

# **Monsters, Inc. Film Summary**

## **Monsters, Inc.**

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



# Contents

<a href="#">Monsters, Inc. Film Summary.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Context.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">Summary and Analysis.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Characters.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Themes.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Style and Cinematography.....</a>	<a href="#">16</a>
<a href="#">Motifs.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Symbols.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Essay Questions.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>

## Context

*Monsters, Inc.* introduces viewers to the monsters' world, where they live and work. We meet Sulley and Mike, best friends who work at the Monsters, Inc. factory. In order to power their city, the monsters must use special 'doors' to enter the human world and scare children, collecting their screams to use as power. One night, Sulley's archenemy, Randall, works late and accidentally leaves a door on the factory floor. While running an errand for Mike, Sulley discovers the door, enters it to investigate, and comes out with a little girl, known through most of the film as Boo, hanging on his back.

Sulley and Mike frantically try to make a plan to send Boo back home before she destroys the whole power system of the city with her screams. While they try to care for her, they discover that Randall and Mr. Waternoose are involved in a terrible scam to kidnap children and use a dangerous machine, the Scream Extractor, to steal children's screams. Mike and Sulley finally put a stop to his plan and save Boo. Throughout the film, Sulley becomes increasingly attached to Boo. In the process, he realizes that children's laughs are much more powerful than their screams.

There are three directors for *Monsters, Inc.* Pete Docter is one of the directors and *Monsters, Inc.* is his only major film as a director, though he had worked on several other major films such as *Toy Story* in the past. David Silverman is a co-director, and he directed many of *The Simpsons* episodes. Lee Unkrich, the other co-director, was also co-director for *Toy Story 2* (1999) and *Finding Nemo* (2003).

John Goodman, the voice of James P. "Sulley" Sullivan, is best known for his role on the television show *Roseanne*, but he has also performed in many other films. For example, he appeared in *Raising Arizona* (1987), *Punchline* (1988), *Arachnophobia* (1990), *The Babe* (1992), *Born Yesterday* (1993), and *The Flintstones* (1994).

Billy Crystal, the voice of Mike Wazowski, is America's funny man. Crystal has appeared in some of the best comedies over the years. After appearing in *This is Spinal Tap* (1984), Crystal was able to get the hysterical part of Miracle Max in *The Princess Bride* (1987). With the part of Harry Burns in *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), Crystal skyrocketed his way to stardom. Crystal also played main roles in *The City Slickers* films (1991 and 1994), *Forget Paris* (1995), *Analyze This* (1999), and *Analyze That* (2002).

Parents and children loved *Monsters, Inc.* and the critics also approved. The Academy Awards nominated the film for three awards: Best Animated Feature for Andrew Stanton and Peter Docter; Best Effects, Sound Effects Editing for Gary Rydstrom and Michael Silvers; Best Music, Original Score for Randy Newman. The film also won an award for Best Music, Original Song for Randy Newman for the song "If I Didn't Have You."



# Summary and Analysis

*Monsters, Inc.* begins by showing a shelf of toys while we hear a little boy tell his parents goodnight. After he falls asleep, a breeze begins to blow and the closet door opens. The boy hears sounds, and suddenly, a monster stands up beside his bed and growls. The boy screams, and the monster proceeds to run away screaming. The lights flip on, and we hear a machine say, "Simulation Terminated." A woman asks what the screaming monster's mistake was, and no one can tell her the answer. The woman tells them that leaving the door open is the worst mistake that can be made, because a child could then get in through the open door. Henry J. Waterhouse III, the head of the factory, comes in and yells at the monsters to tell them that a child's touch is toxic.

After a monster refuses to go in, Waterhouse explains that they have to go in to get the screams in order to keep power to the city. Waterhouse wants more scarers like James P. Sullivan. We then see Sulley, asleep in bed, when his friend, Mike Wazowski, wakes him. Shortly after, Mike's commercial comes on, and he can't wait to see himself on television. The factory's commercial tells about how it keeps power to the city by combining each child with the proper monster, since children are becoming harder to scare. Poor Mike discovers that he is covered by the logo, but he is not upset at all.

