[Template:Other uses](/wiki/Template:Other_uses" \o "Template:Other uses) [Template:Infobox character](/wiki/Template:Infobox_character) **Cthulhu** is a fictional [cosmic entity](/wiki/Cosmicism) created by writer [H. P. Lovecraft](/wiki/H. P._Lovecraft) and first introduced in the [short story](/wiki/Short_story) "[The Call of Cthulhu](/wiki/The_Call_of_Cthulhu)", published in the American [pulp magazine](/wiki/Pulp_magazine) [*Weird Tales*](/wiki/Weird_Tales) in 1928. Considered a [Great Old One](/wiki/Cthulhu_Mythos_deities#Great_Old_Ones) within the pantheon of Lovecraftian cosmic entities, the creature has since been featured in numerous popular culture references. Lovecraft depicts Cthulhu as a gigantic entity worshiped by cultists. Cthulhu's anatomy is described as part octopus, part man, and part dragon. Its name was given to the Lovecraft-created universe where it and its fellow entities existed, the [Cthulhu Mythos](/wiki/Cthulhu_Mythos).

## Contents

* 1 Etymology, spelling and pronunciation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]
* 2 Description[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]
* 3 Publication history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]
* 4 Legacy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]
* 5 References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]
* 6 Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]
* 7 External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

## Etymology, spelling and pronunciation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

Though invented by Lovecraft in 1926, the name Cthulhu is probably derived from the Classic Greek word [chthonic](/wiki/Chthonic) meaning "subterranean", as apparently suggested by Lovecraft himself at the end of his 1923 tale [*The Rats in the Walls*](/wiki/The_Rats_in_the_Walls).[[1]](#cite_note-1) Cthulhu has also been spelled as *Tulu, Clulu, Clooloo, Cthullu, C'thulhu, Cighulu, Cathulu, C'thlu, Culo, Kathulu, Katulu, Kutulu, Kthulhu, Kthulu, Q’thulu, K'tulu, Kthulhut, Kutu, Kulhu, Kutunluu, Ktulu, Cuitiliú, Cqulu, Thu Thu*[[2]](#cite_note-2) and in many other ways. It is often preceded by the [epithet](/wiki/Epithet) *Great*, *Dead*, or *Dread*.

Lovecraft transcribed the pronunciation of *Cthulhu* as *Khlûl′-hloo* and said that "the first syllable pronounced gutturally and very thickly. The *u* is about like that in *full*; and the first syllable is not unlike *klul* in sound, hence the *h* represents the guttural thickness."[[3]](#cite_note-3) An approximate IPA transcription, based on this description and the non-IPA signs, would be [Template:IPA-all](/wiki/Template:IPA-all), with a [voiceless velar lateral fricative](/wiki/Voiceless_velar_lateral_fricative). [S. T. Joshi](/wiki/S._T._Joshi) points out, however, that Lovecraft gave several differing pronunciations on different occasions.[[4]](#cite_note-4) According to Lovecraft, this is merely the closest that the human vocal apparatus can come to reproducing the syllables of an alien language.[[5]](#cite_note-5) Long after Lovecraft's death, the [spelling pronunciation](/wiki/Spelling_pronunciation) [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en) [Template:Respell](/wiki/Template:Respell) became common. The [role-playing game](/wiki/Role-playing_game) [*Call of Cthulhu*](/wiki/Call_of_Cthulhu_(role-playing_game)) has used the pronunciations 'klhul-hoo'[Template:Needs IPA](/wiki/Template:Needs_IPA) or 'tluhluh'"[Template:Needs IPA](/wiki/Template:Needs_IPA);[[6]](#cite_note-6) or more recently 'kuh-THOO-loo'".[Template:Needs IPA](/wiki/Template:Needs_IPA)[[7]](#cite_note-7)

## Description[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

In "[The Call of Cthulhu](/wiki/The_Call_of_Cthulhu)", H. P. Lovecraft describes a statue of Cthulhu as "A monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind."[[8]](#cite_note-8) Cthulhu has been described as a mix between a giant octopus, a man, and a dragon, hundreds of meters tall, with webbed human-looking arms and legs and a pair of rudimentary wings on its back.[[8]](#cite_note-8) Cthulhu's head is depicted as similar to the entirety of a [gigantic octopus](/wiki/Gigantic_octopus), with an unknown number of tentacles surrounding its supposed mouth.

