



GODZILLA



And the Politics Behind the Monster

By: Chiebuka Nnajofofor and Shravani Pamireddy

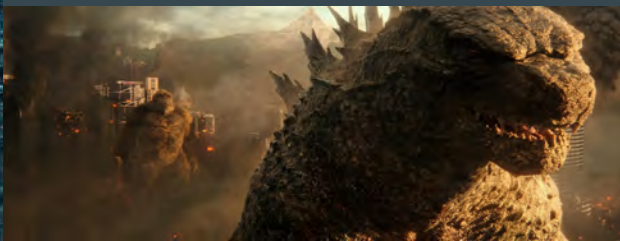


TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Title Slide
2. Table of Contents
3. Atomic Bombs Dropped in Japan
4. Radiation Impact on Hiroshima and Nagasaki Survivors
5. Showa Period
6. Kaiju Film
7. The Birth of Godzilla
8. Lucky Dragon 5
9. Politics of Godzilla (1954)
- 10.. Political Cartoon
11. Other Showa Period Film
12. King Kong Crossovers and Their Political Significance
13. Heisei Period Films
14. Millennium Era
15. Reiwa Era
16. The Body of Godzilla
17. Burns on Godzilla vs Bomb Survivors
18. The Theory on Godzilla's Body
19. Godzilla's Gender
20. Godzilla's Power and Abilities
21. What Does Godzilla Do?
22. Does Godzilla Use Reason
23. American Remakes
24. References
25. Authors Slide



In August of 1945 the first and only atomic bombs used in war were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki



ATOMIC BOMBS DROPPED IN JAPAN

70,000 people died instantly in Hiroshima



40,000 people died instantly in Nagasaki

The justification for the bombs being dropped was to end WWII and get Japan to surrender

RADIATION IMPACTS ON HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI SURVIVORS

Hundreds of thousands of civilians died instantly from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, while thousands of more people died from radiation exposure days and weeks later.



Survivors dealt with long-term effects from radiation exposure. Many lost their hair and developed scars and severe burns.

In the years that followed the bombings, many survivors suffered from the effects of radiation and developed cancers, leukemia, and other chronic diseases. The main cancers that developed in survivors included:

- ❖ Breast cancer
- ❖ Lung cancer
- ❖ Thyroid cancer

Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to have higher rates of cancer due to radiation even to this day



SHŌWA ERA (1912-1989)

This period refers to the reign of the emperor of Showa. During this period, Japan transformed from an absolute monarchy to a democratic system with a constitutional monarchy. Previous to this transition before the end of World War II, the emperor was seen as a demigod and all powerful.



Post World War II, Japan became a military state due to condemnation by the league of nations. However, once this status was removed, Japan entered a period of very significant economic growth.

The period continued through the Cold War.

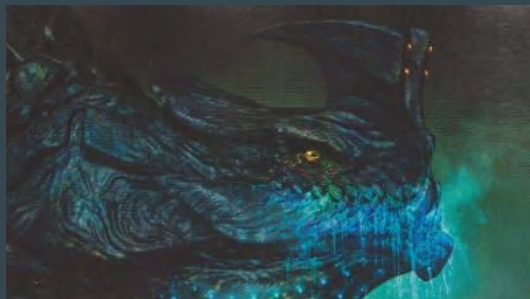
This genre of Japanese film focuses on giant monsters, but they also often serve as social commentary on issues surrounding Japan as well as the world.



However, the genre has gone on beyond Godzilla. There are Kaiju films still being made today and there has been hundreds of Kaiju films made since the first Godzilla movie in 1954.

KAIJU FILM

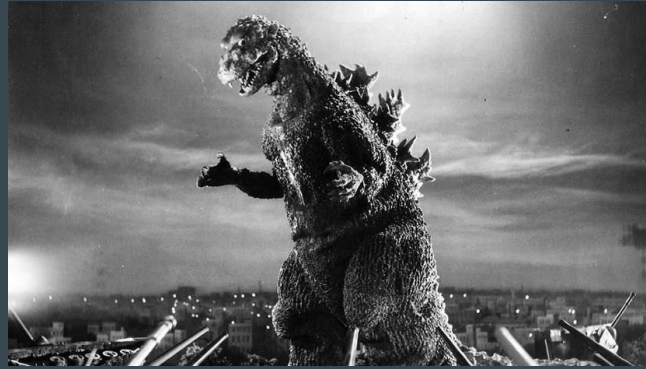
Godzilla (1954) is regarded as the start of Kaiju film. The monster creation as a result of hydrogen bomb testing and its plot of destroying cities serves as the foundation for other Kaiju films as well.



