

Monster Mash

by Maggie Reagan

YA fantasy is blossoming: lately, we've been seeing stories that draw from a widening variety of mythologies and cultures and stories that breathe new life into old tropes (because nothing is ever over). If you're anything like me, this means you've sometimes looked at a couple of completely unrelated books and thought, "Huh, I wonder what would happen if these guys met up."

And here you have it: a few poor, unsuspecting characters from YA fantasy, stuck together and forced to do battle. Some of them are heroes, some are villains, some are something in between, and I paid absolutely no attention at all to time period or location because where's the fun in that? Please let us know if you think any of these outcomes are incorrect (or if you have any other pairs you'd like to see face off)—we'd be happy to duke it out with you, too.

Werewolf vs. Gumiho

WEREWOLF: *Shiver*. By Maggie Stiefvater. 2009. Scholastic, \$17.99 (9780545123266). Gr. 9–12.

Strength: The pack
Weakness: The cold

GUMIHO: *Wicked Fox*. By Kat Cho. 2019. Putnam, \$18.99 (9781984812346). Gr. 8–11.

Strength: Human energy
Weakness: Her soul

The Face-Off: In one corner, we have a werewolf: unlike the traditional werewolf, Sam is human when the weather is warmer, but becomes a wolf when the temperature drops. In the other, we have Miyoung, who is half gumiho, a nine-tailed, mythical Korean fox, and half human. Both fight for their humanity: Sam literally resists his transformation, while Miyoung, who survives by consuming the energy of men, faces higher stakes when the fox bead that contains her soul is lost. With quite a lot of ways on the page to hone her strength—not to mention her murderous method of survival—sorry Sam, but the fox has this one.

WINNER: **GUMIHO**

Dragon vs. Sea Monster

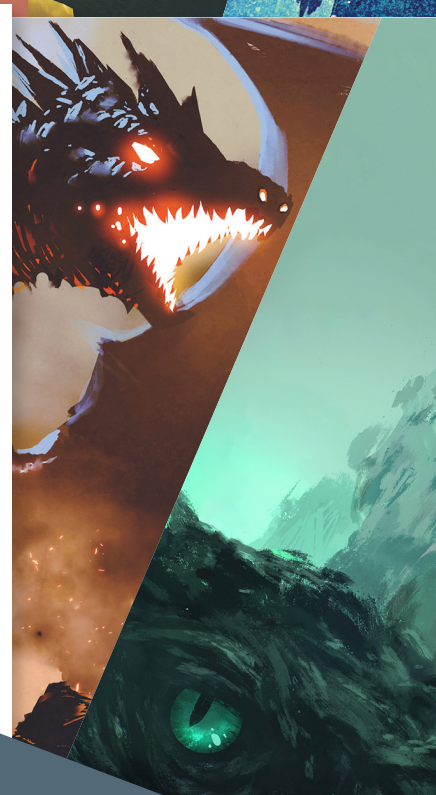
DRAGON: *Talon*. By Julie Kagawa. 2014. HarlequinTeen, \$17.99 (9780373211395). Gr. 8–11.

Strength: Camouflage
Weakness: Inflexibility

SEA MONSTER: *The Abyss Surrounds Us*. By Emily Skrutskie. 2016. Flux, \$11.99 (9780738746913). Gr. 9–12.

Strength: Genetic modifications
Weakness: Bond with humans

The Face-Off: After being hunted almost to extinction, dragons had to adapt. They learned to hide in human form and have infiltrated human society, keeping themselves and their secret in line with strict governances through the Talon organization. The sea monsters, on the other hand, are way too big to be a secret—they pop up post-apocalypse, having been genetically modified by humans who are hunting pirates. What's going to beat a giant sea monster? Maybe a dragon, but definitely not a dragon disguised as a human.

WINNER: **SEA MONSTER**

Dark Faerie vs. Witch

FAERIE: *The Cruel Prince*. By Holly Black. 2018. Little, Brown, \$18.99 (9780316310277). Gr. 9–12.

Strength: Illusions
Weakness: Lying

WITCH: *The Bone Witch*. By Rin Chupeco. 2017. Sourcebooks/Fire, \$17.99 (9781492635826). Gr. 9–12.

Strength: Necromancy
Weakness: Ostracization

The Face-Off: Cardan, the titular faerie prince and antagonist of Black's trilogy opener seems, at first glance, to be worlds away from Tea Chupeco's corpse-raising teen witch: he's at the center of his court; she's an outcast. Cardan, like all faeries, can't lie, but uses illusions to his deadly advantage; Tea's an outcast because of her dark death magic, which allows her to control an army of monsters. All right, so Cardan may have more allies at the outset, but . . . did you get that part about the army of monsters?

