In his essay "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," Jeffrey Jerome Cohen explores the nature and societal role of monsters in order to propose a radical "method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender" (3). Essentially, Cohen offers seven theses that reveal the cultural mindsets that lead to the creation of literal and nonliteral monsters in societies. For example, in Thesis V, he argues that monsters delimit "the social spaces through which private bodies move," and that "to step outside this official geography is to risk attack by some monstrous border patrol or (worse) to become monstrous oneself" (Cohen 12). In other words, monsters personify cultural taboos by embodying the ideas that a society opposes, thereby reminding people to remain loyal to the status quo so as not to risk being seen as monstrous. He concludes in Thesis VII, that monsters "ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance toward its expression" (Cohen 20). Monsters thus offer a chance for reflection; they allows us to reconsider our cultural judgements about differences in our societies.

In Joan Didion's essay, she talks about how she came to New York and her experiences while in New York. While she was there, she struggled with her relationships, finding a well-paying job, and finding happiness. She gives a lot of details about her life during this time, which is when she was in her twenties. Her life in New York seemed really hard and not very happy. She said that she lived in multiple apartments that weren't furnished, and in really bad conditions. At the end of the essay, she tells the reader that she moved back to California and doesn't regret leaving New York, even though she said earlier in the essay that she loved parts of New York when she was younger.