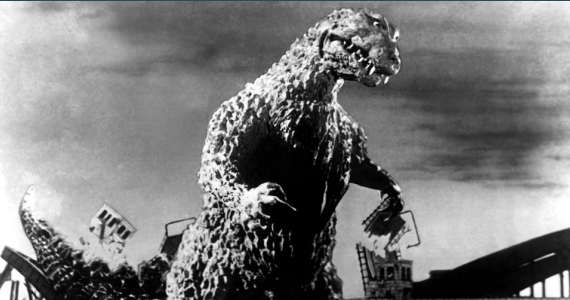
THE BIRTH OF GODZILLA (1954)



The first film of Godzilla was released in Japan in 1954 and was directed by Ishiro Honda.



Godzilla mutated to become more powerful due to a series of hydrogen bomb experiments conducted in the Pacific Ocean. To the Japanese, Godzilla was a way to express their fear of radiation and long term effects of nuclear weapon testing.



Godzilla is a sea monster that was awakened and powered by nuclear radiation. Godzilla has survived since the Jurassic Period and is over 252 million years old.



LUCKY DRAGON 5

The “Lucky Dragon 5” was another incident which is often stated to have inspired the creation of Godzilla.



The United States were conducting hydrogen bomb tests in Bikini Atoll.

The boat became contaminated from the nuclear fallout due to the tests and the men suffered from Acute Radiation Syndrome.



23 men served as the crew on a Japanese fishing boat.



Kuboyama was the only member of the crew to die but was considered to be the first victim of a hydrogen bomb.

POLITICS OF GODZILLA (1954) FILM



The first Godzilla movie was released in 1954, which is just 9 years after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and after World War 2. This was also during the anti-nuclear movement that opposes various nuclear technologies, deeming it as immoral and inhumane.

The summary of the movie is left with a short description that says, “fire-breathing behemoth terrorizes Japan after an atomic bomb awakens it from its centuries-old sleep.” This film is shot in black and white due to its time of release, and it also embodies the darkness and tragedy that Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors felt. This urgent and necessary film showcases chaos, destruction, emotional and mental scarring, and the regrets that Japan civilians felt after the bombings. The director wanted the destruction that Godzilla caused to resemble the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the bombings. This historical film was released during its time as a message to show the scary effects of nuclear weapons and how it impacts everyone.

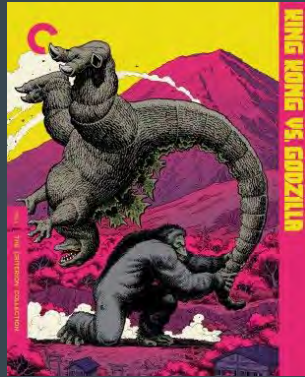




PICTURED: JAPANESE SCIENTISTS MEASURING LETHAL RADIATION LEVELS AT THE FUKUSHIMA DAIICHI NUCLEAR PLANT THIS WEEK.

In the earlier Shōwa period films, Godzilla is seen mostly as a one dimensional monster whose origin comes from the result of nuclear testing. However, as the period continues, Godzilla begins to fall into a gray area often presented as a hero. The films begin to deal with social issues beyond just nuclear poisoning.

Godzilla Raids Again - The Godzilla in this movie is also a result of the same hydrogen bomb tests as the first Godzilla.



King Kong vs Godzilla - This movie is the first of many King Kong and Godzilla crossover movies.

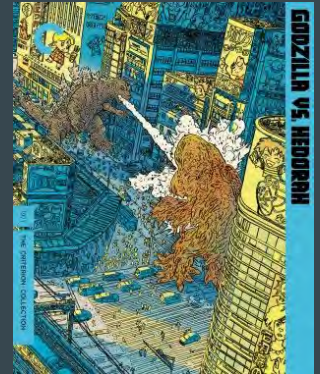
Son of Godzilla - Addresses issues regarding food shortages



All Monsters Attack - Regarded as one of the worst Godzilla movies, but in this movie Godzilla becomes friends with a young boy who is bullied. Shows Godzilla exhibiting more human characteristics.