Sulley and Mike walk to work to save energy. We see an entire wall filled with Scarer of the Month pictures - all are of Sulley. We then see a beautiful monster, Celia, who is in love with and dating Mike. Today is her birthday, so Mike has made reservations for them at the best restaurant. They run into Randall Boggs in the locker room while he threatens to beat Sulley's record. Mike then talks to Roz, the grumpy secretary, who threatens him for failing to turn in paperwork.

In the factory, machines bring doors to the ground while the monsters prepare to go through them and scare the children. All the helpers are in awe of the scarers, and as the scarers go through the doors, children's screams are heard in the factory. Randall and Sulley compete to try to get the most scares, and therefore the most power for the city, in the least amount of time. Some doors are 'dead doors', because the kids behind them aren't scared anymore and they try to touch the monsters. These doors are shredded and only the doorknobs remain. Sulley leads by the most screams contest by a lot, and Randall becomes even more frustrated.

One of the monsters comes back through a door with a sock on his back and the factory goes into decontamination mode. The CDA, the Child Detection Agency, rushes in to carefully remove the sock from his back and destroy it. They also force him to shave and stay away from people for a while.

Waterhouse is afraid that the factory is going to go under, and he asks Sulley to come in and show the new scarers how to become quality scarers. Sulley believes that after the day he has had, he has the record in the bag. Mike prepares for his date, while Sulley goes home to work out. Roz yells at Mike when he leaves, asking him about filing the paperwork correctly for once. Celia is ready to go, but Mike has forgotten his paperwork.



Sulley goes to get the paperwork for Mike, in order to quickly file it for him so Mike can go on his date with Celia.

While he is in the factory, Sulley notices that a door is down on the floor. Sulley opens it to whisper and ask whether anyone is scaring. No one answers, but he suddenly hears a thumping noise. A little girl is playing with his tail. Sulley grabs her and throws her back through the door, but she won't stay. Sulley tries to get through the door safely, but he ends up with a lot of the girl's stuff on him.

After Sulley runs out to throw everything down the toilet, Randall comes in, prepared to get some extra power. The toilet refuses to flush, and Sulley hides everything in his locker. When he walks out of the room, we see the little girl holding onto his back. The little girl then chases him onto a bench. Sulley goes to throw her back in her room through the door, just when Randall comes out and sends the door away. Randall doesn't notice them, but Sulley doesn't know how to get rid of the girl now.

At the restaurant, Mike and Celia enjoy a romantic evening, until Sulley appears at the window. Sulley then comes inside and tries to tell Mike about the girl and Randall's scheme. Sulley tells Mike to look in the bag, but the bag has walked away. Mike leaves Celia to help Sulley. The little girl gets onto a photographer's back, and the entire restaurant empties in a matter of seconds, with people running out screaming, while the little girl she says, "Boo." Mike and Sulley grab the girl and run when the CDA arrives on the scene.

On the news that night, the monsters are telling crazy stories about the little girl and her amazing powers. Everyone is terrified of her, and the whole city is trying to find her. Mike and Sulley try to keep her from touching them. After Mike takes a pet bear from her, she begins screaming, and the power begins going crazy before finally going out completely. The CDA finds out where she is hiding. The little girl stops crying and begins laughing, after Mike trips and flies across the room. Sulley convinces the little girl to be quiet when he gets her to color in a coloring book.

Mike comes up with a brilliant plan to use spoons to dig a tunnel under the city and release her into the wild. The little girl finally gets tired and Sulley tries to lure her into a corner of the room, but she gets into his bed instead. The little girl is scared of the closet, because of Randall, but Sulley tries to reassure her. Sulley sits in the room with her until she falls asleep. Sulley goes to the other room and tells Mike that he doesn't think she is dangerous. Mike says, "Well, in that case, let's keep it. I always wanted a pet that could kill me." Sulley tries to convince Mike to just send her back home.

The next day, they dress Boo up like a monster and try to keep her from Waternoose and the CDA. Sulley explains that he brought his relative to work. When she goes to the bathroom in the men's room, she sings a cute song while Sulley waits. When he opens the stall door, however, he thinks she has disappeared.

