



## Research article

# Human Creativity Vs. Artificial Intelligence: A Comparison of Horror Fiction Crafting from 'Bookish Minds Club' at Souk Ahras University and Claude AI

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### Abstract

The dynamic between human writers and artificial intelligence in crafting fiction, particularly in the horror genre, provides an intriguing context for examining the unique strengths and limitations of each. This research investigates the creative outputs of two groups: members of Souk Ahras University's 'Bookish Minds Club,' who have discussed numerous horror books and have been introduced to various techniques and tropes of the genre, and those who employ Claude AI to aid in their writing process. Sixty club members were divided evenly, with each group receiving identical horror fiction prompts to craft their stories. These stories were subsequently evaluated based on originality, coherence, the effectiveness of horror elements, character development, and overall impact. The results highlighted a slight but notable superiority of human creativity over AI-assisted writing, particularly in terms of emotional depth and psychological complexity. The findings suggest that while Claude AI can provide structural support and enhance certain narrative elements, it often falls short in capturing the knotty emotional and psychological distinctions that human writers, especially those well-versed in genre techniques, naturally infuse in their work.

**Keywords:** human creativity, artificial intelligence, horror fiction, creative writing, Claude AI, comparative study.

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## 1. Introduction

Creativity is the heartbeat of horror fiction, driving stories that dive into the darkest corners of our psyche and evoke spine-chilling fear. The genre thrives on the unique imaginative depths that only human authors can reach. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) becomes more involved in creative writing, generating text and suggesting plot twists, a crucial question arises: Can AI ever replicate the delicate creativity of human storytelling? While AI offers efficiency and innovation, the essence of storytelling, especially in horror, lies in the human experience. It is the human ability to draw from personal fears, cultural contexts, and emotional subtleties that sets human creativity apart. This article compares sixty student-written horror stories with those generated by AI, specifically Claude, to explore this question. While AI offers efficiency and innovation, the essence of storytelling, especially in horror, lies in the human experience. It is the human ability to draw from personal fears, cultural contexts, and emotional subtleties that sets human creativity apart. The comparison reveals that human-authored stories consistently demonstrate greater depth and authenticity. Despite AI's contributions, it cannot apprehend the twists and turns of fear and suspense that make horror fiction profoundly affecting, accentuating the unique role of human intuition and imagination in crafting haunting tales.

## 2. Literature review

Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a crucial role in transforming education by enriching learning experiences. Its ability to offer instant feedback to students helps deepen their understanding, making the learning process more engaging and effective. The incorporation of AI in education has the potential to revolutionize teaching and learning, making education not only more accessible but also more enjoyable for all.

Claude AI is an artificial intelligence assistant developed by Anthropic, a San Francisco-based AI safety startup. It is designed to be a versatile and powerful AI chatbot, similar to OpenAI's ChatGPT. Claude AI leverages advanced natural language processing and machine learning techniques, including constitutional AI, to ensure safety, honesty, and helpfulness in its interactions. It aims to be a useful, safe, and productive AI assistant that can engage in natural conversations and generate human-like responses.

Claude AI offers several valuable features for learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). One of its standout capabilities is handling various forms of input, such as PDFs, making it an excellent tool for summarizing lengthy texts and supporting professional development. Additionally, Claude AI tends to use simpler language than other AI models, making it especially useful for creating content tailored to students and facilitating language learning. Its ability to accept audio input also allows students to practice conversations at home, which is particularly beneficial for improving speaking skills and building confidence in using English. These features make Claude AI an invaluable resource for both EFL students and teachers, enhancing the learning experience and providing personalized support beyond the traditional classroom.

Moreover, Claude AI's advanced technology and its ability to summarize large volumes of information make it a versatile and powerful tool for EFL learning. Its availability in the UK and US, along with the option to use it via a VPN, further broadens its accessibility to users in different

regions. By incorporating Claude AI, EFL teachers can create more personalized and engaging learning experiences for their students, while students can benefit from customized materials, interactive reading, and conversational guidance, ultimately improving their English language proficiency. Collectively, these features establish Claude AI as a valuable asset in the EFL learning landscape, offering innovative methods to support language acquisition and skill development.

## **2.1 The Impact of AI on Creativity in Writing**

Recent advancements in AI have introduced new dimensions to the creative process, offering fresh perspectives on narrative development and innovation. The growing intersection between technology and creativity, particularly the integration of Artificial Intelligence in the domain of creative writing. As AI tools become more sophisticated, understanding their impact on the creative process becomes crucial.

