman in search of a new head. Elwood Crane, Mrs. Crane's cousin, appears shortly thereafter to explain that the necklace she is wearing is cursed and that he will take it to protect her. His car then speeds off into fog, disappearing into the night. The gang then witnesses the Headless Horseman ride by, this time wearing Elwood's head. They quickly go outside to search for his car, worrying something happened to him, and found it abandoned with a newspaper attached to the window speaking of a flying saucer. The gang splits up to look for clues and finds that the phone lines had been cut and the body of the headless horseman is still in his initial burial site. Something clicks in Velma, and the gang rushes for the nearby airfield where they encounter the horseman once more, this time taking off in a plane. Scooby and Shaggy end up on board, and the plane crashes. The gang attempts to unmask the headless horseman, but instead find the head to be real, and belonging to Elwood.	No time jumps, only forward for the sake of pushing the story	Elwood takes keys from car, gang knows the horseman is Elwood	Children.	Not everything is as it seems.	Comedy
7. The Legend of Sleepy Hollow	1980	TV Film	To entertain	Woods, School House, Katrina's home (int.), Katrina's home (ext.), Sleepy Hollow, NY (ext.), graveyard	Ichabod Crane, Katrina Van Tassel, Brom Bones, Fredrick Dutcher, Thelma Dumkey, Squire Van Tassel, Winthrop Palmer, Karl, Ted Dumkey, Singers, Fritz Vanderhoof, Jan Van Tassel	Absent.	Satellite: Ichabod retrieving the hat for the schoolboy; Kernel: Palmer being arrested, Brom being discovered to be the horseman. Story: Ichabod moves to Sleepy Hollow, NY and is informed of many ghosts that inhabit the area, including the old school teacher and the headless horseman. There is a love triangle between Brom, Katrina, and Ichabod and Thelma. Despite Brom trying to trick Ichabod into thinking he is losing his mind due to multiple tricks, Brom and Thelma end up together and Katrina and Ichabod end up together. In the final chase, Ichabod came in contact with the ghost of the horseman after being chased by Brom and figuring out it was him all along. Palmer (the old school teacher) was also discovered to still be alive and playing a trick on Brom. Finally, Ichabod was depicted as someone all of the women lusted after, with both Thelma and Katrina being suitors for him with their fathers giving each of them away to Ichabod frequently throughout the film.	No time jumps, only forward for the sake of pushing the story	Brom tried to kill Palmer, Palmer returned to exact his revenge.	Unknown; Older audience, those who like horror.	Not everything is as it seems.	Comedic Romance
8. Sleepy Hollow	1999	Film	To entertain	Abandoned home, New York City (ext.), New York City Court Room, Carriage (ext.), Carriage (int.), Sleepy Hollow, NY, 1799, Windmill, Van Tassel estate, flower garden, church, Horseman burial site, Crane's bedroom, Katrina's bedroom, cottage, witch's house, cabin	Ichabod Crane, Katrina Van Tassel, Lady Van Tassel/Crane, Baltus Van Tassel, Brom Van Brunt, Reverend Steenwyck, Magistrate Philippe, Doctor Lancaster, Notary Hardenbrook, Hessian Horseman, Lady Crane, Killian, Beth Killian, Burgomaster, High Constable, Jonathan Masbath, Sarah, Van Ripper, Lord Crane, Glenn, Theodore, Thomas Killian, Doctor Lancaster's Wife, Dirk Van Garrett, Spotty Man, Thuggish Constable, Little girls, Rifleman	Absent.	Constable Ichabod Crane is sent to Sleepy Hollow, NY from New York City in order to deduce who the killer of several townspeople may be. He meets Katrina, Brom, Katrina's Father and her Step Mother at a party one evening, and he is informed of the beatings that have been going on. There were a handful of flashbacks regarding Ichabod's past and how his mother was executed for witchcraft, as well as flashbacks to demonstrate how the Horseman was killed. Back in the present, the horseman kills Brom and Ichabod suspects that the horseman is being controlled by a living person. He finds out that Katrina's step mother is the true witch controlling the horseman after he kills Katrina's Father, and the step mother tries to kill Katrina next in order to get rich from the inheritance money. Ichabod retrieves the horseman's missing head and gives it back to him, which causes him to no longer listen to the witch and take her with him back to hell. Ichabod and Katrina move to New York City.	Several flashbacks to Ichabod's childhood, flashbacks to show the death of the horseman, chronological order otherwise	Step mother stole the horseman's head, the horseman rose to claim a head. Everyone ran inside the church, the horseman couldn't get in.	Female	Not everything is as it seems.	Romance