The little girl begins to play, while Mike tries to find the right door in order to send her back home. Roz refuses to help him, since he didn't turn in his paperwork the night



before. While Sulley and Boo play, Mike returns with the bad news that Roz would not help him find the door. Then, Randall comes in and they hide. Since Randall is a chameleon, he becomes invisible and tries to figure out what is happening. Randall's helper then shows him the newspaper with the child, and Randall says that he is going to find the kid. Thankfully, Randall doesn't find them while they are hiding.

Mike finds any door and tries to convince Sulley to drop her off just to send her back through to her world. Sulley calls her Boo, and Mike becomes upset, because Sulley might become attached. While Mike yells at Sulley, everyone stops to stare, and Mike tries to convince everyone that he is practicing for a musical. Boo disappears, and Mike is excited to know that she is no longer their concern. Mike and Sulley run into Randall, who talks to them about the kid. Then, Celia comes in and yells at Mike for leaving her stranded at the restaurant. Randall realizes the truth of the situation and confronts Mike about bringing the kid to work.

Randall convinces Mike that they should just put the kid back during lunch. Mike believes that Randall was cheating, and Randall is relieved that he hasn't discovered the truth about the new machine. So, he agrees to help and have the door at the station during lunch. Sulley chases Boo, but two guys from the CDA come to get his autograph. One of Boo's fake eyes from her monster costume used to disguise her falls off, and Sulley thinks Boo has been thrown down the stairs. Boo runs into some children at the daycare and introduces herself as Mike. In the meantime, Mike runs around trying to find the kid. The monster from the previous day opens his locker to find all of Boo's stuff. Sulley grabbed the garbage package that contains Boo's monster eyes that had fallen off, and he is crying when Mike finds him. They hear her voice, and then find her. A little kid bites Mike and Boo begins laughing, and then the power goes out.

Sulley and Mike run to the factory, and they prepare to send her back through her door. Sulley is uncomfortable with the plan, so Mike goes inside to prove that everything is okay. Randall traps him in a box and takes him away, while Sulley and Boo hide. After Boo makes a noise, Randall stops to search, but the work bell rings before he finds them. Sulley chases Randall through the factory to save Mike. Boo hits a tool on the wall and makes a fake door open when Sulley can't find Randall. They enter together to find secret area where Randall is testing a new machine.

Randall and his helper throw Mike into the machine. Randall chuckles when Mike accuses him of not being concerned about the scare record. They strap Mike into the machine and Randall says he is 'revolutionizing scaring'. Randall introduces Mike to the scream extractor in order to find out where the kid is hiding. Sulley pulls the plug so that he can save Mike. Sulley and Mike throw the helper into the chair, and Randall hurts him.

The three run out of the room, and they go to find Mr. Waterhouse in the training simulator for new scarers. Sulley tries to explain the issues to Mr. Waterhouse. Mr. Waterhouse asks Sulley to show the new scarers-in-training how to be scary and get kids to scream. Sulley roars at the simulation machine, and Boo begins to cry and runs away. Sulley goes to find and comfort her. Sulley is sad when he sees pictures of him



and Boo's reaction on a screen. When Boo sees Sulley, she cries and runs to Mike. Mike tells Waternoose about the secret lab and the girl, and Waternoose is upset, because they cannot deal with any more bad publicity.

Mr. Waternoose picks up the girl so that they can take care of things. Mr. Waternoose then takes them into the factory and throws them through a random door, while keeping Boo with him. After they arrive in the middle of nowhere in a blizzard, the door no longer works. Mike is angry at Sulley for trusting Mr. Waternoose, who was in on the whole thing with Randall. Mike attacks Sulley, and they roll down the hill. At the bottom, they meet the Yeti who treats them to a snack. Sulley is still heartbroken by Boo's reaction.

The Yeti tells them that he totally understands what it is like to be banished. Mike refuses to call Sulley a friend ever again. Then, they learn about the local village, and Sulley wants to go there quickly. Sulley hits the side of the cave and sees tools sitting around. The Snowman tries to tell Sulley that they should never go into a blizzard. Sulley says that nothing matters but saving the girl, and Mike becomes angry. Sulley just wants to get to the village, so that he can try to get back into the factory. Sulley apologizes for everything that has happened, but he still wants to save Boo. Mike tells him that he is on his own this time, so Sulley leaves, alone.