OTHER SHŌWA PERIOD FILMS

Godzilla v. Hedorah - Hedorah is a monster created due to pollution. This speaks to environmental issues.



KING KONG CROSSOVER AND ITS POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE

King Kong makes various appearances throughout the Godzilla movies, specifically in crossovers. Kong represents the American colonialism and how it negatively affects the people in the countries being colonized.

The first King Kong vs Godzilla movie came out in 1962 at the height of the Cold War. This was a period following when Japan was not a sovereign state but was rather viewed as a military state. Japan gained the status of being an independent state in 1952. However, the years following the end of World War II until 1952, Japan was under military rule in a pseudo colonial state.

King Kong vs. Godzilla also serves as a distinction between modern Japan which is heavily influenced by the west and capitalism, versus the older Japan which was more traditional until the impact of the atomic bombs and nuclear technology.



HEISEI PERIOD GODZILLA FILMS 1984-1995

The ascension of emperor Akihito marked the transition to a new era of Godzilla films. The films in this era of Godzilla all take place in a single timeline and have continuity throughout the series.



These films continue the trend of providing social commentary on issues. For example, *Godzilla vs Biollante* serves as a commentary on genetic modification, as a new monster is created as a result of combining Godzilla, human, and a Rose's DNA.



The film *The Return of Godzilla* similarly to the first ever Godzilla movie deals with issues relating to nuclear weapons. In this movie the USSR and United States are heavy advocates for using nuclear weapons, and this relates back to the movie coming out during the Cold War time period.



Originally, the Millennium series was created because there was suppose to be 3 American Godzilla films, but due to the American film being considered a significant failure, Toho decided to bring back the series earlier.



MILLENNIUM ERA (1999-2004)

This series went back to the root of Godzilla. Godzilla in this series was seen again as more animalistic rather than humanistic. Also, Godzilla was redesigned to feature more animal like features such as dorsal fins. The body correlates with the lack of reason that Godzilla uses in this series. None of the millennium films have continuity rather they each present an individual story.



REIWA ERA (2016-PRESENT)

The Rewei era of Godzilla presents a significant shift from earlier eras in terms of the mode in which Godzilla is present. Traditionally, Godzilla films are not animated, but most of the productions in this era are.



In this era, Godzilla is once again presented as having humanistic characteristics later during the era but early on it is very animal like.



There was an agreement between Toho and Netflix to even make an anime series featuring Godzilla.



Godzilla: Planet of the Monster - the first animated Godzilla film

THE BODY OF GODZILLA

Godzilla is a gigantic, two-footed, deep sea monster with jagged dorsal fins and claws. Its body is similar to that of a dinosaur. Godzilla's body is a result of the use of nuclear weapons and hydrogen bomb experiments. The director of the first film, named Ishiro Honda, talked about the body of Godzilla and said, "I took the characteristics of an atomic bomb and applied them to Gojira." The skin texture of Godzilla is reportedly modeled to closely resemble keloid scars from the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing survivors. Godzilla spews from its mouth an atomic heat beam generated from its nuclear energy inside its body that causes total destruction to its surroundings.

Godzilla weighs over 90,000 tonnes. Godzilla also has a very tough exterior that is crocodile-like, embedded with osteoderms. The protruding osteoderms on its back and tail holds the excess heat that it produces.

Radiation from the mouth

The biological nuclear reactor and the mouth part are directly connected. When the hot flame converges into a beam shape, the lower jaw opens to the right and left, because the jaw skeleton and the muscles of the throat are linked to each other and converge by narrowing down the throat.

Internal body

Beyond being an organism, Godzilla's body is made of protein as us. However, it is not a known protein, it is a protein of high molecular structure with high heat resistance.

An organ that produces energy and body to actually make activities using heat generated in a biological nuclear reactor. There is a systemic circulation of a different strain from the cooling-self blood flow.

Skin and bones

Godzilla's hard skin and bones are made of ship-like elements such as carbon, etc., but in order to support a huge size, a new material with a well-known molecular structure was created in order to support a huge size. Due to its structure, it uses hardness and high radioactivity.