Several studies have examined the role of AI in enhancing creative writing skills within educational contexts. They have demonstrated both the potential benefits and inherent limitations of AI tools. Yoshija Walter (2024) asserts:

Developing a critical mindset towards AI among students and educators is fundamental to harness the full potential of these technologies responsibly. The perhaps most significant danger is that both students and educators use AI systems without respecting their limitations (e.g. the fact that they may often hallucinate and provide wrong answers while sounding very authoritative on the matter). (p.25)

Using ChatGPT significantly improved university students' scores in fluency, flexibility, and narrative originality on the Spanish PIC-A test. The study concludes that while AI effectively supports creative writing, it cannot replace human intelligence and creativity, "The assistance provided by AI in writing tasks and verbal creativity is highlighted, and this should be considered in language teaching; in any case, AI cannot replace human intelligence and creativity" (De Vicente-Yagüe-Jara et al., 2023, p.45). AI-based writing assistants enhance students' creativity and writing quality, particularly in idea generation and content organization, though human creativity remains essential. Jack Tsao and Collier Nogues suggest that "creative collaborations with Gen AI may be a promising way to foster emancipatory practices in the classroom while nurturing creative and critical skills" (2024, p.1).

AI tools contribute to more original and varied content, yet human creativity still surpasses AI in producing complex narratives. that AI-powered tools assist students in brainstorming and developing writing assignments, improving idea generation and organization, though not fully replacing human creativity, "In particular, the tools, including Quillbot, Jenni, Chat-GPT, WordTune, Copy.ai, Paperpal, and Essay writer, were found to foster a comprehensive learning environment and enrich students' overall academic performance" (Marzuki, et, al., 2021 p.15).

Artificial creativity, akin to artificial intelligence, is a field exploring human creativity by developing creative computational systems. It aims to understand creativity using cognitive and situational frameworks, with the goal of enabling creative practices alongside artificial agents. Some view it as a subset of computational creativity focused on automating creative tasks, while others emphasize how machines can inspire new approaches in creative fields. José Miguel Santos Araújo Carvalhais Fonseca (2011) claims:

It involves a controversial debate about metaphysics and morals. It raises the problem, for instance, of whether, having admitted that we were faced with computers satisfying all the scientific criteria for creative intelligence (whatever those may be), we would, in addition, choose to take a certain moral or political decision. (p.452)

The concept of creativity itself is debated, influencing future developments in computer-aided creation. Definitions range from generating novel, surprising, and valuable ideas or artifacts to forming connections between previously unrelated concepts. Based on these definitions, current AI tools like neural networks and generative algorithms already exhibit forms of creativity. Recent discussions differentiate between generative capabilities (producing novel outcomes) and adaptive capabilities (applying judgment to achieve creative goals). This aligns with a systems-based view of creativity involving networked interactions between people and objects, where value emerges from the process. Anuradha Reddy (2022) argues:

Artificial creativity demonstrates the potential to empower individuals to interface and critically dialogue with computational systems. Reframed as artificial 'everyday' creativity, Reddy focuses on the curious, joyful, and adjacent modes of everyday creativity by including hybrid materials that embrace alternative pedagogies of code and computation. (p.295)

Scholars argue for a deeper understanding of AI systems' programming and constraints rather than simply anthropomorphizing machine creativity. This approach allows for critique, exploration, and creative play within the system's possibilities. AI is broadly defined to include not only "large language models (e.g., ChatGPT) which might approach general AI," but also other computer programs capable of performing tasks typically requiring human intelligence. The study concludes by exploring "future directions for research on AI as a tool for creativity across the four C's" (Ivcevic & Grandinetti, 2024, p.1). It also raises questions about who programs these systems and who can explore their creative potential using everyday materials and skills.

## **2.2 Creativity in Crafting Horror Stories**

Research on creativity in storytelling reveals various aspects that contribute to crafting engaging narratives. Csikszentmihalyi's seminal work (1996) introduces the concept of "flow," a state of deep immersion crucial for writers "Flow is the result of intense concentration on the present, which relieves us of the usual fears that cause depression and anxiety in everyday life" (p.123). Margaret Boden (2004) explores the cognitive processes in creativity, emphasizing divergent and convergent thinking; he evokes that "creativity requires a rich variety of mental processes, intelligible in (both connectionist and nonconnectionist) computational terms" (p.146). Keith Sawyer (2012) examines narrative creativity's social and cultural influences and the iterative nature of writing. He argues that "Certainly, more cross-cultural research along these lines will be necessary for a complete explanation of creativity" (p.289).