After borrowing the sled, Sulley speeds toward the village but has an accident on the way, knocking him unconscious. Sulley then hears screams nearby, wakes up, and sees the village over the hill. Sulley is able to get through the door and back into the factory. Sulley runs to the hidden chamber to try to save Boo. Waternoose yells at Randall for being irresponsible and making him banish Sulley, who was twice the scarer Randall will ever be. Sulley rushes in just when the scream extractor moves toward Boo. Sulley rescues her and heads back toward the factory, but Randall hides and begins attacking Sulley.

Mike then arrives on the scene and begins to apologize to Sulley. Mike doesn't realize that Sulley is being attacked by Randall. Sulley is being choked to death, and Mike throws something at Sulley. That is when Mike realizes that Sulley is being attacked by Randall. Waternoose tells Randall to stop them. Then, Celia attacks Mike, and he finally tells her the truth. Celia doesn't believe him until she sees the little girl. Celia tries to help by announcing that Randall has beaten the scare record and having a group of congratulators attack him. Sulley and Mike chase Boo's door, so that they can safely return her to her home. While they careen through the factory on the door system, we see how many doors are there, and there are a lot. Sulley and Mike run in and out of doors while they try to avoid Randall and find Boo's door.

At one point, Randall grabs Boo, and Sulley and Mike begin to chase them. Sulley finally chases them into a door, but he falls to the edge. Randall tries to throw him off the door, a fall which would probably kill him. Then, Boo begins attacking Randall, and Sulley is able to climb up, so he does not fall. Sulley and Mike find another door, throw Randall into it, and then destroy it. Sulley congratulates Boo on finally beating her monster.





When they try to send Boo home, the power is out, so they can't get the door open. Waternoose is in the factory telling everyone to stop the power once the door lands so that they will be able to capture the child and the criminals. Mike carries Boo's outfit, scares the CDA, and tricks them into chasing him. In the meantime, Sulley grabs Boo and her door while Waternoose chases them. Finally, Sulley sends her through the door.

Waternoose says that he has to kill both Boo and Sulley, and he will kidnap children before hurting the company. Suddenly, he grabs the child, only to discover that they are actually in the simulation room. The lights come on, and the CDA takes Waternoose away, since they have been watching the whole time. Then, the CDA stops Sulley and Mike, so they can talk to a person known as 'number one'. Roz walks in the door and introduces herself as the undercover agent. Roz is glad to have had Sulley's help in revealing Waternoose as a bad guy, so that she knew how high the conspiracy went. Roz agrees to send Boo home, but she demands that they shred the door, so Sulley and Mike can't see her again. They are both terribly sad because of the news. Sulley sends Boo through her door to her bedroom, but Boo pulls Sulley into the room for a few minutes before he says goodbye. Sulley puts her to bed and hugs her, and then he leaves, closing the door behind him.

Boo opens the door, but all she finds is her closet. Roz then has the door shredded, and she tells them that none of this ever happened. Mike gives Sulley a piece of the door that fell to the wayside. Waternoose is sent away. All the employees are scared that the factory will be closed. Sulley sadly walks away at the end of the day, and Mike tries to cheer him.

Sulley realizes from his memories of Boo that they can create even more power for the plant by making children laugh rather than making them scream. The next thing we see, Mike is making a young boy laugh in his room while they gather power from his laughs. They have discovered that laughter is 10 times more powerful than screams.

Celia and Mike are still madly in love. Mike and Sulley are popular again as the top power producers and they get their picture on the front of a magazine. Once again, Mike is covered by something - this time it's a barcode on the cover of a magazine, but, as usual, he is thrilled just to be on the front of a magazine.

When Sulley looks at the paperwork for the increased production of the factory, he moves his paper and sadly looks at the drawing Boo had colored of him. Mike then takes Sulley to the door for Boo's room that has been pieced together from the shredder. Sulley adds his special piece of wood to the door Mike put back together, and he opens the door to visit Boo. When Sulley opens the door, his face lights up, and the film ends.