Blood flow

The biggest problem with Godzilla is how to cool the heat generated in a very high temperature biological nuclear reactor. As an image, it is doubtful what the blood itself is made of, but as in the image, a liquid (blood) with high boiling point, which is excellent in endothermic and heat dissipation surrounds the biological nuclear reactor with high pressure, as if the heart, the aorta, the capillary, the vena cava, the heart as it circulates, it seems to be that there is a blood circulation specialized in a cooling function that blood vessels gradually becoming thinner take down the temperature while going around the whole body and come back again.

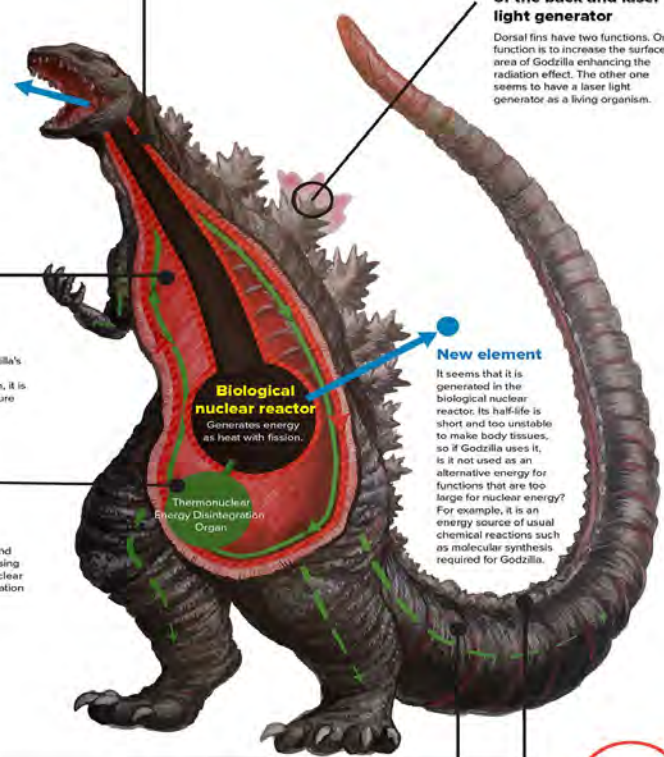
Heat dissipation effect of the back and laser light generator

Dorsal fins have two functions. One function is to increase the surface area of Godzilla enhancing the radiation effect. The other one seems to have a laser light generator as a living organism.

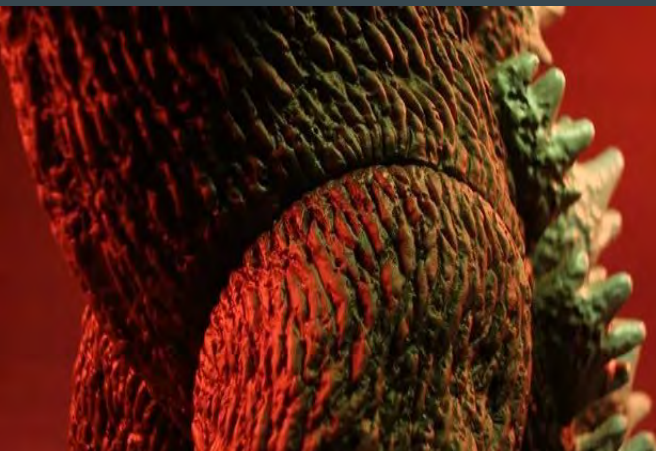
New element

It seems that it is generated in the biological nuclear reactor; its half-life is short and too unstable to make body tissues, so if Godzilla uses it, it is not used as an alternative energy for functions that are too large for nuclear energy?

