

“Monster”

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When you look up the word monster in the dictionary the definition that appears is an imaginary creature that is typically large in size , ugly and frightening. Some of the synonyms are giant, mutant, colossus and the list continues. Meanwhile, this is the exact word that is sometimes used in books and movies to describe and characterize a disabled person with a certain mental or physical disability. These people are seen as monsters or freaks to society, when they should be seen as equal members to society and their community. Just because they look different then everyone else does not mean that others should treat them like peasants or looked down upon them.

Disability happens around us more often than we generally recognize or care to notice, and we harbor unspoken anxieties about the possibilities of disablement... What we fear , we often stigmatize and shun and sometimes seek to destroy.”(Longmore) This statement in the Longmore article shocked me the most because of its reality and truth behind it. Disability is seen as a fear in which no one wants to discuss. In this article Longmore makes it a point to mention that in certain novels or movies the person with a disability is seen as the “bad guy” “evil” or “monster” of the film or movie. The worst thing as described by Longmore in his article is that in the portrayal of people with disabilities, the only way to stop them is to kill them and make them irrelevant to everyone.

In the short story by Junot Diaz, Ysrael was seen as a monster by most of the community because of the way he looked, which then made him an outsider to all. Ysrael was excluded by all the young boys in the campo. “He was something to talk about, a name that set the kids screaming.”(Diaz 3) The boys would torment him because of his deformity in his face but the fact that he wore a

mask to conceal his face, made the boys in the campo more curious about Ysreal and would do anything to harass him and expose the “ugly” creature that laid beneath. The boys would say “He’s ugly....And that his face would make you sick.”(Diaz 8) Because of his monster like features, none of the young boys bothered to understand him as the human he is.

A similar short story names “The Odyssey” by Homer relates because of Polyphemus and how the other characters see him as a vicious ruthless monster. My problem with this short story is that no one asks why it all happened in the first place, and who are the true monsters.

Polyphemus only eats plants and cared for his animals but when these men came into his home and invade his space he has no other choice but to take matters into his own hands. In Polyphemus’ defense the men came into his house calling him names such as “cyclops” and “lawless brute”, so after analysing all the facts I believe Polyphemus was the victim and the soldiers were the brute monsters. The soldiers come into a community of “cyclops” which they were not welcomed, they were considered the outsiders and monsters. While reading this at first as the perspective of the soldiers I didn't see what they were doing as wrong or crucial. To me they were conquering the beast. But then you put yourself in Polyphemus’ shoes and think about yourself, if someone came into your house, used your bed, ate your food and then treated you as a animal in your own space wouldn't you feel low and small like you don't matter in your own home.

While reading these two short stories it reminded me of a wonderful book I read not too long ago named “Wonder” by R.J Palacio. This novel is a fiction which was written after the author took her son to get some ice cream and he began to cry when he saw a young girl next to him with a big birthmark next to him. This moment in her life inspired her to create Auggie.

Auggie is a 10 year old boy who has a rare facial condition called Treacher Collins syndrome, and because of that he has been homeschooled his whole life until he was in 5th grade. I believe children are worse than adults because of the simple fact that they just say what's on their mind while not thinking of the other person. The other children in Auggie's new school didn't treat him as one of their own, they would bully him and try to sit as far away from him as possible. "What's the deal with your face? I mean, were you in a fire or something?" (Palacio 28) Children are brutally honest, especially when they do not know all the facts. So when one of Auggie's classmates straight up asked him about his face without hesitation he was heartbroken and did not know how to answer the question and was embarrassed of his physical appearance. He felt like a freak and a monster. "I wish everyday could be Halloween. We could all wear masks all the time. Then we could walk around and get to know each other before we go to see what we looked like under the masks." (Palacio 73). After all the bullying, teasing and lack of friends that Auggie had in school he wanted Halloween to be everyday because it was the one day he could be himself and everyone was concealed and there was no judgement while he is walking down the hall. The problem is that few people take the opportunity to get to know him, since many people are put off by the way he looks. Auggie wants everyone to realize that it matters more what is on the inside than on the outside.

In the film, "By Stanley for Stanley", Stanley was viewed as a monster in the eyes of many people because of his deformed body. Stanley was born without his arms which means he was only able to use his legs for everyday activities, like brushing his teeth or eating his breakfast. This movie is more like a documentary made by a man named Stanley for a little boy's

named Stanley. Stanley was fortunate enough to meet a young boy who was also named Stanley and was also born without any arms. The little Stanley was only 4 years old and in the process of learning how to deal with his deformity. To little Stanley, his disability wasn't apparent to him and did not make him feel any different from anyone else. There was a scene in the movie which stunted me dramatically. Both Stanley's were out with their families at a restaurant and the waitress put them in a private room where they would be alone. In the private room there was glass which made it possible for the other people in the restaurant to see them. Because both Stanley's don't have legs they have to eat with their toes and since little Stanley is only 4 years old and does not reach the table, his parents have to place him on top of the table without shoes so he could start learning how to eat independently. While they were eating, another family got up to leave after they saw Stanley. It was hard to watch and wrap my head around the fact of how people could be so ignorant to another person, another human being. In this scene, both big Stanley and little Stanley were seen as freaks and monsters that everyone tries to get away from. Their deformity should not define them as a person. Like in the Junot Diaz novel, both Stanleys and Ysreal are seen as outsiders because of their physical appearance.