# Characters

## James P. "Sulley" Sullivan, played by John Goodman

### Description

James P. "Sulley" Sullivan is the premiere scarer at Monsters, Inc. The factory collects the power from children's screams in order to power Monster City. For months in a row, Sulley has been the most successful scarer on the factory's team.

One day, though, Sulley finds an extra door on the floor. Sulley enters to check it out, but no one is in the room, not even a child. Sulley leaves the room, but a little girl named Mary, known in the film as Boo, hides on his back. Sulley realizes the problem just as Randall comes in and sends the door away.

Sulley runs to his friend, Mike, and they spend the rest of the film trying to figure out how to get Boo back to her home, while also discovering an evil plot by Randall and Mr. Waterhouse to steal children and use the Scream Extractor on them. Sulley and Mike beat them, and then they use children's laughter to create ten times more power than the screams ever did. Sulley, though, cannot help missing little Boo, whose door was destroyed after she was sent home. Thankfully, Mike put the door back together, and as the film ends, Sulley gets to see Boo again.

### Analysis

Sulley is famous, but he never lets the fame go to his head. Sulley treats everyone equally, from his friend Mike to the people on the street. Unlike Randall, he cares less about winning the competition for Scarer of the Month than he does about living a good, full, and happy life.

In the beginning, Sulley, like all the other monsters, believes that children are evil and can destroy monster life. After meeting Boo, Sulley realizes that this lie has been formed by Mr. Waterhouse or someone else and that children really are safe to be around. While he and Mike try to send Boo home, Sulley becomes more attached to the little girl. Roz even requires that Boo's door be destroyed, because Sulley has become so attached to Boo.

## Mike Wazowski, played by Billy Crystal

### Description

Mike Wazowski is Sulley's hilarious friend. Mike works the doors and tanks in the factory for Sulley. Although Sulley does not seem to care much about fame, Mike loves having



his picture on a magazine or the television screen, even if he is usually partially covered by a logo or barcode.

Mike is dating Celia, a secretary at the factory. On the day that Boo appears on the scene, he is taking Celia out for a romantic evening in celebration of their one year anniversary. Celia is appalled by how quickly their evening is ruined after Sulley shows up with a little girl in his bag. Mike has to deal with the entire situation and eventually he saves Boo and wins Celia back.

## **Analysis**

Mike is a cheerful addition to the cast, and he helps remind viewers to keep a positive attitude. Mike's pride is never offended when he is partially covered in all the publicity that he and Sulley receive. Mike is, instead, glad that he has even those small moments of fame.

Mike does become upset when he sees that they now have to care for a little girl. Like the other monsters, he is afraid that she will kill him, and he wants to get rid of her as soon as possible. Although Mike doesn't become as attached to Boo as Sulley does, Mike is very fond of her by the end of the film.

## **Boo/Mary, played by Mary Gibbs**

### **Description**

Boo is actually a little girl named Mary, who is supposed to be scared by Randall. When Sulley makes it into her room before Randall does, she decides to play with Sulley and follow him back into the factory. Although Mary is in great danger from Randall and Mr. Waternoose, as well as the CDA, she is constantly smiling and laughing, totally clueless that she is in any danger.

Boo is the typical little girl. Boo cries when she is scared, but overall she is very brave. The monsters believe that she can kill them, so they are far more scared of her than she is of them. Boo's presence helps the monsters realize that children are not dangerous and that their laughter is even more powerful than their screams.

### **Analysis**

Boo is the catalyst for the story. Boo's appearance in the factory makes life more difficult for everyone, while Sulley and Mike have to figure out a way to return her to her home. Mr. Waternoose and Randall, on the other hand, desperately try to find her, so that they can use her in their evil experiment.

Boo keeps the audience laughing when she first comes out the door hanging onto Sulley's back, and then continues to get into trouble by appearing in the most inconvenient spots, like when she climbs on the photographer's back at the restaurant.



Over time, Boo and Sulley create an important bond, and Boo is just as sad to leave as Sulley is to see her go home.

