



# VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University  
**VCU Scholars Compass**

---

Undergraduate Research Posters

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program

---

2016

## Of Shining Sea and Rising Sun: cultural storytelling in the genre of horror in video games

Anna C. Webster

*Virginia Commonwealth University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/uresposters>

 Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Digital Humanities Commons](#), and the [Other English Language and Literature Commons](#)

© The Author(s)

---

### Downloaded from

Webster, Anna C., "Of Shining Sea and Rising Sun: cultural storytelling in the genre of horror in video games" (2016). *Undergraduate Research Posters*. Poster 230.

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/uresposters/230>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Posters by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact [libcompass@vcu.edu](mailto:libcompass@vcu.edu).



# Of Shining Sea and Rising Sun:

*Cultural Storytelling in in the Genre of Horror Video Games*

By Anna C. Webster, Senior

## INTRODUCTION:

Storytelling techniques vary between cultures and across time, but how have they manifested in the new genre of “digital texts”? Storytelling in horror video games seems to divide into two polarized schools: the Eastern School (Japan) and the Western School (USA) of horror. But how? And why?

## METHODS:

With the careful analysis of eight video games, four from each respective school, I have been able to identify different themes, mechanics, and techniques used within the horror genre of this unique medium.

## WESTERN GAMES:

- Resident Evil 4 (Capcom)
- Five Night’s At Freddy’s Franchise (Cawthon)
- The Evil Within (Tango)
- Outlast (Red Barrels)

## EASTERN GAMES:

- Silent Hill Franchise (Konami)
- Rule of Rose (Punchline)
- Fatal Frame 2 (Tecmo)
- Ib (Kouri)

## FINDINGS:

Throughout my findings, I assessed certain criteria:

- What features of the games overall create the style of each respective school?
- Why might these features be prevalent in that specific locale/society (based on psychology, anthropology, folklore, etc)?
- Where might these common themes find origin within the culture: religion? History? Elsewhere?

## The Breakdown:

### WESTERN SCHOOL:

- Generally surrounds a white male protag. who has some sort of mission: save the president’s daughter, investigate something, etc.
- Guns, gore, and blood
- Presence of “jump scares”
- Heavily combat-oriented
- Enemies are usually zombies/humanoid creatures

### Reasoning/Origins:

- Blood and gore – desecration of the human body. Engrained fear of Christianity-based sin?
- Presence of combat part of the American psyche due to post-WWI hegemony?

### EASTERN SCHOOL:

- Generally surrounds a young woman protag. who is searching for something.
- “Slow burn” concentrating on eerie atmosphere rather than intense combat and jump scares.
- Greater presence of the supernatural (ghosts, demons, monsters, “body horror” etc.).
- Puzzles are used to advance plot, rather than combat.

### Reasoning/Origins:

- Spirits and supernatural – desecration of the spirit and other possessions. Shinto-based cultural fear?
- Body horror – residual fear from nuclear attacks?

## References:

Cantor, J., & Oliver, M. B. (1996). *Developmental Differences in Horror Responses*. In J. B. Weaver & R. Tamborini (Eds.), *Horror Films: Current Research on Audience Preferences and Reactions* (pp. 63-80). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Capcom. (2005). *Resident Evil 4*. Video game.

Cawthon, S. (2014). *Five Nights at Freddy’s* (Franchise). Video game.

Konami. (1999 - 2012). *Silent Hill* (Franchise). Video game.

Kouri. (2012). *Ib*. Video game.

Lopez Cruz, R. A. (2012). Mutations and Metamorphoses: Body Horror is Biological Horror. *Journal of Popular Film & Television*, 40(4), 160-168. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01956051.2012.654521>

Marak, K. (2015). Japanese and American Horro. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co.

Punchline. (2006). *Rule of Rose*. Video game.

Red Barrels. (2013). *Outlast*. Video game.

Tango Gameworks. (2014). *The Evil Within* (Psycho Break). Video game.

Tecmo. (2003). *Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly*. Video game.

Voth, G., Bailey, J., McClymond, K., & LaFleur, R. A. (2015). *Japanese Tales of Purity of Defilement*. Kanopy Streaming.

Weaver, J. B., & Tamborini, R. (1996). *Frightening Entertainment: A Historical Perspective of Fictional Horror*. In *Horror Films: Current Research on Audience Preference and Reactions* (pp. 1-14). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Zillmann, D., & Gibson, R. (1996). *Evolution of the Horror Genre*. In J. B. Weaver & R. Tamborini (Eds.), *Horror Films: Current Research on Audience Preferences and Reactions* (pp. 15-31). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Zuckerman, M. (1996). *Sensation Seeking and the Taste for Vicarious Horror*. In *Horror Films: Current Research on Audience Preference and Reactions* (pp. 147-160). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

## Acknowledgements:

UROF – funding (Summer Fellowship 2016)  
Brian McTague – Mentor  
NCUR 2016 – Opportunity to Present