James Kaufman and Robert Sternberg (2010) provide a multidisciplinary perspective on the psychology of writing creativity "creativity arises from a complex web of interrelated forces operating at multiple levels that can only be modelled and understood via multidisciplinary investigation" (p.388), while Mark Runco (2014) discusses narrative creativity as both an individual and collaborative process, highlighting divergent thinking and problem-solving. He explains that "Creativity may be a kind of problem-solving, or problem-solving may sometimes (but not always)

involve creativity; or creativity may involve self-expression, play, and experimentation instead of problem-solving" (p.354).

Crafting effective horror fiction involves several key elements that together create a compelling and immersive experience for the reader. At its core, horror taps into the deepest emotions, as H.P. Lovecraft noted, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (Lovecraft, 1927/1945, p.12). Introducing fresh ideas and original monsters keeps the audience engaged and surprised. Establishing a haunting atmosphere through descriptive language and utilizing settings that enhance horror elements, such as isolated locations or places with dark histories, is crucial; as Stephen King puts it, "Good books don't give up all their secrets at once" (King, 2000, p. 231). Well-rounded, relatable characters with believable fears and vulnerabilities add depth to the story. Robert McKee emphasizes that "true character is revealed in the choices a human being makes under pressure" (McKee, 1997, p.101).

A gradual build-up of tension, avoiding constant jump scares, creates a more impactful narrative, akin to Edgar Allan Poe's assertion, "True, nervous, very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?" (Poe, 1843/1975, p.249). Incorporating psychological horror, exploring internal conflicts, and using symbolism and themes to add layers of meaning enrich the story, echoing Shirley Jackson's sentiment, "No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality" (Jackson, 1959, p.1). Mary Shelley's insight, "Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos," underscores the importance of using chaos to fuel creativity (Shelley, 1818/1993, p.x).

Vivid sensory details and occasional sensory overload heighten the fear, as Clive Barker suggests, "Books are a refuge, a sort of cloistral refuge, from the vulgarities of the actual world" (Barker, 1991, p.257). Maintaining unpredictability with unexpected plot twists and subverted tropes keeps readers on edge, reflecting Joe Hill's idea that "Fear isn't a fleeting emotion that visits and then leaves. It's an invisible creature that lives inside your head and heart, waiting to leap out at any moment" (Hill, 2010, p.312). Evoking strong emotions like fear and dread, fostering empathy for the characters, and ensuring believability through research and realistic reactions all contribute to a compelling horror experience. As Anne Rice notes, "None of us really changes over time. We only become more fully what we are" (Rice, 1988, p.91). Finally, Ray Bradbury's advice, "You must stay drunk on writing so reality cannot destroy you," underscores the importance of authenticity in creating believable horror narratives (Bradbury, 1990, p.14).

### **3. Methodology**

This study conducted a controlled experiment with a between-subjects design to compare Artificial Intelligence and the human mind in crafting horror fiction. The approach is a mixed method (quantitative, qualitative).

#### **3.1 Participants**

The study involved 60 students from Souk Ahras University, comprising third-year bachelor (L3) students, as well as Master One and Master Two level students. All participants are active members

of a book-reading club called Bookish Minds. This club holds weekly discussions on books selected through a voting process, ensuring a diverse range of literary genres is covered. The discussions focus on various aspects of literature, including characterization, formulas, characteristics, types, and literary criticism, providing a comprehensive exploration of each book.

### **3.2 Intervention**

The participants were divided into two groups to evaluate the role of AI assistance versus human creativity in crafting horror fiction. One group utilized Claude AI (G1) to aid in their writing process, leveraging the AI's capabilities to generate ideas, structure narratives, and refine their stories. The other group (G2) relied solely on their own creativity and skills without any AI assistance. This comparative setup aims to highlight the superiority of the human mind in creativity, particularly in the domain of horror fiction, by analyzing the differences in the quality, originality, and depth of the stories produced by each group.