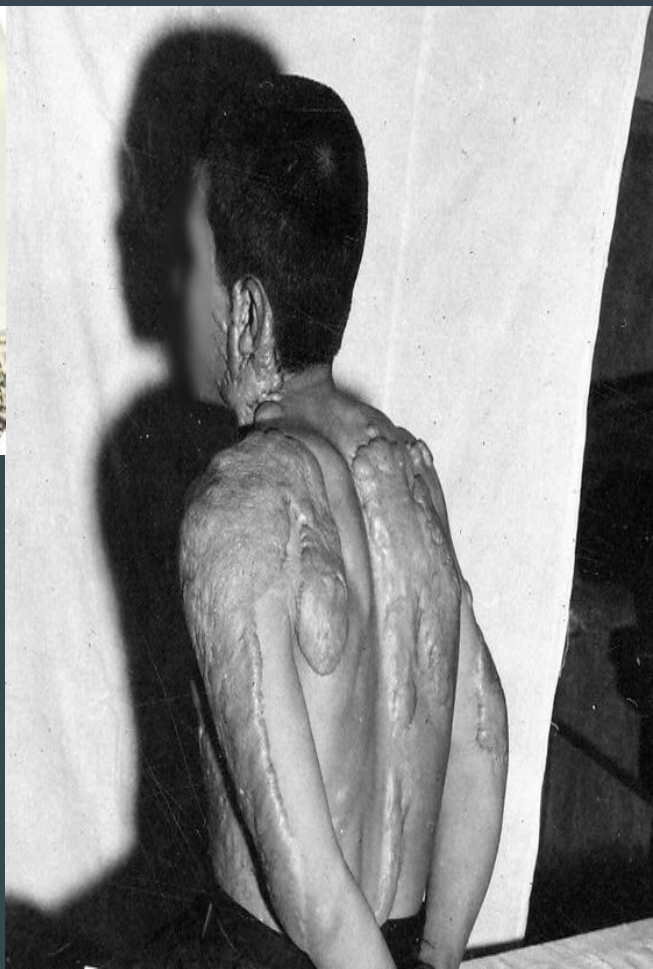
For example, it is an energy source of usual chemical reactions such as molecular synthesis required for Godzilla.



KELOID SCARS AND BURNS ON GODZILLA VS BOMB SURVIVORS



Notice the red marks coursing through Godzilla's skin due to its nuclear energy



THE THEORY OF GODZILLA'S BODY, ROAR, AND THE REASONS FOR ITS ACTIONS

In the *Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times* essay, it talks about the gaping mouth and how it ties into a monster-like quality. In the text, it says, “The rule of the most moderate possible lip-opening particularly proves its idealizing force in instances such as the expression of violent pain, where the represented object would be expected to have a wide-open mouth, as in a scream” (Menninghaus). In fact, Godzilla’s roar in the 2014 movie was one of the loudest things ever recorded. When Godzilla opens its mouth, it lets out an enormous roar that is disturbing. Godzilla’s roar sounds like nothing that’s ever been heard before and is very unique to it. Some say that the roar is a cry of pain from all the keloid scars on its body, specifically in the 1954 film. When Godzilla opens its mouth to roar, this creates a large crater in its face, thus deeming it as ugly and monstrous, as Menninghaus would say.

Godzilla does not have a proper body. In Menninghaus’s essay, he describes a proper body by saying, “Noninterruption is thus the main feature of beautiful ‘lines’—both singular lines and those of the entire body: ‘The form of true beauty has uninterrupted portions.’” Godzilla’s body is the exact opposite of this, with its large gaping mouth, sharp teeth, scars, and craters on its skin, its body is far from smooth.

Pertaining to the earlier Godzilla films, Godzilla often wreaks havoc and causes destruction in cities because humans charge at it first. It is believed that Godzilla fights humans because of what they did to its body with the hydrogen bomb experiments. Godzilla often gives into the body and acts on anger, but it most likely acts on anger because humans strike first or did something to upset it.

In the 1954 film, the only man-made weapon that could destroy Godzilla’s body and kill it was an oxygen destroyer. A scientist in the 1954 film discovered this and was afraid to use it because he was worried that the oxygen destroyer could be used against men. This represents a powerful message that another creation could turn into another terrifying weapon like the atomic bomb and other nuclear weapons. This is one of the films where Godzilla dies in its own movie.

Check out Godzilla’s Terrifying Roar in the 2014 film: https://youtu.be/IT_GHXBdHhs?t=17



GODZILLA'S GENDER

There has been a lot of controversy over whether Godzilla is a male, female, or hermaphroditic. The Japanese films refrained from using male pronouns, and instead referred to Godzilla with the gender-neutral pronoun “it.” Despite this evidence, English-language films always suggests that Godzilla is a male. In an article that talks about the complicated history of Godzilla’s gender, it says that Godzilla is probably considered a male “presumably because the idea of a massive, god-like creature that wreaks havoc on a city being anything other than masculine simply doesn’t compute” (Edwards). The co-creator of Godzilla, Tomoyuki Tanaka, talked about it in his book and suggested that the monster was probably a male as well. In the *Godzilla (1998)* film and in the Legendary Godzilla films, it is also referred to as a male. Godzilla’s gender differs by culture, but it is more so believed to be a male.