9. Headless Horseman	2007	Film	To entertain, to renew	Car (int.), Car (ext.), woods, Wormwood, basement, church, bridge, general store, library	Liam, Ava, Kokchak Jefferson Stillwell, Tiffany, Pa Rusk / Sgt. Mosby Rusk, Lizzie, Candy, Nash, Doc, Seth, Headless/Calvin Montgomery, Johnny Rusk, Sheriff Steve Buck, Sheriff Gus, Davis, Dogcatcher, Walking Man, Rag Doll Man, Johnny's gang, Woodworm Townfolk	Absent.	Seven college kids on their way to a Halloween party decide to take a shortcut. Their van gets a flat, and a young female truck driver (Candy) brings their van to Wormwood, an old country town. She explains that they are having a Headless Horseman celebration. Meanwhile, one of the kids (Seth) wanders off into the woods and gets beheaded by the horseman. Ava discovers Seth's body and tells the others. Candy explains that the horseman has been haunting their village since 1806 and was a serial killer who now rises up every 7 years to get 7 heads. She warns them to escape before dark. They attempt to leave on foot but a mysterious mist surrounds the forest and they are unable to see where they're going. Tiffany gets beheaded during this process and they all split up and are forced back towards Wormwood. Half of them try to get weapons to defend themselves while the other half searches for a working car. Candy's dad shows up and ties up the remaining college kids in order to sacrifice them to the horseman, but Candy unites them and reveals she is not actually from that town and wants to escape like the rest of them. She explains that if the Horseman does not get his 7 heads, the entire town of Wormwood would disappear forever. Lizzie is beheaded by the horseman and Candy steals the tow truck, kills her dad and books the Horseman with the car cable, dragging him onto the bridge where he bursts into flames. Candy, Liam and Ava survive.	Flashback to the civil war where the Headless Horseman kills two confederate soldiers. Otherwise, purely chronological	Every seven years the horseman rises up to fetch seven heads	R	Don't deviate from your path	Romantic Tragedy
10. Sleepy Hollow Pilot	2013	TV Show Episode	To entertain, to renew, to heal from loss or disappointment	Woods, barn, battlefield, Sleepy Hollow NY, cave, graveyard, church, cop car (ext.), cop car (int.), sheriff station	Ichabod Crane, Abbie Mills, Frank Irving, Katrina Crane, Andy Brooks, Polygraph Technician, Sheriff August Corbin, Reverend Alfred Knapp, Sleepy Hollow Officers, Doctor, Waitress, Prison Guard, Aide, Militiaman	Absent	Ichabod is a revolutionary war soldier on behalf of the American side, while the horseman is a British redcoat. Ichabod beheaded the horseman, and the horseman sliced through Ichabod's chest. Ichabod then wakes up in contemporary Sleepy Hollow in a cave, and wanders out into nearby traffic and is arrested by police. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Abbie Mills and Sheriff Corbin encounter the headless horseman, and Sheriff Corbin loses his head. Back at the Sheriff's office, Abbie meets Ichabod, and the two of them begin to hunt for clues as to what is going on. It is revealed that Katrina, Ichabod's wife, was a good witch and she leads Ichabod on the path forward. She explains she is the keeper of the horseman's head, and that he is the first horseman of the apocalypse. Abbie and Ichabod attempt to retrieve the horseman's head and narrowly succeed after coming into contact with the horseman. Other officers encounter the horseman and Abbie and Ichabod are allowed to pursue the horseman.	A handful of flashbacks and forwards to illustrate Ichabod's previous life, several dream sequences, chronological	Ichabod beheaded the headless horseman, Ichabod and the horseman became bound to one another	TV-14	Truth is stranger than fiction	Comedy