The comparison centers on evaluating the criteria and key elements essential to crafting compelling horror fiction, as applied by both human participants and AI. The experiment assesses the effectiveness of narratives in evoking fear, tapping into the primal emotions described by H.P. Lovecraft. Participants must incorporate original ideas and unique monsters, ensuring their stories maintain unpredictability and surprise. A critical aspect of the evaluation is the ability to establish a haunting atmosphere through vivid, descriptive language and settings that amplify horror elements, such as isolated or darkly historic locations. Additionally, the creation of well-rounded, relatable characters with realistic fears is examined, reflecting Robert McKee's notion that character is revealed under pressure. The gradual buildup of tension, avoiding reliance on jump scares, and the use of psychological horror, internal conflict, symbolism, and thematic depth are also crucial elements. By comparing the stories produced by humans and AI against these criteria, the experiment aims to determine which approach better captures the essence of effective horror fiction, including emotional impact, atmosphere, character development, and narrative tension.

### **3.3 Materials**

Claude AI was introduced to (G1), who trained and got accustomed to its use. (G2) wrote in their own style after being informed about the procedure they would follow. The process begins by copying the provided prompt into the response box. Participants then clicked on the AI's answer. Only participants who wrote using Claude AI then took a screenshot containing the full answer for analyzing them. The prompts given are three stimulating beginnings of stories. The first one is: "Every night, you see a shadowy figure standing at the foot of your bed. No matter what you do, it always appears at the same time, getting closer each night." The second prompt is: "A little sister receives an old, creepy doll as a gift. Soon after, strange things start happening around the house, and the child insists that the doll is alive." The third is: "A dense forest near a small town is known for the whispers that can be heard at night. When a local teenager goes missing, a group of friends ventures into the forest to uncover its eerie secrets."

The study was conducted during three ordinary sessions of the Bookish Minds club. In each 50-minute session, participants crafted a distinct short horror story. After the allotted time, the written drafts, completed on paper, were collected. Participants (G1) using Claude AI integrated its suggestions into their writing process, while those writing independently (G2) relied solely on their

own skills and imagination. This setup allowed for a clear comparison between AI-assisted and human-only creativity in the realm of horror fiction.

#### **4. Results**

The below scales (figure 1) provide a visual representation of the evaluation criteria for key horror elements in the experiment comparing the human mind and Claude AI. Each criterion, fear of the unknown (originality), atmosphere (descriptive language and setting), tension build-up (pacing and suspense), and character depth (relatable characters and fears), is rated on a scale from 1 to 5. A score of 1 indicates a minimal or ineffective application of the element, such as flat characters or a lack of originality, while a score of 5 signifies a highly effective use, such as deeply relatable characters or an immersive atmosphere. Intermediate scores (2.5, 3.75, 4.5) reflect varying degrees of effectiveness, with 2.5 representing basic or minimal qualities and 4.5 denoting strong but not fully exceptional implementation.