## **Randall Boggs, played by Steve Buscemi**

### **Description**

Randall Boggs is a chameleon monster who also makes a living scaring children. Randall has become very good at his job over the years, and he is always just behind Sulley in the contest to become Scarer of the Month. Randall is a jealous and mean monster who is always looking out for himself.

Because Randall wants to become more famous, he agrees to help Mr. Waterhouse test the Scream Extractor on Boo. Randall gains access to the factory floor to steal Boo, but Sulley finds the door, and the little girl, first. Randall learns that Boo is with Sulley, and he proceeds to steal her away, so that he and Waterhouse can experiment.

### **Analysis**

Randall is the all-around bad guy of the film. Randall hates Sulley, and he constantly has a bad attitude about everything. Randall is extremely jealous and greedy, and he causes problems for all the characters while he tries to have the best record at the factory.

Along with Mr. Waterhouse, Randall plots to hurt Boo and other children to become increase his wealth. The Scream Extractor is just the type of terrible machine that we would expect Randall to use, so that he could make more money and become as famous as Sulley. Randall teaches children exactly what type of person not to become, standing in direct opposition to Sulley.

## **Henry J. Waterhouse III, played by James Coburn**

### **Description**

Henry J. Waterhouse III is the owner of Monsters, Inc. Mr. Waterhouse has been in the business of scaring children to create power for the city for many years. However, when the film begins, he has become greedy and is looking for a way to create more power with less expense.

Waterhouse develops a machine called the Scream Extractor that will allow them to just steal screams from the children without having to use individual scarers. The factory could then hire fewer monsters, but it would create just as much energy as before, if not more. Waterhouse realizes that this machine could hurt the children, but he is willing to do whatever it takes to get ahead.



## Analysis

Waternoose seems like a nice guy, but when we finally learn the entire plan behind Boo's kidnapping, we realize that he has been playing a role all along. Instead of being a nice person, Waternoose reveals himself as a mean, cruel monster, who cares about no one but himself.

While we watch the film, we see Sulley and Mike as being more like 'people', while Waternoose and Randall are portrayed in a way that we would expect monsters to act. Just like humans, there are monsters who actually act like monsters and monsters who are kind enough to be 'human'. Waternoose and Randall stand in direct opposition to the kind hearts of Mike and Sulley.

## Celia, played by Jennifer Tilly

### Description

Celia is Mike's girlfriend. Celia is completely in love with Mike, and, when the film begins, she is excited to be celebrating their anniversary. After the ordeal at the restaurant, Celia becomes understandably very angry with Mike. The next morning, she attacks him and yells at him. Finally, when she understands the situation, she is so proud of Mike and forgives him for everything.

### Analysis

Celia is the average woman. Celia has been swept off her feet by Mike, and she is severely disappointed at his behavior during the events at the restaurant. Celia is relieved and excited to find that her man is a hero instead of a jerk.

## Roz, played by Bob Peterson

### Description

Roz is the lady who works at the desk in the factory. Roz is always mean to Mike, because he never gets his papers turned in properly or on time. Although he tries to charm his way out of trouble, Roz refuses to give in to his charm.

When Mike and Sulley finally corner Mr. Waternoose and tape him in the training room, Roz walks in and reveals that she is an undercover agent. Roz congratulates them, but she forces them to destroy Boo's door, since Sulley has become attached to Boo.



## **Analysis**

Roz seems terribly mean and cruel throughout most of the film. Roz seems to be a very 'stick-to-the-rules' person who doesn't care about anyone else's needs. When we discover that she is the head of an undercover team, though, we begin to understand her attitude a little more.

## **Yeti, played by John Ratzenberger**

### **Description**

Sulley and Mike meet the Yeti when they are banished from Monster City. The Yeti takes care of them and tells them where the next town is located, though he warns them not to go out in a blizzard.

### **Analysis**

The Yeti is a kind creature, whose friend, Bigfoot, was also banished at one time. Yeti tries to understand Mike and Sulley's situation and takes good care of them.

## **Fungus, played by Frank Oz**

### **Description**

Fungus is Randall's assistant who does whatever Randall tells him to do. Although he is involved in the evil plan, he doesn't seem to be a bad monster like Randall.