# HOW HORROR URBAN LEGENDS CHANGE

Table 3

## Narrative Analysis of the “Wendigo”

Artifact Name	Year Created	Type of Media	Objective	Settings	Characters	Narrators	Events	Temporal Relations	Causal Relations	Audiences	Themes	Types of Narratives
1. Plains Ojibwa Tales, “Nanibozhu and the Wendigo” by Alanson Skinner	1920	Short Story	to clarify thinking or to make sense of something; to entertain, to convey truths and values about a culture	Woods, Winter	Nanibozhu, Windigo, Weasel	Most likely Alanson Skinner relaying a story	Nanibozhu comes across a Wendigo. Wendigo required Nanibozhu to fetch a spit (which Nanibozhu knows will be used to roast him). Nanibozhu fetches the worst spit he could find, which brought him time to devise a plan. He comes across his friend the Weasel, who Nanibozhu asks to crawl into the Wendigo's anus in order to bite his from behind; the only way to kill the beast. Weasel does exactly this, and Nanibozhu rewards him by turning him white and giving him a black feather for a tail.	Time seems to move relatively fast, but there are no time jumps.	Nanibozhu brings wrong spit, Windigo helps Nanibozhu, Weasel gets rewarded with color and tail.	General audience. Fine for all ages, and was likely told to all ages.	Friends come in many shapes and sizes	Romance
2. The Golden Book Magazine's “The Wendigo” by Algernon Blackwood	1933	Short Story	to entertain	Base Camp, Woods, Tent	Dr. Cathcart, Hank Davis, Simpson, Joseph Defago, Punk	Narrator knows already what happened, telling it in past tense	Hunting crew goes north (possibly Canada?). Punk stays at the base camp. Group splits up to cover more ground, Hank w. Cathcart, Simpson with Defago. Defago smells something rotten on the wind and it makes him uneasy. That night, Defago screams from his tent and Simpson runs after him, tracking his footprints. They slowly begin to shift, before they are no longer there. Simpson hears Defago scream in the sky that his feet are on fire. Simpson makes it back to base camp where Defago also returns, but dies shortly upon arrival. Punk knows he had seen the Wendigo.	No flashbacks, time moves quickly and time jumps are used fairly often to reflect a new day	Group didn't view the smell as a warning; Defago comes into contact with a Wendigo.	Older audience; teenagers and older	Don't underestimate the unknown	Irony
3. Capt. Marvel “And the Slayer on Skis” by Alfred Bester	1942	Comic Book	to entertain	Radio Station; Spook Mountain, Diamond Cave	The Wendigo, Capt. Marvel, Billy, Chief Blackheart, Bear, Lowell, Trixie Topps	Watches but gives additional context	In this piece, a snowy “Spook Mountain” was being developed into a ski resort. Billy, aka Captain Marvel, discussed this occurrence within his radio show, before switching to describe the First Nations People's urban legend of the “Wendigo.” Here, Billy described the creature as a man-eating, unnatural beast. As time went on, Billy then heard the pleas of a movie star who was in trouble on the mountain, and transformed into Captain Marvel. He sprang into action, fighting a bear that threatened the young actress. Following this, Billy returned to his radio show the following day where Chief Blackheart, an Indigenous shaman, warned Billy about bears' relationship with the “Wendigo.” He explained that, according to legend, messing with bears angers the demons that stir within the mountain. Before he could finish, however, a figure on skis and wearing a parka manifested and killed Chief Blackheart, stating that he is the Wendigo and that people should stay out of his affairs. Jumping ahead, the Wendigo was later found out to be simply a man in a costume, hoping to mine diamonds on the mountain. Within this version of the urban legend, the meme of the “Wendigo” is once again expanded upon to include a relationship between bears and the First Nation's demon. Also, although simply a man, the figure of the “Wendigo” is still seen killing a person, and is still widely associated with aboriginal culture.	Time jumps are created by narrator involvement	Capt Marvel interferes with diamond mining, Billy gets kidnapped.	Younger, most likely aimed at male children	Good always triumphs over evil	Comedy
4. Ottawa Journal's “Big Chief Nan-Bush and the Wicked Wendigos” by Ja-Bega-Nene	1950	Newspaper Comic	to entertain, to convey truths and values about a culture	Woods, Winter	Chief Nan-Bush, Wendigos, Manitou	Present, story-teller type, knows all	Chief Nan-Bush was discovered to be hunting for deer. The author described the conditions as cold and the wind as harsh, which made Chief Nan-Bush worried about Wendigos. Once, as he took aim at a large moose, a bear appeared and frightened away the bear. Associating this with the Wendigo, he knew they were drawing close on him. Still, he pressed on towards the lake where he was hoping to catch fish, but in the distance he saw Wendigos gathered, performing a war dance and preparing to attack. They chase him through the woods until Manitou, Chief of the Gods, saved him by making rocks appear in the lake for him to run across. The Wendigos followed until Nan-Bush was on the other side, and Manitou made the rocks vanish. They fell into the water and were never seen again. Today, in Trout River, you can still see the rocks.	No time jumps until the very end, told chronologically	Bear scared away a moose, Nan-Bush knew Wendigos were aware of his presence	Younger, most likely aimed at children	Hold onto one's faith in the face of evil	Comedy/Romance