A distinction must be made between people with disabilities and monsters. In ancient times a community member who has some sort of disfigurement would be considered to be a monster because they were known to have the characteristics of a monster. Plutarch, a first century biographer, refers to a monster market in his stories, in which people would sell and buy human oddities such as people with three eyes. This market also worked like a freakshow where people would come and entertain themselves based on other peoples disabilities. This means that this connection between Monster and Disability goes back ages and still linger around today.

As I mentioned in the beginning of my essay, a monster is defined as an imaginary creature in fairy tale stories, so why is it okay to refer to people with disabilities in this matter as well. This would should not be one of the paradigms when one is talking about people with disabilities. They are people and not imaginary creatures from a book which we could just kill of in the end . Because of these novels and films that wrongly use this word and reference it, we then have people that know little about disabled people believing that everyone was a physical or mental disability are evil, violent and should not be part of the society or socialize with, which is absolutely the wrong message.

### Work Cited

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Response #3

While listening to this report, I couldn't believe the miscommunication between the person being admitted, the staff and especially the police officers that arrived at the scene. It's disgusting how the officers automatically assume that Alan was a criminal and needed to be shot in the chest. Because of his disability they they believed her was a monster with violent tendencies that can't be trusted. Many of the rule of the hospital were violated that night and no one thought to stand up and defend Alan. Lord only knows how terrified Alan must have been having this episode that everyone was after him and then her comes these officers whole wrestled him down to the ground and then not only shoot him but also teaser him as well. In my option that was only done to cover up the scene of the mistake they have done. At one point Alan said "I do believe I'm A bionic person, Im a cyborg. I'm a secret agent on a mission."Once he told this to the hospital he should've been given his medication, there was no need to involve the police in the situation that could have been resolved by the hospital. He trusted the hospital and believed this was the only place he would get the help he needed but unfortunately it was the complete opposite for him



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Response #5

“Disability happens around us more often than we generally recognize or care to notice , and we harbor unspoken anxieties about the possibility of disablement.....What we fear, we often stigmatize and shun and sometimes seek to destroy.”(Longmore) This statement in the article shocked me the most believe of its reality and the truth behind it. Sometimes disability is seen as a fear which no one wants to discuss about in public. People with a disability is also seen as “evil” or “criminal” because of how they have been portrayed in many novel and movies. The “Bad Guy” is most of the time disabled, either missing a limb or deformed which the represents disability as the cause of evildoing or punishment for it, or both. Which then teaches our children that if you are evil and follow in that person's path you too will be disabled and that is the worst thing that can happen to you. The worst thing about the portrayal of people with disabilities is that the only way to stop these ”violent” “cruel” people is only by death, and this sends the absolute wrong message to the people that know very little about people with disabilities. They now believe that everyone they see out in the street that is in a wheelchair or lost a limb or deformed are horrible people that they should be scared of and should not socialize with.

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#### Response #6

I was one of the lucky ones that was able to see a ReelAbilities film that went in perfectly with my word which is “monster”. The film I saw was called “ By Stanley for Stanley” which was about a man that was born with no hands and can only use his legs to function and do everyday things like eat and brush his teeth. He was making this film for a little boy name Stanley that was also born without any arms, to try and give him some guidance and tips that he himself never received as a child. There was a section in the film where big Stanley and little Stanley went out with their family to eat and everyone in the restaurant was looking at them because they were on the table eating with their feet. They basically had no privacy and were given the side eye from many of the other customers the whole dinner. I couldn't imagine how hard it is to walk for them to walk around and have people staring at you like you have two heads, when all you want to do is be left alone and unbothered. Big Stanley often reminds little Stanley that this isn't his punishment, and he doesn't deserve this. When he gets older it's going to be hard and you're going to have bad days where you don't want to see anyone but you must get over it and move on because life has to continue. In this film both Stanley's are seen as monsters just for the simple fact that they have a different way of eating or even getting dressed in the morning. Big Stanley also makes it clear to little Stanley that his rareness is unique and he should never be depressed about who he is because he was made special.

## Key Words:

### Animals:

- Not a human being, this word is referred to in novels or movies to as an outsider like in “Of Mice and Men” Lennie was compared to an animal because of his “animalistic features.

### Monster:

- An animal or creature with an unusual appearance of behavior typically threatening and dangerous, For example in “Ysrael” by Junot Diaz Ysrael was known as a monster.

### Fear:

- To be afraid of something or someone because of their physical appearance. An example of this is Polyhemes from “The Odyssey”. All the soldiers were frightened because of the cyclops.

### Victim:

- Is a person that is tricked or harmed in the situation. An example of this is Alan from the “My Damn Mind” he was not the monster or attacker, he was the victim because of his Schizophrenia.

### Strength:

- Is a state of being strong and feeling powerful, doesn't have to be physical. This could be mental like Auggie from “Wonder”, no matter what he went through he still went to school everyday and top of his class.

### Challenged:

- Being disabled or impaired in a specific aspect. An example of this is Lennie from “Of Mice and Men” because he was autistic the other men would treat him as less of a person.

Pain:

- Physical or mental suffering. This can relate to Allan because of his mental suffering , from him not knowing what was real and what was made up in his head.

Patience:

- The ability to handle a delay which can refer to “The miracle worker” in which the teacher Anne Sullivan had much patience with Hellen Keller and her language development

Normal:

- The standard or the type that is usually expected. Who is to say what is considered normal or not normal. This aspect can still not be defined.

Invisible:

- Something or someone that can not be seen or heard. An example of this is “By Stanley for Stanley” , in which he explains that one day little stanley will grow up and not wanna be seen but he must continue with life because it will only get harder before it gets easier.