### **Analysis**

Fungus is a monster who is only doing exactly what he is told to do by his bosses. Since he doesn't think for himself, he is easily led by Randall and Mr. Waterhouse.

# Themes

## Loving the Unknown

People everywhere, and monsters, are always fascinated with the unknown. When there are new places, dreams, hopes, or adventures, we are always willing and ready to explore them. Because of this passion for the unknown, countries have been created, wildernesses tamed, and doors entered.

In *Monsters, Inc.*, the monsters of Monster City seek to explore the unknown so that they can keep their city running on the only type of power they have discovered - the screams of children. Each monster who works at the factory has a daily adventure while they explore a new world and work to power their city. The other monsters in the city revere these monsters as explorers and celebrities.

Not only do the monsters love the unknown, but so does little Boo. Boo is fascinated by the new world she enters, and after becoming attached to Sulley, she has no desire to leave. From this common love of the unknown, viewers learn that humans and monsters may not be so different after all.

## Dangerous Competition

Competition can be a motivator or it can be a killer. At first, the competition at the factory seems to help each of the monsters do their best while they compete to be Scarer of the Month. However, Randall then tries to outwork everyone else and begins a terrible series of events.

Although we eventually learn that Randall's true goal has nothing to do with the competition, we still see a dangerous side to him, even in the beginning when he and Sulley compete on the factory floor.

Viewers, many of whom are children, learn that competition can be good and bad, but if you become motivated for the wrong reasons, you can become a mean, evil person. These children discover that dangerous competition only ends up hurting the person who wants to bring harm to another.

## Greed

Greed is possibly one of the most destructive forces in nature. Humans are prone to jealousy and greed, which almost always ends in heartache for someone. In the United States especially, materialism has risen to a whole new level, where many people are more concerned with their things than about other people.

In order to help children learn the dangers of greed, *Monsters, Inc.* shows how greed can not only hurt others but it can also hurt the greedy people. We watch while Randall and Mr. Waterhouse are destroyed by their greed, and they also hurt Boo, Sulley, and Mike through their schemes.

While Randall seeks to become more powerful at the company and take all the focus off of Sulley, he is willing to do anything that the greedy Mr. Waterhouse, who wants to retain the largest profit possible for himself, asks. When we learn more about their evil plan, we quickly understand the power of greed to ruin lives.



## Style and Cinematography

Fun and whimsical, *Monsters, Inc.* was an immediate favorite around the world with children and adults alike. Everything in *Monsters, Inc.* appeals to our love of the unknown and the desire to explore the world with our imaginations. Children can truly begin to think of life and relationships in a different way by seeing this film.

The animation in *Monsters, Inc.* creates a world of monsters who are more human than animal. These monsters have thoughts, feelings, and activities that are similar to what we experience as humans. Thus, people are easily able to relate to characters like Mike and Sulley.

Besides being humanlike, these characters also come across as warm and fuzzy rather than scary. Although there are a few scary moments and a few scary monsters, the overall impression of the viewer is that the monsters are only doing their job to survive. We can have fun and enjoy the monsters' world, because we understand its similarity to our own.

# Motifs

## The Publicity

As we watch *Monsters, Inc.* we are continually learning more about the characters and events through publicity devices. We first learn that Sulley is the most famous scarer at the factory when we see the factory's commercial on television. We also learn more about the characters, because Sulley is not impressed with being on television, while Mike is extremely excited, even though he is covered by the company's logo.

Additionally, when all the chaos happens at the restaurant when Boo is discovered, we learn more about the situation from the news broadcast on Sulley's television. We see the camera crews report on the events at the restaurant, as well as the leads the police have on Boo. When the helicopters start to get close to the apartment, because of Boo's screaming, suddenly the power goes out, and the police and the media are confused.

Finally, we learn about Sulley and Mike's success at the factory after Mr. Waterhouse is fired when they receive the copy of a magazine. Mike is once again thrilled to be presented into fame, but Sulley and Celia both begin to comfort him, because he has been covered by the barcode.

## The Training Floor

The training floor is shown both at the beginning and ending of the film. When the film begins, we are introduced to the concept of scaring children for the power created by their screams.