5. The Forest Rangers’ “The Wendigo”	1965	TV Show Episode	to convey truths and values about a culture, to entertain	woods, bush, fort (ext.), fort (int.), ranger station (int.), helicopter (ext.), Mr. Wabigan's cabin (ext.), Mr. Wabigan's cabin (int.)	George Keeley, Joe Two Rivers, Chub Stanley, Mike Forbes, Kathy, Emmasina Wabigan, Mr. Wabigan	Absent	Emmasina runs away from school in order to look for her father, whom she believes to have been abducted by the Wendigo. While running through the brush, she encounters a forest ranger helicopter which flew overhead. She follows the helicopter to find the main characters roughhousing outside. She asks for food, they feed her and inform them of her story. She then leaves with their dog back into the woods to find her father's house. Two of the boys follow her as Joe trails slightly behind. He gets to the cabin first, however, and is shocked out by a mysterious arm. Emmasina and the boys quickly find her dad's house, and Joe unconscious on the floor. They wake him up and Emmasina hears the wind howling outside, believing it to be the Wendigo. She equips an anti-wendigo mask created by the boys and runs outside to confront the monster, whom of which ends up being her dad. He explains that only a fool would believe in the Wendigo, and they live happily ever after	No time jumps until the very end, told chronologically	Wind howls aggressively, Emmasina believes it to be Wendigo. Emmasina leaves the house, the boys follow to ensure her safety	Family friendly audience	Not everything is as it seems	Comedy/Romance
6. Wendigo	1978	Film	To renew, to entertain	Canadian wilderness, wendigo island, tent (int.), tent (ext.), campfire, canoe, lake	Defago, Billy, Frank Benson, Connie Kranzler, Eric Jennings, Wendigo, Mike Cogan, Blackfoot Warriors, Blackfoot Squaws, Blackfoot children	Absent	Campers and hunters go into the Canadian wilderness and discover an island rumored to be an indigenous burial ground holding treasure. Unbeknownst to them, however, the wendigo is there and begins picking them off one by one.	Flashbacks to show the Blackfoot tribe on the island	campers have no respect for the island or its dead, they get killed	Teens, young adults, horror lovers	Treat resting places with respect	Tragedy
7. Pet Sematary by Stephen King	1983	Book	to entertain, to convey truths and values about a culture, To heal from loss or disappointment	Creed residence (ext.), Creed bathroom, main road, Crandall residence, ambulance, mortuary, woods, pet sematary, ancient burial ground, Rachel's old home, Zeld's bedroom	Louis Creed, Ellie Creed, Gage Creed, Rachel Creed, Jud Crandall, Norma Crandall, Wendigo, Victor Pascoe, Bill Bateman, Dory Goldman, Steve Materton, Zeld's Goldman, Irwin Goldman, Churchill Wendigo	Reliable, Limited First Person Narration	Doctor Louis Creed moves to Ludlow, Maine with his wife Rachel, daughter Ellie and son Gage. He quickly befriends his neighbor Jud Crandall, who warns of the highway next to his home. It is mainly used by trucks leaving a chemical plant that speed by. Jud becomes a father figure to Louis since he lost his dad at three years old. A few weeks go by and Jud takes the Creed family on a walk in the woods on a well treaded path to a “Pet Sematary,” misspelled to mean cemetery. The next day, Rachel and Louis have an argument over death and Rachel worries it may traumatize her at a young age if she were to know what it was. She then explains about the traumatic experience she endured while taking care of her dying sister Zeld, and Louis apologizes and promises to be more understanding of her situation. After this, Louis has a traumatic experience when a student hit by a car, Victor Pascoe, addresses Louis by name without knowing who he was. That night, Louis dreamed of Victor, who was explaining that Louis must not go to the Deadfall at the back of the Pet Sematary, no matter what happened. Louis woke up covered in dirt and pine needles, but convince himself that he must have dreamt it all. While Rachel and the kids are away, Ellie's cat Church is hit by a car, and Jud and Louis take it to the burial ground behind the cemetery to resurrect him. He comes back altered, but alive. In the few short weeks after, Gage is hit by a truck and dies. Louis fights with his in-laws who blame him for Gage's death, and Louis buries Gage in the same burial ground. Gage kills Jud with a scalpel and then his mother, and Louis kills Gage and Church with morphine. Louis then buries his wife in the burial ground and burns down Jud's house.	Major flashback to show the trauma Rachel endured while taking care of Zeld. Other than that time moves linearly with minor time jumps forward for the sake of pushing the story along	child dies, family mourns; child gets brought back to life, child is altered	Unknown; Young Adult	Some things are better off gone	Ironic Tragedy
