

20 Opening Sentences from Classic Horror

1. "The terror, which would not end for another twenty-eight years—if it ever did end—began, so far as I know or can tell, with a boat made from a sheet of newspaper floating down a gutter swollen with rain."

It (Stephen King, 1986)

2. "No live organism can continue for long to exist sanely under conditions of absolute reality; even larks and katydids are supposed, by some, to dream."

The Haunting of Hill House (Shirley Jackson, 1959)

3. "Mr. Utterson the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary and yet somehow lovable."

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Robert Louis Stevenson, 1886)

4. "3 May. Bistritz.—Left Munich at 8:35 P.M., on 1st May, arriving at Vienna early next morning; should have arrived at 6:46, but train was an hour late."

Dracula (Bram Stoker, 1897)

5. "You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings."

Frankenstein (Mary Shelley, 1818)

6. "Louis Creed, who had lost his father at three and who had never known a grandfather, came to Ludlow with his wife and his two young children and a raggedy cat."

Pet Sematary (Stephen King, 1983)

7. "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents."

"The Call of Cthulhu" (H.P. Lovecraft, 1928 - Novella)

8. "The seller of lightning rods arrived just ahead of the storm."

Something Wicked This Way Comes (Ray Bradbury, 1962)

9. "The man in black fled across the desert, and the gunslinger followed."

The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger (Stephen King, 1982)

10. "On those cloudy days, Robert Neville was never sure when sunset came, and sometimes

they were in the streets before he could get back."

I Am Legend (Richard Matheson, 1954)

11. "It was a dark and stormy night."

Paul Clifford (Edward Bulwer-Lytton, 1830 - Famous bad example, but a classic trope opener)

12. "True!!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?"

"The Tell-Tale Heart" (Edgar Allan Poe, 1843 - Short Story)

13. "This book is not for you."

House of Leaves (Mark Z. Danielewski, 2000 - Modern Classic)

14. "The air in the apartment was motionless, smelling of dust, disuse, and age."

Rosemary's Baby (Ira Levin, 1967)

15. "The year was 1953, and the two greatest fears of all Americans were the Atom Bomb and Rock and Roll."

Swan Song (Robert McCammon, 1987)

16. "My name is Mary Katherine Blackwood."

We Have Always Lived in the Castle (Shirley Jackson, 1962)

17. "The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac, or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn."

The Picture of Dorian Gray (Oscar Wilde, 1890)

18. "Norman Bates heard the noise and a shock went through him."

Psycho (Robert Bloch, 1959)

19. "West of Arkham the hills rise wild, and there are valleys with deep woods that no axe has ever cut."

"The Colour Out of Space" (H.P. Lovecraft, 1927 - Short Story)

20. "The tower, which was not supposed to be there, plunges into the earth in a place just before the black pine forest begins to give way to swamp and then the reeds and wind-gnarled

trees of the marsh flats."

Annihilation (Jeff VanderMeer, 2014 - Modern classic/New Weird)