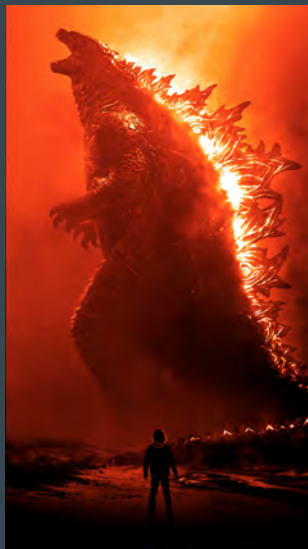
GODZILLA'S POWERS AND ABILITIES

The weapon that Godzilla is known for is its atomic breath. The color of the atomic breath corresponds to its dorsal plates. In some films, the color is neon blue and in other films it red.

Godzilla's power has some variations depending on the movie. For example, in *Godzilla: Final Wars (2004)*, the red spiral atomic breath had an incredible range, power, and accuracy. It could even hit targets in outer space and instantly kill things. But in *Godzilla vs Megaguirus (2000)*, Godzilla's orange atomic ray (holds same power as its blue rays) was known to cause fires and could destroy an artificial miniature black hole (a black hole is a region of spacetime that exhibits gravitational acceleration that is very strong. No particles or electromagnetic radiation can escape from it. In the movie, this could absorb light and destroy the earth).



Godzilla can also emit energy from every part of its body in a short-range pulse known as the nuclear pulse. This is used throughout the Heisei Godzilla films. To the right is an image of Godzilla about to use its nuclear pulse in *Godzilla: King of the Monsters (2019)*.



Godzilla is known to be very strong. The creature has lifted and thrown other monsters that are bigger than itself. It also uses martial arts techniques and uses its long tail as a weapon. Godzilla has used its tail to aid in its attacks on enemies and to knock over buildings. Godzilla once used its dorsal fins to cut off Megaguirus' claw in *Godzilla vs Megaguirus (2000)*.



Godzilla has an amazing ability to resist injury and highly efficient regenerative energy as seen in many films.

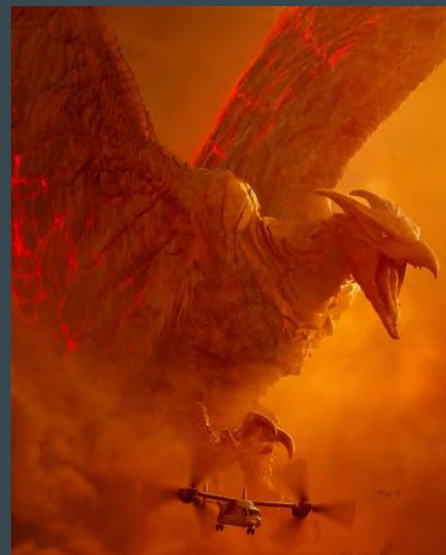
WHAT DOES GODZILLA DO?

Godzilla's motivations and functions vary from film to film depending on the plot.



For example, in the *Godzilla (1954)* film, Godzilla was a destroyer. In this film, Godzilla's underwater habitat was completely destroyed from a hydrogen bomb test that ended up killing its entire family. This left Godzilla with burns and scars, hence the keloid scars on its body. Because of this, Godzilla was enraged and wreaked havoc on the citizens of Tokyo. It destroyed boats and obliterated the city. So in this film, Godzilla functioned against humanity.

However, in *Godzilla: King of the Monsters (2019)*, Godzilla's focus was not on the destruction of humanity. Although humans may die from destruction as a result of Godzilla's fights with other monsters, Godzilla's target was not to hurt humans. In this movie, Godzilla fights against god-sized monsters that include Mothra, Rodan, and its ultimate enemy, King Ghidorah. These three monsters want supremacy and put humans in danger. Monsters that threaten humanity also threaten Godzilla, so Godzilla kills its enemies to assert its dominance over everyone and keep its title as "King of the Monsters."



DOES GODZILLA USE REASON?

