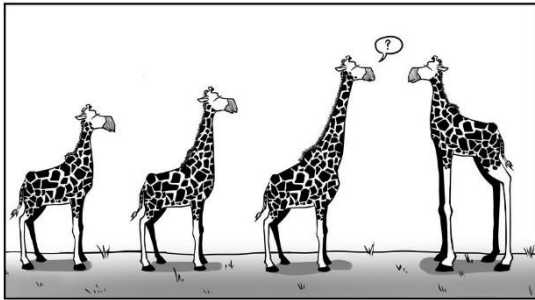


The Influence of Darwin

Gothic literature focuses on ruin, decay, death, madness, terror and chaos. It often shows people of privilege behaving irrationally and passionately, ignoring common-sense and reason.

This sense of horror grew in response to the fears and concerns of people in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At the time, scientific discovery was upsetting what some people believed, and this fear of the new and unfamiliar led to books like Frankenstein being written. In it, a scientist uses his knowledge to accidentally create a monster – a fear which people still have today when it comes to new scientific discoveries (just think about the fuss over cloning or genetically modified foods).



stronger. See the diagram to show how giraffe evolved...

People's beliefs were also challenged by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. This showed that different species had evolved through a process called 'natural selection', in which animals pass on their strongest characteristics, meaning their offspring are better suited to the environment they live in. In this way, species become stronger and

This theory was deeply disturbing for many people, as it challenged their religious beliefs: Darwin's theory completely goes against the Bible's teachings, in which God created Adam and Eve. Many people felt they were being forced to choose between their long-held religious beliefs and science – and many believed that science was meddling in matters that only God had control over.

Rather than being innocent creatures created by a powerful god, this theory meant that we had evolved from more primitive creatures by accident – something many people found appalling because it showed we were more closely related to the animal kingdom than people had assumed. The theory was also misunderstood by many who believed that this meant we were evolved from monkeys and apes – which we are not.