8. Charmed’s “The Wendigo”	1999	TV Show Episode	To entertain, to heal from loss or disappointment, to convey truths and values about a culture	Antique store, Lane residence, Pru's office, Quake restaurant, phone booth, Halliwell residence, park, hospital	Prue Halliwell, Piper Halliwell, Phoebe Halliwell, Inspector Andy Trudeau, Ashley Fallon, Billy Waters, Harriet Lane, Laurence Beck, Claire Pryce, Auctioneer, Teri Lane, E.R. Doctor	Absent	Piper's car breaks down and she is hunted by a Wendigo while she tries to fix it. She gets scratched and is taken to the hospital. Her sisters Prue and Phoebe meanwhile are selling an antique bracelet at an auction and Phoebe has a premonition regarding who the owner was. Inspector Andy and FBI Agent Fallon try to track down the Wendigo, who ends up being Fallon. She tries to kill him in the park but is interrupted by Phoebe and Prue, who end up killing her with a flare gun.	No flashbacks, occasional flash forwards, a handful of dream sequences, chronological	Piper gets scratched, Piper turns into Wendigo, Phoebe has a vision, she is able to save Andy's life	TV-14	An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind	Romance
9. Supernatural's “Wendigo”	2005	TV Show Episode	To entertain, to heal from loss or disappointment	Blackwater, CO; Tent (int.), Campsite, Woods, Mining Cave, Impala (ext.), Impala (int.), Ranger station, Wendigo lair	Sam Winchester, Dean Winchester, Roy, Haley Collins, Ben Collins, Mr. Shaw, Ranger Wilkinson, Tommy Collins, Gary, Brad, Paramedic, Local Wendigo	Absent	Brothers and monster hunters Sam and Dean on their drive across country to find their father stop in Colorado. There, they hear about the abducting of a local teenager at a campsite, or so the teenager's sister reported. Sam and Dean go to the girl's home to find out more about it, as well as to uncover why an X would be on one of their father's maps in the same location. After speaking with the sister, Sam, Dean and the group go to the woods the next morning to find the missing teen's campsite. They find it, and are immediately caught of guard by a scream, which they later deduce is the wendigo trying to lure them away. The wendigo kills one of the members, and the next morning the gang devises a plan to kill it with fire. Dean and the sister are kidnapped by the wendigo and taken back to its lair. Sam and the sister's little brother find them in an abandoned mining cave, and Dean shoots the Wendigo with a flare gun. The wendigo dies, and they survive.	No flashbacks, time moves chronologically for the sake of the story	Brother is taken by Wendigo, Sam and Dean go to save him	TV-14	Good triumphs over evil	Romance
10. Until Dawn	2015	Video Game	To entertain, to heal from loss or disappointment, to convey truths and values about a culture	Blackwood Sanatorium, Blackwood Pines, North West Mines, Blackwood Mountain, Washington Lodge, Fire Tower, Washington Estate, Shed	Ale, White, Anns Bennett, Billy Bates, Ashley, Makapitew, Mike, Cree, Dan T., David Miller, Emily, Dr. Hill, Jessica, Suzanne Daniels, Matt, Ted Moseley, The Psycho, The Stranger, The Wendigos, George Hawthorne, Sam, Gordon Bennet, Victor Milgram, Victoria LaBoucher, Chris, Josh, Jefferson Bragg, Beth, Hannah, Wolfe, Adam White, Bob Washington, Charles Miller, Chuck Berenson, Dr. Bowen, Dr. W.B. Cathcart, Evelyn Daniels, Melinda Washington, Sarah Smith	Reliable, Third person omniscient	Satellite: The love triangles formed by the teens. Kernels: Hannah and Beth going missing, the Wendigo having Beth's tattoo; Story: A group of teens play a prank on one of their friends, who runs out of the house during a snowstorm. Her twin sister follows after her, and the duo slide off of a cliff. A year later, the remaining teenagers are unaware of what happened to their missing friends and ascend the mountain where the events took place for a reunion. While there, they start being stalked by creatures in the night that hunger for them. Ultimately, they find out what had happened to their two missing friends and, depending on the player's decisions, survive the night and make it to safety.	Quite a bit of use of flashing forward. This can be seen in the beginning after Beth and Hannah's disappearances, to where it jumps a year ahead. Other examples can be of the vision events that can be triggered by the player in order to possibly avoid a death.	Butterfly effect mechanics; actions have consequences	M	Karma will come back to haunt you	Elements of all four, highly dependent on the player's choices.

