

*“Two girls
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Goths”*

What image comes to mind

when you think of the word ‘Goth’? Do you think of someone draped head-to-toe in black, with ghostly pale skin, heavy black eyeliner, meaningful tattoos and painful-looking piercings? Or maybe you conjure up a darker picture of devil worship and other sinister goings on?

In 2007, 20-year-old Sophie Lancaster was kicked and stamped to death just for being a Goth. At the time, she was trying to protect her boyfriend from a severe beating, but her valiant efforts left her in a coma from which she never regained consciousness. The couple, from Rossendale in Lancashire, had posed for pictures with their attackers just minutes earlier. Two teenagers were found guilty of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. Three other lads also received prison sentences.

When you hear stories like that, it’s no surprise to know that there’s an awful lot of confusion about what it actually means to be a Goth – and a major intolerance from a twisted minority towards anyone daring to be different.

GOING GOTH

Being a Goth means something different to everyone. For some it’s about expressing their individuality. They hate being told what to wear by glossy fashion magazines and won’t go within 10 miles of a designer label. When we’re trapped in identical school uniforms for most of our teenage years this choice certainly has some appeal.

Others say that being a Goth is about rebelling. It’s about being anti-mainstream and sticking two fingers up to authority. It’s a resistance to the idea that everyone has to live by ‘rules’.

Then there are those Goths who say they like to feel things deeply and analyse their emotions. They claim to be non-violent pacifists. They take the things that the rest of society label as ugly, gruesome or wrong and make them beautiful and artistic.

The Goth label was first used by the manager of Joy Division when he described his band as ‘gothic’.

What about all the stereotypes we hear of?: Goths harm themselves; Goths practice witchcraft; Goths spend their evenings mooching around graveyards. No!

Goths aren’t much different to the rest of us. They just choose to look at life from a different angle.

Goths enjoy reading, going to the cinema and listening to music just the same as everyone else. Ok, so they’re more likely to listen to The Cure and Mozart than McFly and Rihanna, but wouldn’t the world be a dull place if we all liked the same stuff?

Research

proves that Goths are more likely to get jobs as doctors, architects or social workers than become social drop-outs.

HORROR STORIES

So, what’s it actually like to be a Goth? I decided to hit the streets of Dublin to find out. It wasn’t long before I stumbled across two groups of teen Goths near Grafton Street, and they certainly had a few horror stories to share.

One group told me how they were chased away from St Stephen’s Green by two knife-wielding men.

Another lad had been stabbed by a stranger simply because he was wearing black clothes. Two girls described how

they’d been spat on because of the way they were dressed. And then there were the name-calling incidents and insults they all

had to endure on a regular basis.

Doesn’t sound too great, does it? But what was so evident about both groups were the strong friendships, built on trust and understanding. Being Goths had brought them together and united them in a common belief.

So, if there’s one thing I’d like readers to take away with them, it’s that we should all keep an open mind towards one another. If you’re not a Goth, respect that Goths may prefer to wear black clothing, watch horror movies and do their own thing. If you are a Goth, respect other people’s right to wear more colourful, conventional clothes and their desire to fit in with the mainstream.

We need a little diversity in our world. We also need to learn to appreciate each other’s differences.

The Goth sub-culture emerged as part of the punk rock scene. When punk faded out, the Goths kept going strong.

DARK thoughts
– inside the mind of a **GOTH**

Why do some teens become Goths? And why do others pour scorn on their choice of lifestyle? **Holly Mack** investigates.