Simply looking upon the creature drives the viewer insane, a trait shared by many of the Great Old Ones and Outer Gods.

## Publication history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

H. P. Lovecraft's initial short story, "The Call of Cthulhu", was published in [*Weird Tales*](/wiki/Weird_Tales) in 1928 and established the character as a malevolent entity, hibernating within an underwater city in the South Pacific called [*R'lyeh*](/wiki/R'lyeh). The imprisoned Cthulhu is apparently the source of constant anxiety for mankind at a subconscious level, and also the subject of worship by a number of human religions (located several places worldwide, including New Zealand, Greenland, Louisiana, and the Chinese mountains) and other Lovecraftian monsters (called [Deep Ones](/wiki/Deep_Ones)[[9]](#cite_note-9) and [Mi-Go](/wiki/Mi-Go)[[10]](#cite_note-10)). The short story asserts the premise that, while currently trapped, Cthulhu will eventually return. His worshippers chant "*Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn*" ("In his house at *R'lyeh*, dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.")[[8]](#cite_note-8) Lovecraft conceived a detailed genealogy for Cthulhu (published as "Letter 617" in [*Selected Letters*](/wiki/Selected_Letters_of_H._P._Lovecraft_IV_(1932–1934)))[[11]](#cite_note-11) and made the character a central figure in corresponding literature.[[12]](#cite_note-12) The short story "[The Dunwich Horror](/wiki/The_Dunwich_Horror)" (1928)[[13]](#cite_note-13) refers to Cthulhu, while "[The Whisperer in Darkness](/wiki/The_Whisperer_in_Darkness)" (1930) hints that one of his characters knows the creature's origins ("I learned whence Cthulhu first came, and why half the great temporary stars of history had flared forth.").[[10]](#cite_note-10) The 1931 [novella](/wiki/Novella) [*At the Mountains of Madness*](/wiki/At_the_Mountains_of_Madness) refers to the "star-spawn of Cthulhu", who warred with another race called the [Elder Things](/wiki/Elder_Thing) before the dawn of man.[[14]](#cite_note-14) [August Derleth](/wiki/August_Derleth), a correspondent of Lovecraft, used the creature's name to identify the system of lore employed by Lovecraft and his literary successors: the [Cthulhu Mythos](/wiki/Cthulhu_Mythos). In 1937, Derleth wrote the short story "The Return of Hastur", and proposed two groups of opposed cosmic entities:

[Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

According to Derleth's scheme, "Great Cthulhu is one of the Water Beings" and was engaged in an age-old arch-rivalry with a designated air elemental, [Hastur the Unspeakable](/wiki/Hastur), described as Cthulhu's "half-brother".[[15]](#cite_note-15) Based on this framework, Derleth wrote a series of short stories published in *Weird Tales* 1944–1952 and collected as [*The Trail of Cthulhu*](/wiki/The_Trail_of_Cthulhu), depicting the struggle of a Dr. Laban Shrewsbury and his associates against Cthulhu and his minions.

Derleth's interpretations have been criticized, among others, by Lovecraft enthusiast [Michel Houellebecq](/wiki/Michel_Houellebecq). Houellebecq's *H. P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against Life* (2005) decries Derleth for attempting to reshape Lovecraft's strictly amoral continuity into a stereotypical conflict between forces of objective good and evil.[[16]](#cite_note-16) In [John Glasby's](/wiki/John_Glasby) "A Shadow from the Aeons", Cthulhu is seen by the narrator roaming the riverbank near Dominic Waldron's castle, and roaring. The physical description of the god is totally different from that given as canon by all the other authors.