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Table 4

*Historical Context Analysis of “Bloody Mary”*

<b>Artifact Name</b>	<b>Date of Creation</b>	<b>Location of Creation</b>	<b>Significant Historical Events</b>	<b>Terminology, Ideology and Language</b>
1. Halloween Happenings by Lettie C. VanDerveer	1921	Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.	Tulsa Race Riot	"Hallowe'en", English
2. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs	1937	Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.	Hidenburg Disaster	"Dwarfs", English
3. Dead of Night - The Haunted Mirror	1945	United Kingdom	End of WWII	English
4. Orphée	1950	France	Pro-Communist Riots	Teenagers drinking in bars, French
5. The Witch's Mirror	1962	Mexico	1962 Mexico City Radiation Accident	Spanish
6. Ghost of the Mirror	1974	Taiwan	Zhaotong Earthquake	Mandarin
7. The Boogey Man	1980	Maryland, U.S.A.	Mt. Saint Helens eruption	English
8. Candy Man	1992	Chicago, U.S.A.	Russia stops targeting US with nuclear weapons	Project Buildings, English
9. South Park "Hell on Earth 2006"	2006	Culver City, California, U.S.A.	Great American Boycott takes place	"Yellow," "Bust a cap," "Please don't ice me homie," English
10. Oculus	2013	Fairhope, Alabama, U.S.A.	Boston Marathon Massacre	English

