

## New Who: The Eleventh Hour

In 2005, 43-year-old sci-fi show *Doctor Who* returned from its nearly 15 year hiatus. With it came a new cast of characters and a new generation of fans. First there was the Ninth Doctor (portrayed by Christopher Eccleston), who then regenerated into Ten (David Tennant); and then there was the Doctor who had quickly become the fan favorite: the Eleventh Doctor, played by Matt Smith. But what about Eleven's arc has allowed it to become the favorite of so many people? Perhaps it could be the exceptional writing, with its flawless continuation, or maybe it was the relatable protagonists or the uniquely creepy antagonists.

The Eleventh Doctor's era has some of the best written stories of the entire series. Based on various reviews, including one from *The Nerdist's* Amy Ratcliffe, "The Day of the Doctor" was the best of them all. Ratcliffe proclaims "Though 'The Day of the Doctor' had a couple of hiccups, the episode was powerful and presented a rare opportunity to see different Doctors side by side. It was nothing short of delightful to watch Smith interact with Tennant and Hurt—so much so that I want to see a spinoff featuring the trio having adventures." The act of writing the story so the Doctor could meet his previous selves and eventually fix one of his biggest regrets without completely undoing previous stories takes incredible skill and pre-planning. Moffat and Gatiss could have easily dismissed events from other episodes to make this feat possible, creating erroneous plot holes that fans would surely swarm over like angry flies. Despite some minor holes, they were successful in putting together pieces and the episode turned out to be amazing, especially with the return of David Tennant and Billie Piper's characters and the small reveal of the upcoming Twelfth Doctor.

Along the way, writers turned untouched stones from previous eras and episodes. Exhibit A is one of my favorite episodes, "The Big Bang." This episode revisits multiple events and

scenes from earlier episodes in the series. The first scene in the episode mimics the start of Eleven's first episode where he first meets Amy Pond. As the Doctor rewinds through his life, he sees events reminiscent of "The Lodger," in a meanwhile-this-is-happening sort of perspective. Even his conversation with Amy in "Flesh and Stone" makes an appearance.

Every character in the storyline of the Eleventh Doctor is complex and relatable. According to James Parker in his article, "The Doctor Is In," "Smith's might be the best Doctor yet. One minute brooding like Sherlock Holmes, the next as compact and exclamatory as Willy Wonka, with all of time and space his Chocolate Factory" (70). The Doctor masks the pain of his dramatic past beneath his lovably quirky personality but, when the time comes, the Doctor can be a very serious, even frightening man. Kyle Anderson reiterates this point when he says in his article, "For Newbies: The Eleventh Doctor," that "there is a real darkness within the Eleventh Doctor, something his previous incarnation only briefly dealt with, and he is prone to moments of real menace, though they are quickly ebbed." Out of all the Doctor's regenerations, Eleven is a favorite because of his levels of complexity. Amelia Pond is Eleven's first companion. She is a girl with fiery red hair and a matching personality who comes to know the Doctor as her best friend. Rory Williams is Amy's husband, a nurse and the Last Centurion, who is reluctant to engage on other worldly adventures with the Doctor but does because of his loyalty to his wife. River Song, also known as Melody Pond, is the Doctor's cunning wife who is Amy and Rory's daughter and part Time Lord. River is never far away and always gets the Doctor out of sticky situations. She is the epitome of a strong female character and has a prime spot on many fans' lists of favorite characters. Last, though certainly not least, is the Eleventh Doctor's last companion: Clara Oswin Oswald. Clara is a headstrong young woman who always seems to be everywhere and when the Doctor is, even during adventures with previous companions. She

agrees to go on adventures with the Doctor and, through a series of events, writers reveal that she is the ultimate companion: she was born to save the Doctor.

On the opposing side, there are the antagonists: the Doctor's greatest foes. These characters are always unique and frightening. First there are the Weeping Angels: villains that have given all New Who fans an irrational fear of statues. These "angels" are statue-like aliens, which look like angels but can come in the form of any statue out there, including the Statue of Liberty. When you look at them, the Angels are completely motionless; however, with each blink, they move closer. Eventually, if you can't keep your eyes open long enough to escape their line of sight, they will touch you, sending you to an entirely different time period or dimension. Jef Rouner, in his article "The 5 Best Doctor Who Monsters," says it all when he states "every Whovian flinches at statues now, and that's proof of a good monster." However, with levels of frightening the Angels come in second to the Silents—that's S-I-L-E-N-T-S, not S-I-L-E-N-C-E. These well-dressed alien creatures have a face that is the stuff of nightmares, and you can only remember them when you see them. In his article, Jef Rouner says, "Their abilities to make people forget their existence, as well as an almost stereotypical alien look, create that perfect combination of laughable and unnerving that makes the Daleks so effective." The most terrifying monsters of the entirety of Eleven's era, however, are the Peg Dolls. These childhood toys are not only dreadful looking, but the Doctor encounters them when he is shrunken down to their size, giving them a fair match. They follow him around, with their straw-like hair and soulless black eyes, chanting an eerie song akin to a child's nursery rhyme: *Tick Tock goes the clock, even for the doctor*. This is already creepy enough—all children's songs are when put into a horror setting—but it only gets worse as unwillingly shown by Amy and Rory. When they catch you, you turn into one of them.

Many things make for a good reboot. To name a few, people love continuity; they love new, interesting personalities and stories to absorb into the existing canon; and they love unique challenges and antagonists that leave everyone on the edge of their seat. These factors and many more helped push Doctor Who back into the mainstream after its lengthy break and they are part of why the Eleventh Doctor and his story have become and remained a favorite among Doctor Who fans, new and old, worldwide.

## Works Cited

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