The character's influence also extended into recreational literature: games company [TSR](/wiki/TSR,_Inc.) included an entire chapter on the Cthulhu mythos (including statistics for the character) in the first printing of [*Dungeons & Dragons*](/wiki/Dungeons_&_Dragons) sourcebook [*Deities & Demigods*](/wiki/Deities_&_Demigods) (1980). TSR, however, were unaware that [Arkham House](/wiki/Arkham_House), who asserted copyright on almost all Lovecraft literature, had already licensed the Cthulhu property to the game company [Chaosium](/wiki/Chaosium). Although Chaosium stipulated that TSR could continue to use the material if each future edition featured a published credit to Chaosium, TSR refused and the material was removed from all subsequent editions.[[17]](#cite_note-17) Cthulhu was once again mentioned in the 5th edition of the *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook* (2014), after [Dagon](/wiki/Dagon_(Cthulhu_Mythos)), another of Lovecraft's fictional creations, featured prominently in the 4th edition of the game rules.

## Legacy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[thumb|poster from the](/wiki/File:20100701_cthulhu_poster.jpg) [2010 Polish presidential election](/wiki/Polish_presidential_election,_2010). The caption translates as "Choose the greater evil. Vote Cthulhu." [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

The Californian spider species [*Pimoa cthulhu*](/wiki/Pimoa_cthulhu), described by Gustavo Hormiga in 1994, is named with reference to Cthulhu.[[18]](#cite_note-18) Two microorganisms that assist in the digestion of wood by termites have been named after Cthulhu and Cthulhu's "daughter" Cthylla: [*Cthulhu macrofasciculumque*](/wiki/Cthulhu_macrofasciculumque) and [*Cthylla microfasciculumque*](/wiki/Cthylla_microfasciculumque), respectively.[[19]](#cite_note-19) In 2006 Bethesda Softworks together with Ubisoft and 2K Games made a game called [*Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*](/wiki/Call_of_Cthulhu:_Dark_Corners_of_the_Earth) based on the works of Lovecraft. Cthulhu himself does not appear, as the main antagonists of the game are the Deep Ones from [*The Shadow Over Innsmouth*](/wiki/The_Shadow_Over_Innsmouth), and the eponymous sea god [Dagon](/wiki/Dagon), but his presence is alluded to several times, and a statue depicting him appears in one of the temples that will negatively affect the player's sanity. One of Cthulhu's "chosen", a Star Spawn of Cthulhu, a hideous creature similar in appearance to the abomination himself, also appears as a late-game enemy.

In 2015, an elongated, dark region along the equator of [Pluto](/wiki/Pluto), initially referred to as "the Whale", was proposed to be named "[Cthulhu Regio](/wiki/Cthulhu_Regio)", after Lovecraft's fictional deity, by the NASA team responsible for the [*New Horizons*](/wiki/New_Horizons) mission.[[20]](#cite_note-20)

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## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

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## Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

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* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
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* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
  + "Idh-yaa", p. 148. Ibid.
  + "Star-spawn of Cthulhu", pp. 283 – 4. Ibid.
* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
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* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
* ["Other Lovecraftian Products"](http://www.hplovecraft.com/popcult/other.asp), *The H.P. Lovecraft Archive*

[Template:Refend](/wiki/Template:Refend)

## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:Commons category](/wiki/Template:Commons_category) [Template:Wikisource](/wiki/Template:Wikisource)

* [Cthulhu Lives, the Lovecraft Historical Society](http://www.cthulhulives.org/toc.html)
* [Template:Librivox book](/wiki/Template:Librivox_book)

[Template:Cthulhu Mythos](/wiki/Template:Cthulhu_Mythos) [Template:H. P. Lovecraft](/wiki/Template:H._P._Lovecraft)

[Category:Cthulhu Mythos deities](/wiki/Category:Cthulhu_Mythos_deities) [Category:Fictional characters introduced in 1928](/wiki/Category:Fictional_characters_introduced_in_1928) [Category:Fictional telepaths](/wiki/Category:Fictional_telepaths) [Category:Monsters](/wiki/Category:Monsters) [Category:Fictional demons and devils](/wiki/Category:Fictional_demons_and_devils) [Category:Literary villains](/wiki/Category:Literary_villains)

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