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The Ghost Phenomenon

As of the last Fifth teen years a culture wide change has been seen throughout the American people, and this culture change is the belief in ghosts or the “paranormal” and one such show that contributed to the shift is “Ghost Hunters “. The show ghost hunters follows a crew as they videotape and inspect areas that have “paranormal” activity. With this we wonder, how this effected society and what helped inspire this. To understand how the show changed society we must first figure out the folk lore that helped society accept this show into its cultural mix.

Folklore has been in society for thousands of years. From the stories of the creator god Itzumia in the Mayan era, he was known as the god who gaveth and taketh creation, most of the time he took life, he only created fruit and happiness when he was appeased. Like Maya most ancient cultures pre catholic revolution, believed in stories of malevolent gods who needed to be appeased and if not most crops would fail. Some cultures would even sacrifice people or animals to give a gift to the gods. Most of ancient folklore can be retraced through the bible.

Some of the oldest folklore can be found in the bible. Many stories from ancient time can be found within the bible, some such stories involve the belief that mount Olympus and Heaven are the same. One story that stands out with the most parallels is the story of the great flood in Greece or Noah’s ark in the bible. Both stories are set thousands of years apart, but both have the same ending. In the story of Noah’s Ark god sends a giant flood across the world and only saves a few to rebuild the world. In the story of the flood Mount Olympus was over run and Zeus cast a flood across all of Greece and the world, and only the ones chosen by Zeus could survive. Many of these types of parallels could be found throughout most religions and cultures. It is believed that most of modern folklore derived from the bible. While the bible helped push culture and folklore into ancient society it was not the only form of folklore that had so much success.

The year is 1812 and the book “Grimm’s Fairy Tales “is published and spread across the world. This book is the beginning of the publication of what we call folklore, or fairytales. This book would not become popular for a hundred years or so but when it finally became popular it sold tens of millions of copies, finding its way into the homes of Americans around the 1930’s. No longer were stories told between just families, and held in secret meetings. No, now the whole world could read all of those fairytales and slowly but surely over the next ten years you would see society slowly accept “scary stories” or folklore into main stream media, One such story is “ The night of the living dead”.

The night of the living dead is the first movie to really grab the attention of all of America and make these paranormal movies, cult classics, seen everywhere. This movie is one of the reasons folklore is so widely accepted in modern culture. It helped break the boundary that most films had an issue with. And that issue is making the folklore believable enough to attract attention, most movies at the time focused on crazy effects or weird monsters, but this one focused on one thing every single person is scared of, the possibility of zombies. And because it connected so well with people it became an instant cult classic, pushing the paranormal into the normal spectrum of movies. Now that ghosts and things that go bump in the night are accepted by the American people and craved. Now that we know how ghost stories and creepy crawlers got accepted into society, what started everything? What helped pushed Ghost hunters to become part of main stream media.

Its 1995 Jason Hawes, founder of Ghost hunters, is at a local library to get to research an old story he had heard of in his home town of Warwick, Rhode Island. Jason wanted to figure out where this story came from and if it was real. So for the next few hours he dug up old archives and books on his town. Finally he found where the story started and decided to document it with his old camera. After talking to the family whose story had been passed down for generations. After hearing the story, he decided to grab his friend Grant, and head over to the light house where the story began.

The story was called “The lighthouse massacre”. It all starts back in the 1800’s, apparently a group of new people had started staying in town and living at the inn in the lighthouse. After a few months of this people started noticing that almost once a month a person would go missing from the town. After about 10 months the police started to search around and see if they could catch whoever was doing it. After a couple more months of looking around a police man follow some of the new comers back to the lighthouse and noticed that the inn keepers were not there anymore, and in there stead was all of the new comers running the place. One thing led to another and people eventually put two and two together, all of the missing people were found in a ditch under the lighthouse in a small area dug into the bottom of the lighthouse. After asking around and hearing the story Jason asked the owners of the lighthouse if he could go and investigate the lighthouse with his friends. And so Jason and grant took a few cameras and recorded it all and soon after founded the T.A.P.S paranormal investigator squad know on T.V. as Ghost Hunters. So what are the ghost hunters? The ghost hunters are a group of people who take cameras and go to supposedly haunted areas of the world and attempt to make contact with the spirits. They spend many nights normally without anything but there camera and the crew and film, and invoke the spirits to talk to them. The group is for the idea of getting people to realize ghosts are real.

The ghost hunters were founded in the early 21st century, at the time the only show of the sort was “paranormal minds” and at the time that was not popular. This also was at the same time that most families started to get more technology in there house; new T.V’s newer equipment, Smartphones. A lot of family’s also invested in computers at this time, people in this time period were feeling adventurous, so what’s more adventurous than the unknown. So people spent hours upon hours watching 4 people go into old churches and graveyards and hope to see ghosts. This slowly grew, and around 2005 it became popular, suddenly there were other shows popping up just like Ghost hunters; Ghost Adventurers, Paranormal Destiny, etc.… Ghost hunters helped bring out a market that everyone loved and helped make it real, rather than a show like super natural, ghost hunters is set in this world with real things, all of it feels real. The show plays on people’s fears, they use music to help set the tone and force people to “feel” the presence. The use many factors to really make the average person look over their shoulder and think what could be there. And this type of show became a hit. Millions and millions of families would watch ghost hunter every week. As of November of 2009 syfy.com released a statement that shows that over 3 million people watch ghost hunters a week. The show was making a lot of money.

Ghost hunters changed the culture of what we call American reality T.V. it caused many other shows like it to surface, it also got so popular, that the channel it was aired on changed their name. ghost hunters helped lead the charge in the paranormal culture we have today, now instead of just watching the show people can participate in it, all across the world places such as old churches and lighthouses and even some prisons have tours of there more haunted sections. None of this was around before ghost hunters.

One of the main reasons ghost hunters was so culturally accepted is because most American’s were closet ghost believers, they didn’t tell anyone but they believed. A 2001 study from the University of Berkley shows that over 53 % of American’s believe in the paranormal. Meaning that at the time people believed but had nowhere to channel their paranormal thoughts. Ghost hunters gave people a medium in which they could watch and indulge in the world of the unknown, and where they could find a group of people like them and connect.

While the show affected the culture of the community it also brought people paranormal clothing and merchandise. It helped the community connect more, not just by watching the show but by openly supporting it, in a way it helped many people connect on a deeper level. The show had gone from “just a show” to a community with over 8 million strong at one point. Ghost hunters changed how we viewed the paranormal, and because of that you saw a rise in people who were “paranormal investigator” people who would come out and help other people who had issues from the unknown. It really changed how people viewed ghosts and the afterlife.

Ghost hunters the show, started out like any other show, humble, but over time it gained a following, it helped bring others together and gain a sense of community. It went from just a show to a place where people could support one another and in many cases discuss what they couldn’t elsewhere. It changed how most of the world looked at the afterlife and death, it proved that even a few people can change the world, maybe not in the same sense as most, but they did change the culture. And with that change came acceptance of paranormal into mainstream media and outlets across the globe. To think the show was started because of a simple wonder that Jason had, and now it’s become something for generations to admire and watch.

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