

Josh Newton

Dr. Ivanova

23isp275

9 January 2024

### Monster Project Essay: Norurun, The Train Conductor

When first presented with the topic of creating my own monster that could be used to describe occurrences in my life, I was not entirely sure what monster I wanted to create. I kept this prompt in the back of my mind as I have lived in Tokyo for the past four months, and I was finally able to create one. This monster that I have created is a Tanuki-like creature, based on the trickster Tanuki that we learned about in class, with the appearance of Norurun, a popular animated character used on the Tokyo subway lines. Reason being, every morning I have to pass through a train crossing for the Meguro line to arrive at my first train station in my commute, but I am always stopped in my tracks by the trains on the Meguro line. This occurrence is especially annoying because the train that comes from the Ōokayama Station takes a particularly long time to pass, which sometimes results in me waiting for two, three, or even five separate trains to pass by from both Ōokayama and Okusawa Stations before I can walk to the Midorigaoka Train Station for my school commute. As a result, I have to rush to class, and I am sometimes made late because of the train crossing. This occurrence coupled with the fact that my commute takes about an hour and a half to complete, makes going to school quite the annoying experience in the mornings. So, I would like my created monster to be: Norurun, The Train Conductor, who lives disguised as the Norurun plushie in Midorigaoka Station.

I think that the trickster version of the Tanuki that we studied in class is a perfect creature from Japanese literature to pull inspiration from for Norurun. Tanuki were known for manipulating both their physical appearance and the appearance of objects around them in order to trick humans. So, Norurun uses its trickster abilities to disguise itself as the cute plushie at the Midorigaoka station, and causes the trains to pass by on the tracks just in time to make me late. Additionally, Norurun has a tendency to make more trains appear back to back if I attempt to outwit it by leaving my dorm earlier in the morning. In this way, Norurun's trickster tendencies are similar to those of the Tanuki: harmless and for the Tanuki's amusement. However, there is one key difference between Norurun and the Tanuki we studied: while the Tanuki conjure "deceptive visions," as discussed in the Konjaku questions and additional materials from the October 13th meeting of this class, Norurun's manipulation of the trains is not an illusion but a real occurrence. Hence, the Norurun creature I created pulls inspiration from Tanuki, but it is most certainly not a one-to-one derivative of the literary creature. Finally, I think that Norurun likes playing games, because sometimes he will have the trains cross in front of me, but give me just enough time to get through the crossing without waiting if I run through it. If I do in fact choose to run and beat the trains, Norurun always uses his Plan B: he makes my train that I need to catch extremely late. As a result, the other people that did not run and waited for the train are able to board the exact same train as me, making me regret wasting the effort of running through the train crossing.

When comparing Norurun to the Monster Theses we discussed in class, I think he fits quite well into the description of the Seventh Thesis: "The monster stands at the

threshold of becoming.” The reasoning for this comparison is that the Seventh Thesis discusses monsters being the children of people, and being born from their minds. Norurun is exactly that. I created Norurun out of annoyance for the train crossing near my dorm, because something has to be controlling the trains for them to cross as I’m trying to go to class every day, right? As a result, Norurun is a great example of the Seventh Thesis.

In conclusion, Norurun is a Tanuki-like creature that manipulates the train lines near my dorm to make me late to class. I think that this creature is not inherently evil, but rather playful and annoying because his train game that he likes to play with me. Perhaps one day I will be able to find a way to win Norurun’s train game on the way to school, but until then he is a monster that meddles with my school commute every day, just like a Tanuki from our class studies.