Later, we once again learn how popular Sulley is when all the monsters-in-training are impressed that he has come to teach them how to scare. They are excited by his presence, and Mr. Waterhouse is confident that if anyone can teach them how to scare well, it will be Sulley.

Finally, when Mr. Waterhouse chases Sulley and Boo, Sulley leads him into the training room. Mike and Sulley then use the technology to tape Mr. Waterhouse and make sure that he will be held accountable for his actions. The training floor is also where Boo's door is destroyed, and Sulley is heartbroken, knowing that he won't get to see her again.

## Disguises

Disguises are an important motif in *Monsters, Inc.* The characters use disguises for a variety of reasons while they try to figure out the truth of what's going on at the factory. At times, the disguises work, and at other times, they fail miserably.



One of the most obvious disguises in the film is when Sulley and Mike dress Boo up as a little monster so they can easily carry her into the factory. Although the disguise doesn't look very convincing, it works for most of the day. Sulley and Mike work hard to keep her safe by keeping her true identity secret. When Waternoose and Randall discover who she really is, they then take advantage of the situation and kidnap her for their own ambitious plans.

Randall also disguises himself by using his natural abilities. Since he can use his chameleon nature to look like anything he is near, he is one of the best scarers on the team and the perfect person for Mr. Waternoose's evil plan. Randall uses his ability to disguise himself to cheat the system by stealing Boo for her screams.



# Symbols

## Boo's Door

When Sulley first discovers an extra door sitting on the factory floor after hours, he is not sure what to expect. Instead of just walking by or reporting the problem to Roz, Sulley enters the door to find a silent room. When he leaves, he has no idea how much his life is about to change.

Boo's door can symbolize several things in the film. For one, it symbolizes a time of change for Sulley and Mike. Sulley has been the top scarer for years, and he is about to get into more trouble than he can handle. Sulley is also going to learn about a world beyond Monster City and come to love one of the children he has been scaring. Life will never be the same after Boo.

Additionally, Boo's door can symbolize the problems with greed. The only reason there is an extra door is that Randall is planning to put Mr. Waternoose's evil plan into action. Because of their greed, a little girl could be killed, and Sulley and Mike are banished for a time.

## Boo's Picture

When Mike and Sulley first take Boo to Sulley's apartment to hide her from the CDA, they give her crayons and paper to keep her occupied. While she is playing, they hide from her and try to come up with a plan to send her back home. While they debate what to do, she suddenly holds up something for them to look at: a picture of Sulley that she has colored.

When Boo first shows the picture, Mike and Sulley are amused. This does make Sulley think that maybe Boo isn't so bad and that she probably can't really hurt them. Although Mike doesn't want to believe Sulley, he is quickly convinced.

At the end of the film, we see the picture once more when Sulley looks at his chart, since he is now the manager of the factory. Taped to the clipboard is Boo's picture. Sulley looks sad and sighs. We recognize that this picture symbolizes the relationship between Boo and Sulley: from the early days when Sulley was still afraid of her, until the end of the film when they have developed a bond of love.

## The Scream Extractor

The Scream Extractor is a terrible machine that Randall and Mr. Waternoose have created to extract even more screams from children by actually draining them of their screams by force. Because most children have become immune to the scarers, Mr. Waternoose is desperately seeking a way to keep his factory running.



Although he is partially looking out for the city, Mr. Waterhouse is mostly concerned about himself. If he can extract more screams and create more power, then he personally will be able to make a lot more money, without having to pay a lot of scarers and other staff.

The Scream Extractor is a symbol of the lengths that someone will go to in order to greedily hoard money for themselves. Mr. Waterhouse is not concerned about anyone but himself, and the Scream Extractor shows his lack of emotion toward others.



## Essay Questions

Why is Sulley famous around Monster City?

In the beginning of the film, what do the monsters use for power?

What is the most dangerous thing that the monster world believes any monster could do?

Why is Randall in such fierce competition with Sulley?

How do Sulley and Boo meet?

What happens when Boo begins using her voice loudly?

Who is behind the evil plot Mike and Sulley uncover, and what is the plot?

In the end, what do they find to help them get even more power for the city?

How does Sulley get to see Boo again?