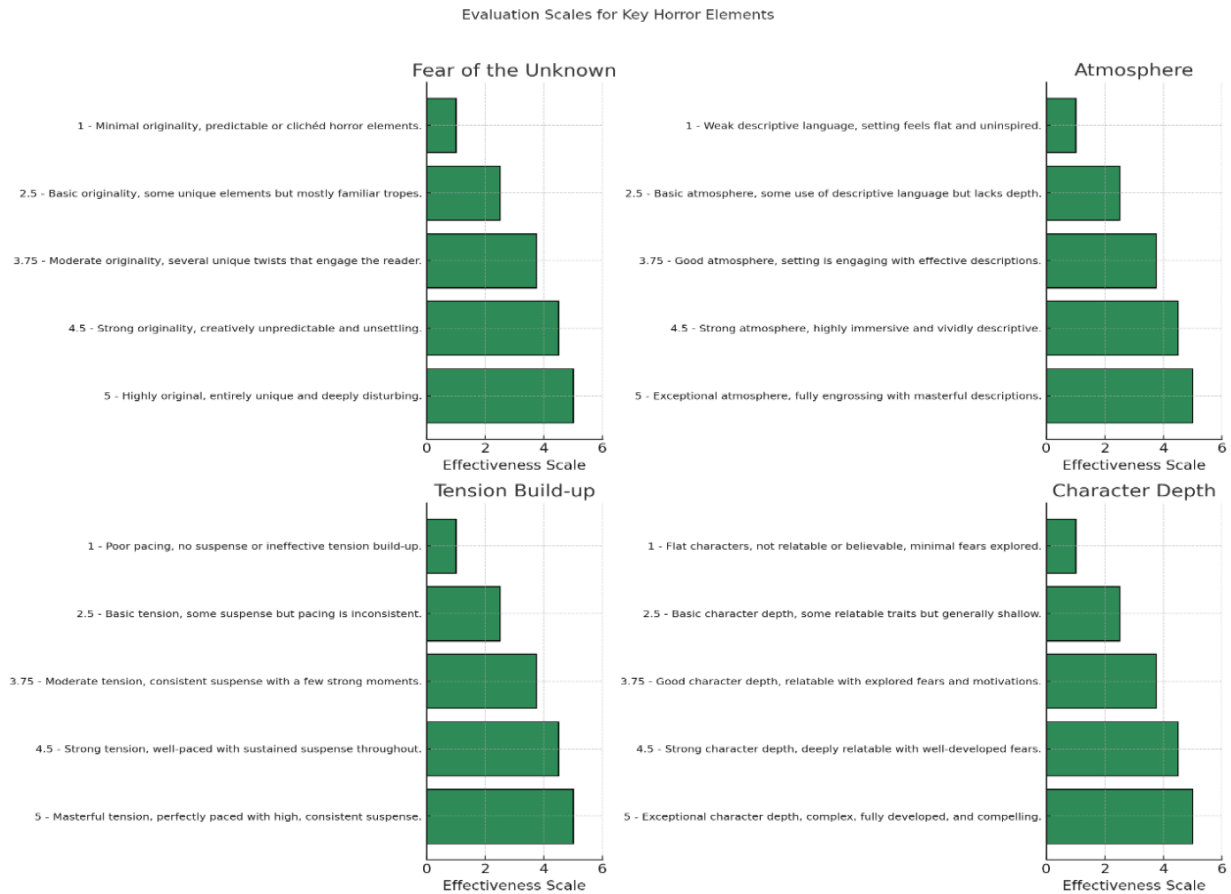
Fear of the Unknown (Originality) measures how effectively a horror story introduces original and unpredictable elements that elicit fear through uncertainty. A score of 1 reflects minimal originality, where the story relies heavily on clichés or predictable horror tropes, offering little to no novelty. The fear generated is weak, as the audience can easily anticipate what will happen next. At a mid-level score of 2.5, some unique aspects are introduced, but the majority of the story remains familiar. While there is some level of uncertainty, it does not significantly enhance the horror experience. Moving to a score of 3.75, the story incorporates several unexpected twists or novel ideas, making it more engaging and unsettling. The fear of the unknown is more pronounced, creating a sense of curiosity and dread. A score of 4.5 reflects strong originality, where the narrative is creatively unpredictable, keeping the audience on edge. The fear of the unknown is central, with the story consistently subverting expectations in ways that heighten the horror. A top score of 5 indicates that the story is entirely unique, with fresh and deeply disturbing ideas. The unknown elements are so well-crafted that they instill a profound sense of fear, making the story exceptionally terrifying.

Atmosphere (Descriptive Language and Setting) assesses how well the story's setting and mood are constructed to immerse the reader and create a sense of dread. A score of 1 indicates a weak atmosphere, where the descriptive language is sparse or ineffective, resulting in a setting that feels flat and uninspired. The story fails to immerse the reader, diminishing the overall horror experience. At 2.5, there is some use of descriptive language, but it lacks depth and fails to fully capture the reader's imagination. The setting is somewhat engaging, but it does not significantly contribute to the horror. A score of 3.75 suggests that the setting is well-developed, with effective use of descriptive language that creates a more engaging and eerie environment. The atmosphere contributes meaningfully to the story's horror elements. With a score of 4.5, the story is highly immersive, with vivid descriptions that make the setting come alive. The atmosphere is tense and unsettling, significantly enhancing the horror experience. A score of 5 reflects an exceptional atmosphere, where the descriptive language is masterful, creating a fully engrossing and terrifying setting. The atmosphere is so powerful that it almost becomes a character in its own right, deeply influencing the story's horror.

Tension Build-up (Pacing and Suspense) evaluates how effectively the story builds suspense and maintains tension, crucial for keeping the audience engaged and on edge. A score of 1 represents poor pacing and tension, where the story lacks suspense, with poor pacing that either rushes through key moments or drags unnecessarily. As a result, the tension is minimal, and the horror impact is weak. At 2.5, some elements of suspense are present, but the pacing is inconsistent. The story may have a few tense moments, but they are not sustained, reducing their effectiveness. A score of 3.75 indicates that the story builds suspense more effectively, with consistent pacing that keeps the reader engaged. There are several strong moments of tension, making the horror more impactful. With a score of 4.5, the pacing is well-controlled, with sustained suspense that keeps the reader on edge throughout the story. The tension builds steadily, leading to a climax that is both satisfying and terrifying. A perfect score of 5 reflects masterful tension, where the story is perfectly paced, with high, consistent suspense from beginning to end. The tension is expertly managed, creating a constant sense of fear and anticipation that grips the reader.