In the first few Godzilla movies, Godzilla is presented as very animalistic. It lacks self-awareness and is intelligent but only in the animal sense. It uses reason to get what it wants but does not exhibit any human characteristics. However, in later movies it is shown to have some level of compassion as well. It gets upset when Godzilla Jr. dies and expresses rage.

However, in the post Heisei period Godzilla films, it is shown to once again only be animalistic in nature and it's human attributes are not expressed. It does use reason but in a very crude manner not expressing much intelligence or care for others.





AMERICAN REMAKES

The American remakes of the Godzilla film's try to clear America of many of the negative attributes they are presented with in the movies. For example, they often neglect to mention that Godzilla was initially created in response to the nuclear bombs being dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.



For example, in the remake of the original Godzilla film for American audiences, the film ends on a note of hope whereas for the original it warns of the future Godzillas as a result of nuclear technology and it's side effects. This led to Godzilla often being perceived in America as simply a monster and the political significance behind it being lost to the American audience.



REFERENCES

- The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters
- Godzilla Movies between the 1950s to present day (2021)
- Disgusting Zones and Disgusting Times by Menninghaus
- Lee, Nathaniel. “The True Story You Probably Don't Know behind 'Godzilla' Came from the Devastation after Hiroshima and Nagasaki Bombings.” *Business Insider*, Business Insider, 3 June 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/godzilla-wwii-japan-nuclear-bombs-monster-kaiju-fishing-boat-2019-6>.
- Venton, Danielle. “The Impossible Anatomy of Godzilla.” *Popular Mechanics*, Popular Mechanics, 29 May 2019, <https://www.popularmechanics.com/culture/movies/a10476/the-impossible-anatomy-of-godzilla-16785535/>.
- Raymond, Nicholas. “What Godzilla Really Thinks about Humans.” *ScreenRant*, Valnet Inc., 9 July 2020, <https://screenrant.com/godzilla-humans-bullies-environment-toho-monsterverse/>.
- Sanchez, Gabriel H. “24 Disturbing Pictures from the Aftermath of Nuclear Warfare.” *BuzzFeed News*, BuzzFeed News, 9 Aug. 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/gabrielsanchez/the-devastating-and-apocalyptic-aftermath-of-a-nuclear>.
- “Inside Shin Godzilla.” MyKaiju®, 1 May 2017, <https://mykaiju.com/inside-shin-godzilla/>.
- “Powers and Abilities of Godzilla.” *Ultimate Pop Culture Wiki*, https://ultimatepopculture.fandom.com/wiki/Powers_and_abilities_of_Godzilla.
- Edwards, Chris. “The Complicated History of Godzilla's Gender.” *Little White Lies*, CineWipe, 29 May 2019, <https://lwlies.com/articles/complicated-history-of-godzilla-sex/>.
- “Godzilla (1954).” *Gojipedia*, [https://godzilla.fandom.com/wiki/Godzilla_\(1954\)](https://godzilla.fandom.com/wiki/Godzilla_(1954)).
- Normile, Dennis. “How Atomic Bomb Survivors Have Transformed Our Understanding of Radiation Impact.” *Aftermath*, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 23 July 2020, <https://www.science.org/content/article/how-atomic-bomb-survivors-have-transformed-our-understanding-radiation-s-impacts>.
- *Godzilla: The showa-era films, 1954–1975*. The Criterion Collection. (n.d.). Retrieved October 28, 2021, from <https://www.criterion.com/boxsets/2648-godzilla-the-showa-era-films-1954-1975>.
- Kuchera, B. (2016, December 6). *Watch a detailed explanation of how America ruined godzilla*. Polygon. Retrieved October 28, 2021, from <https://www.polygon.com/2016/12/6/13856652/godzilla-japan-america-gojira>.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Hello! My name is Chiebuka Nnajofo for but I also go by Chichi. I am currently a Junior here at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. I am a Public Health major with a minor in Psychology and I will be graduating in May 2023. My goal for the future is to become an Occupational Therapist with a specialization in geriatrics. Some of my hobbies include songwriting, playing guitar and piano, reading science fiction dystopian novels, singing, playing tennis, and watching movies!



Hi! My name is Shravani Pamireddy. I am currently a Junior at Rutgers University - New Brunswick. I am a Business Analytics and Information Technology major and I will be graduating in May of 2023. I hope to work in data science when I graduate. In my free time I enjoy watching football, hiking, watching movies, and playing soccer.