HOW HORROR URBAN LEGENDS CHANGE

Table 5

*Historical Context Analysis of "Sleepy Hollow"*

<b>Artifact Name</b>	<b>Date of Creation</b>	<b>Location of Creation</b>	<b>Significant Historical Events</b>	<b>Terminology, Ideology and Language</b>
1. The Headless Horseman	1922	U.S.A.	Radio is introduced into the White House	Ichabod beats a student, English
2. The Headless Horseman	1934	U.S.A.	America begins to move out of the Great Depression	Depiction of African Americans only as servants, depicted as monkeys riding on donkeys; Silent
3. The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad	1949	Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.	Second Red Scare Begins	Musical scenes reflect the contemporary music of the time, English
4. Washington Irving's Sleepy Hollow	1950	U.S.A.	First African American winner of a Pulitzer Prize: Gwendolyn Brooks	English
5. Walt Disney Uncle Scrooge #66 The Heedless Horseman	1966	Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.	Anti Vietnam War demonstrations break out	Female ducks have beehive hairdos, English
6. The Scooby-Doo Show The Headless Horseman of Halloween	1976	Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.	Jimmy Carter defeats incumbent Gerald Ford in US Presidential election	"Jeepers," English
7. The Legend of Sleepy Hollow	1980	U.S.A.	Mt. Saint Helens eruption	Refers to the indigenous people as Indians, Women being seen moreso as equals, "funny in the loft," "Go jump in the river," "Clumsy as a pig in a parlor," English
8. Sleepy Hollow	1999	U.S.A.	President Bill Clinton was acquitted during his impeachment hearing in the Senate	Refers to the indigenous people as Indians, English
9. Headless Horseman	2007	U.S.A.	Nancy Pelosi becomes the first woman to be Speaker of the United States House of Representatives	English
10. Sleepy Hollow Pilot	2013	U.S.A.	Boston Marathon Massacre	English

HOW HORROR URBAN LEGENDS CHANGE

Table 6

*Historical Context Analysis of the “Wendigo”*

<b>Artifact Name</b>	<b>Date of Creation</b>	<b>Location of Creation</b>	<b>Significant Historical Events</b>	<b>Terminology, Ideology and Language</b>
1. Plains Ojibwa Tales, "Nänibozhu and the Wendigo" by Alanson Skinner	1920	U.S.A.	Prohibition begins	English
2. The Golden Book Magazine's "The Wendigo" by Algernon Blackwood	1933	England, U.K.	Winston Churchill warns of impending German threat	Lots of racist terminology. N words and R words. English
3. Capt. Marvel "And the Slayer on Skis"	1942	U.S.A.	Japanese Americans placed in Internment Camps	English
4. Ottawa Journal's "Big Chief Nan-Bush and the Wicked Wendigos" by Ja-Bega-Nene	1950	U.S.A.	First African American winner of a Pulitzer Prize: Gwendolyn Brooks	English
5. The Forest Rangers' "The Wendigo"	1965	U.S.A.	Voting Rights Act signed into effect following the Selma demonstrations	Refers to the indigenous people as Indians, English
6. Wendigo	1978	U.S.A.	Jonestown Suicides take place killing 909 Americans	Racial stereotypes, English
7. Pet Sematary by Stephen King	1983	U.S.A.	The world's first dedicated hospital ward for HIV/AIDS patients opens at the San Francisco General Hospital	"Pet Sematary," "Deadfall," "Micmac, Indians" English
8. Charmed's "The Wendigo"	1999	U.S.A.	President Bill Clinton was acquitted during his impeachment hearing in the Senate	English
9. Supernatural's "Wendigo"	2005	U.S.A.	150,000 people march in DC against the Iraq War	English
10. Until Dawn	2015	England, U.K.	UK Supreme Court rules that immediate action must be taken to reduce air pollution	English



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