WINNER: **WITCH**

Vampire vs. Vampire

FORKS VAMPIRES: *Twilight*. By Stephenie Meyer. 2005. Little, Brown/Megan Tingley, \$17.99 (9780316160179). Gr. 9–12.

Strength: Extreme beauty
Weakness: Other vampires

NEW ORLEANS VAMPIRES: *The Beautiful*. By Renée Ahdieh. Oct. 2019. Putnam, \$16.99 (9781524738174). Gr. 9–12.

Strength: Inhuman speed and strength
Weakness: Silver; the sun

The Face-Off: You just can't keep a good vampire down. Almost 15 years since Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* sent the world into a frenzy, these bad boys hath risen again—and with the upcoming release of Renée Ahdieh's *The Beautiful*, YA seems poised to enter the era of the vampire once more. It only seemed fair to pit them against each other.

Everyone remembers the Cullens & Co. (justly or not) for their sparkle, but they were surprisingly indestructible, with none of the usual vampire weaknesses—pretty much the only thing that can take down these guys are other supernatural creatures, and even that requires some effort. Ahdieh's nineteenth-century New Orleans vampires are more traditional, but there's one other major difference between the two: the Cullens wanted to blend in. Ahdieh's vampires are ready to kill.

WINNER: **NEW ORLEANS VAMPIRES**

Evil Queen vs. Ghost

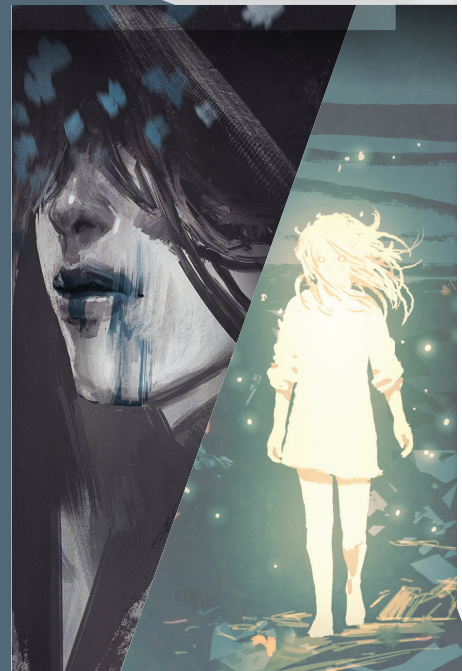
THE EVIL QUEEN: *Forest of a Thousand Lanterns*. By Julie C. Dao. 2017. Philomel, \$18.99 (9781524738297). Gr. 9–12.

Strength: Blood magic
Weakness: Love

GHOST: *Anna Dressed in Blood*. By Kendare Blake. 2011. Tor, \$17.99 (9780765328656). Gr. 8–12.

Strength: Violent rage
Weakness: Athame

The Face-Off: All hail the antiheroine. In an Asian-inspired origin story for *Snow White*'s evil queen, Xifeng embraces the prophecy that says she will be Empress of all Feng Lu despite her meager upbringing. All she has to do is embrace the evil blood magic inside her—and betray her true love. Meanwhile, in the present day, the titular Anna, the ghost of a murdered teen, promptly disembowels a boy in her first appearance, but a ghost hunter with a magical knife draws her interest. They're both worthy opponents, but Xifeng has destiny on her side, and who can fight that?

WINNER: **THE EVIL QUEEN**

Zombie vs. Alien

ZOMBIE: *Dread Nation*. By Justina Ireland. 2018. HarperCollins/Balzer+Bray, \$17.99 (9780062570604). Gr. 9–12.

Strength: Endurance
Weakness: Central nervous system

ALIEN: *The 5th Wave*. By Rick Yancey. 2013. Putnam, \$18.99 (9780399162411). Gr. 9–12.

Strength: Mobilization
Weakness: Single combat

The Face-Off: Bring on the apocalypses (apocalypsi?). In Ireland's alternate history, the dead rise after the Civil War, ready to feast on the living. In Yancey's alien-invasion tril-

ogy starter, the aliens bring the apocalypse, unleashing an increasingly devastating series of disasters upon humanity from orbit. At first glance, this one may seem like a no-brainer (sorry); these aliens are a highly intelligent, highly weaponized fighting force prepared to take over the planet, and the zombies are, well, zombies. But at the end of the day, these aliens just aren't properly equipped for this fight. They want to wipe out machines? Zombies don't use them! They unleash a plague? Zombies are already dead! Psychologically manipulating them into turning on each other? Yeah, okay. These aliens don't set foot on the planet itself, which makes this is a siege situation, and the undead will outlast them till the end.

WINNER: **ZOMBIE**