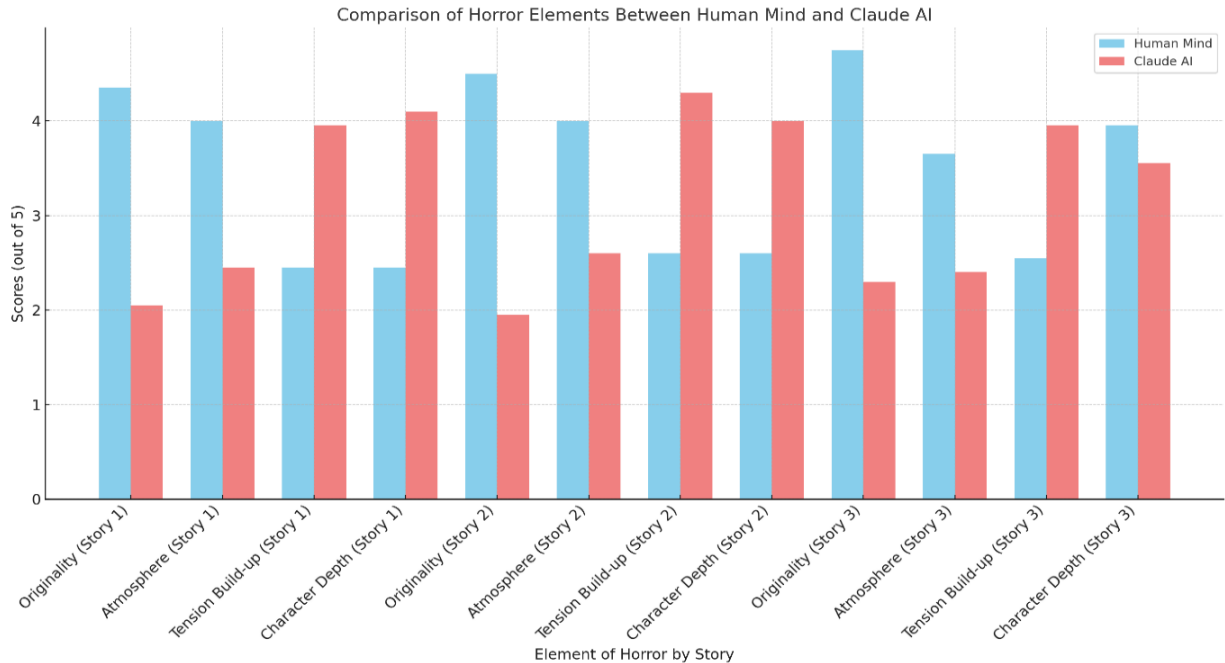
Character Depth (Relatable Characters and Fears) measures how well the characters are developed and how effectively their fears and motivations contribute to the horror. A score of 1 indicates flat characters, where they are one-dimensional, with little to no development. They are not relatable or believable, and their fears are shallow or unexplored, reducing the emotional impact of the horror. At 2.5, the characters have some relatable traits, but they are generally shallow. Their fears are touched upon, but not deeply explored, limiting the story's emotional resonance. A score of 3.75 suggests that the characters are more developed, with relatable qualities and explored fears. Their motivations and fears contribute meaningfully to the horror, making the story more engaging. With a score of 4.5, the characters are deeply relatable, with well-developed fears and motivations. Their personal struggles and fears are intricately tied to the horror elements, enhancing the emotional impact of the story. A perfect score of 5 indicates exceptional character depth, where the characters are complex, fully developed, and compelling. Their fears are deeply explored and resonate strongly with the audience, making the horror intensely personal and emotionally powerful.





**Figure 1: Evaluation Scales for Key Horror Elements**

The statistics presented in the chart below (figure 2) represent the mean scores of two distinct groups: (G1) utilizing Claude AI, and (G2) composed of human participants, both tasked with crafting short horror stories. The mean scores provide an average evaluation across multiple (3) stories based on specific criteria related to key horror elements. By averaging the scores within each group, the chart offers a clear comparison of how effectively each group performed across these critical aspects of horror writing. This comparison allows for an objective assessment of the relative strengths and weaknesses between human creativity and AI-generated content.



