

## INTRODUCTION

Horror fiction is a genre that explores the dark side of human imagination, often exploring the unknown, the supernatural, and the unsettling. The genre gives readers a safe place to face and overcome their fears and social anxieties. Barron (1990) states that horror fiction is a medium that challenges readers' preconceptions by forcing them to confront uncomfortable ideas and images. His view highlights how horror fiction reflects societal fears and anxieties, offering a unique perspective on the human condition. Engaging with these darker themes encourages readers to question their own beliefs and assumptions, leading to a deeper understanding of human nature.

Furthermore, Lovecraft (2013) states that true horror evokes a profound sense of dread and awe, making readers feel as if they are on the edge of grasping something that is fundamentally beyond human comprehension. Lovecraft's idea generates existential terror, a key feature of cosmic horror. The idea emphasizes on creating a specific emotional sensation underscores the importance of symbolism in horror literature. By examining the symbolism in horror literature, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these narratives tap into our collective psyche and reflect our deepest anxieties. This exploration will examine common horror symbols, their psychological effects, and their contribution to the genre's enduring impact on audiences.

Symbolism in horror fiction is a deliberate technique used by authors to craft a rich, complex, and unsettling narrative. Symons (2014) states that literary symbolism involves using symbols to represent abstract ideas, emotions, or concepts, allowing authors to convey complex themes in subtle yet powerful ways. By using symbols, authors can create layers of meaning that readers can interpret and reflect upon. Callaghan (2021) emphasizes that symbolism must be understood within the context of the story. Symbolism in literature is not static; it requires a deep understanding of the context in which it is used. The meaning of a symbol can vary significantly depending on the narrative, characters, setting, and themes. For instance, a rose might symbolize love in one story but death in another, depending on how it is presented within that specific context. According to DeGuzman (2023),

symbolism plays a powerful role in conveying specific themes or concepts. Symbolism can transform complex ideas into relatable forms, adding depth to the narrative. In other word, symbolism is a powerful device in literature because it can create a new meaning and perspective from abstract ideas.

One of the authors who is specialized in creating symbolism in horror stories is Stephen King. King has many successful works in literature, most specifically are horror and gothic genres. His works are often adapted into films because they consider that the films will gain a lot of audience. King is also known as the Master of Terror. Some of King's famous works are *IT*, *In the Tall Grass*, *The Mist*, *The Shining*, *Pet Sematary*, *Carrie*, *Gerald's Game*, and *The Green Mile*. King has a unique style in creating fear and terror in his novels. In *In the Tall Grass* (2012), King is successful in creating fear by using "tall grass" as the main horror element built into the story. In King's work entitled *IT* (1986), he uses a scary clown figure to create a dark and frightening atmosphere for his readers. Usually, clowns are known for their cheerfulness and cuteness, but Stephen King can turn the clown into something demonic and scary. The same thing also happens in his work, *The Mist* (1980), he creates a frightening terror from the mist that later on will come out a monster out of it. These examples illustrate King's ability to craft unique and terrifying narratives that engage readers on multiple levels, whether through supernatural elements, psychological horror, or symbolic metaphors.

The research discusses a novella by Stephen King and his son, Joe Hill, entitled *In the Tall Grass*. *In the Tall Grass* tells a story of a sister and brother who find themselves in the middle of the road with nothing to see other than tall grass around them. The siblings stop as soon as they hear the voice of a boy crying for help; the voice comes from the tall grass. They try to help the poor boy by getting into the tall grass and then realise that there is no way out for them, and something evil lurks within.