**Figure 2: Comparison of Horror Elements Between Human Mind and Claude AI Across Three Short Stories**

#### 4.1 Discussion of the Results

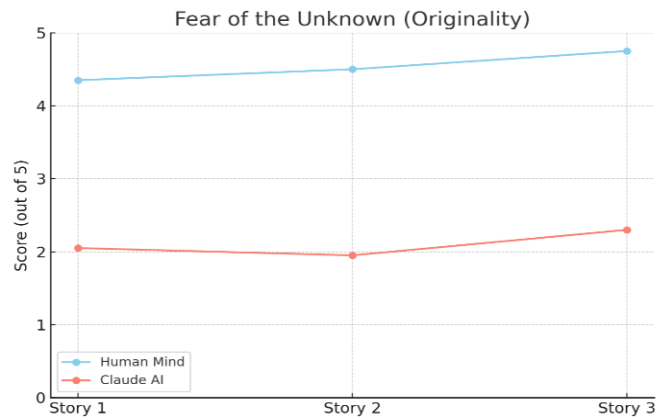
The comparison of horror fiction elements between the Human Mind and Claude AI reveals distinct strengths and weaknesses in each approach across three short stories. The analysis is based on four key criteria: Originality (Fear of the Unknown), Atmosphere (Descriptive Language & Setting), Tension Build-up (Pacing & Suspense), and Character Depth (Relatable Characters & Fears).

##### Originality (Fear of the Unknown)

G2 participants consistently outperform Claude AI in originality, with mean scores ranging from 4.35 to 4.75, compared to Claude AI's scores between 1.95 and 2.30. This suggests that human creativity excels in generating fresh, unpredictable ideas, tapping into the deeper psychological elements of fear. The human participants incorporated more unusual ideas and displayed greater ambiguity, making their horror stories more compelling. For instance, Group 2 (G2) showcased a significant variety of fear-inducing elements, including culturally specific horror motifs and personal experiences like stories of jinn's possession and 'Ghoul' (a monster in the Algerian culture). This diversity is evident in their 30 stories, each of which is entirely distinct from the others, highlighting the superior originality and creative depth that human minds bring to the horror genre. Claude AI, while capable of producing coherent narratives, tends to rely on more predictable tropes, limiting its ability to evoke the fear of the unknown effectively.

The paper of student AB from (G2) showcases these elements. The student wrote "As they left the mosque, he took his hand, looked straight into it: 'Zuhri, hands of heaven!'" It suggests a deeper, spiritual connection between the characters, hinting at fate, destiny and the supernatural powers of the 'Zuhri' child according to the Arab culture. "He saw a woman slaying her own child

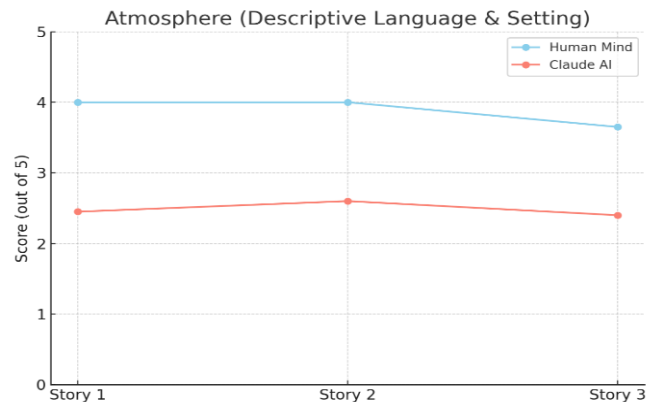
with a kitchen knife, a fully naked figure, stranded from its feet, chest peeled all the way to his belly, and few fingers were missing." This grotesque and surreal imagery heightens the horror of the scene. The vivid description of violence and mutilation adds to the narrative's dark, nightmarish atmosphere, illustrating the creative use of shock to elicit an emotional response. "At the corner, some children were eating, excitedly crunching what seemed like one of that corpse's fingers." This detail is a chilling juxtaposition of innocence and horror. The children, usually symbols of purity, engage in cannibalistic behavior, creating a surreal and disturbing image that blurs the boundaries between innocence and evil.



**Figure 3 Fear of the Unknown (Originality) Ratings Across Three Stories for Human Mind and Claude AI**

### Atmosphere (Descriptive Language & Setting)

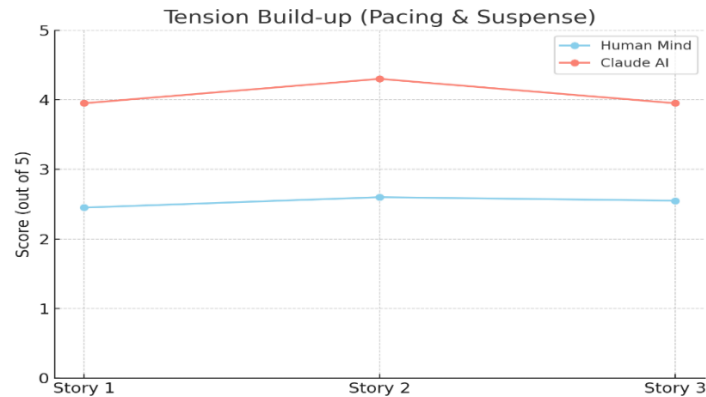
Human participants scored between 3.65 and 4.00, slightly higher than Claude AI's range of 2.40 to 2.60. This indicates that while humans are generally better at creating a haunting atmosphere through vivid descriptions and well-chosen settings, such as specific cultural landmarks like "kosour mahjoura" (deserted ancient castles) and "mossala" (small chambers in Muslim cemeteries). Claude AI still demonstrates a basic ability to establish atmosphere, albeit less effectively. The AI's descriptions tend to be less immersive, likely due to a lack of varied understanding of setting and mood.



**Figure 4: Atmosphere (Descriptive Language & Setting) Ratings Across Three Stories for Human Mind and Claude AI**

### Tension Build-up (Pacing & Suspense)

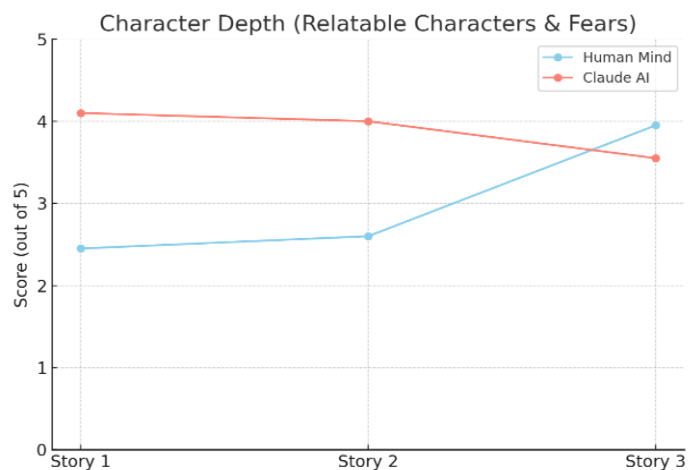
Claude AI surpasses the Human participants, with scores between 3.95 and 4.30, compared to human scores of 2.45 to 2.60. Claude AI excels in structuring narratives with well-paced suspense, possibly due to its algorithmic nature, which allows for precise control over pacing. Human writers, on the other hand, may struggle with maintaining consistent tension, leading to uneven pacing.



**Figure 5: Tension Build-up (Pacing & Suspense) Ratings Across Three Stories for Human Mind and Claude AI**

### Character Depth (Relatable Characters & Fears)

Claude AI also scores higher in character depth, with scores ranging from 3.55 to 4.10, while human participants scored between 2.45 and 3.95. The majority of the human stories did not offer a clear understanding of the character's thoughts, emotions, and development, which impacted the depth and engagement of their narratives. This result suggests that, although Claude AI may lack the innate human empathy needed for complex character creation, it is still capable of producing well-rounded characters. Its advantage likely stems from its vast dataset, enabling it to replicate common human fears and vulnerabilities effectively.



**Figure 6: Character Depth (Relatable Characters & Fears) Ratings Across Three Stories for Human Mind and Claude AI.**

## 5. Conclusion

The results highlight the complementary strengths of human creativity and AI-generated content in horror fiction. While the Human Mind excels in originality and atmospheric description, Claude AI demonstrates proficiency in maintaining tension and developing relatable characters. These findings suggest potential for collaborative storytelling, where the imaginative depth of human authors can be paired with the structural strengths of AI to craft more compelling horror narratives.

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