**HORROR**

**CREATIVE WRITING BOOKLET**



**YR 9**

**HORROR CREATIVE WRITING**

The story you write will contain some element of the supernatural – either using the genre of the GHOST STORY or the genre of the HORROR STORY. These types of story contain very definite differences.

**GHOST STORY**

A faint tapping on the window woke Ben from his uneasy sleep. As he tried to adjust to the darkness he was aware of an icy chill in the room and the sound of someone else breathing…

* The purpose of a ghost story, as well as to entertain, is to create fear, often only through suggestion.
* There is usually a reason for the ghost’s visit, often because they feel that they have some kind of unfinished business.
* In a ghost story, the protagonist often helps the ghost to complete this business and move on.

Setting:

Can be isolated, mysterious, frightening, unusual, threatening, e.g. castles, old houses, dark woods, etc are all very popular

Characters:

The ghost – frightening, mysterious, troubled. The protagonist(s) – frightened, innocent, brave

Plot:

Usually builds to a climax. Often an unusual, unexpected twist at the end. Ghost usually allowed to rest in peace

Word Choice:

Deliberately chosen to heighten suspense and fear. Use of figurative language (imagery) and sound words (alliteration and onomatopoeia)

**HORROR STORY**

Ben screamed and screamed. They had left him there to die, entombed in the cave now that they had sealed the entrance. When his screaming subsided and the echo vanished, Ben heard another sound. A low moaning sound which seemed to be coming closer…

* The purpose of a horror story, as well as to entertain, is to create terror, usually through more blatant methods than the ghost story. Often horror stories contain some kind of monster (such as vampires, werewolves, etc) whose only purpose is to prey on the human characters.
* The protagonist often is the one who rids the world of the threat of this monster, or becomes a victim trying.

Setting:

Often an isolated or scary location where there is little chance of escape, or a normal location which has become very menacing and threatening to the occupants

Characters:

Often the sense that character is an innocent victim threatened by a more powerful force. The adversary is often supernatural and evil. Protagonist often finds bravery and hidden strengths

Plot:

The victim struggles against incredible odds to free him/herself from an unpleasant fate. Sometimes this struggle is successful, sometimes not. There is a build up of tension. There is a strong climax, and possibly a cliffhanger ending

Word Choice:

Words are chosen to intensify fear and horror. Words are chosen to build up the suspense. Alliteration and onomatopoeia, as well as lots of imagery, build up the atmosphere

THE FIVE MAIN ELEMENTS OF SETTING

* The setting of a short story usually comes at the beginning of a story, and lets the reader know where and when the story is taking place.
* The setting helps the reader to imagine what the place is like.
* It is a picture in words and is the backdrop against which the action takes place.
* It is very important to ensure that you create a believable and effective setting for your story.

To create a setting for your reader you need to describe:

* What the place looks like. You should choose your words carefully, giving as much description as you can.
* If the place is light, dark, or has certain colours. Often a dark setting at night is used in these type of stories. However a bright, sunlit day could work well since it is an unexpected setting. You could also use colour as a warning to your reader. For example, each time the ghost, monster appears the room takes on a red glow.)
* What the weather is like. Traditionally, storms and rain work well in ghost stories, as do snow, fog etc.
* What sounds there are. Depending on the weather, this could be wind howling, thunder crashing, etc.
* Any other impression made on the senses. The use of strange aromas works well; the feel of the walls, the dampness of the fog on the skin etc; unusual tastes, such as strong perfume which catches in the throat.

**EXTRACTS**

The following extracts are all opening paragraphs from published short stories. They are all take a very different approach to the genre, yet each is effective in its own way. In your own writing you should ensure that you begin in a way which draws the reader in; tell your audience just enough to get them interested and then tell your tale, gradually revealing your story.

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was – but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit.

*The Fall of the House of Usher* by EDGAR ALLEN POE

It all began when Grey was followed home, inexplicably enough, by the strange, famished yellow cat. The cat was thin with large, intense eyes which gleamed amber in the forlorn light of the lamp on the street corner. It was standing there as Grey passed, whistling dejectedly, for he had had a depressing run of luck at Grannie’s tables, and it made a slight piteous noise as it looked up at him. Then it followed at his heels, creeping along as though it expected to be kicked unceremoniously out of the way.

# The Yellow Cat by MICHAEL JOSEPH

“I’d not go higher, sir,” said my landlady’s father.

I made out his warning through the shrill piping of the wind, and stopped and took in the plunging seascape from where I stood. The boom of the waves came up from a vast distance beneath; sky and the horizon of running water seemed hurrying upon us over the lip of the rearing cliff.

*Dark Dignum* by BERNARD CAPES

Even before I knew more about that piece of furniture I wouldn’t have wanted it in my house. For a valuable antique, it wasn’t particularly attractive. With that tall stack of dark mahogany drawers, and those long spindly bowed legs, it looked not only heavy but top-heavy. The carved bonnet-top of the highboy was too elaborate for my taste, and the surface had been polished till it glistened a deep blackish brown, exactly the colour of canned prunes.

*The Highboy* by ALISON LURIE

He had stalked the demon to her lair. Now, he waited. Waited for dawn, when she would be most vulnerable. The waiting was the worst part. Knowing what was to come. The legends, he’d learned, were not to be trusted. The legends were wrong in so many ways.

*The Stake* by RICHARD LAYMON

**DESCRIPTIONS OF SETTINGS**

Read this description of a haunted house in London.

PORTMAN SQUARE, LONDON, 1911

It was an old house which stood on the corner of the street. The corridors were very long and not very well lit. The sun didn’t shine in the windows , and so the house didn’t have a good view.

At night, the house grew very dark. As well as being difficult to light, the house was always very cold.

Not very interesting, is it? However, using the elements for settings, we can change it to something much better.

PORTMAN SQUARE, LONDON, 1911

It was a strange and rambling house, full of old oak stairways. Long and narrow corridors seemed to hold dark and evil secrets. Windows gave no warming sunlight, only gloomy views of shadowed courtyards at the back and the blank, blind faces of houses at the front.

After sunset a shroud of darkness seemed to wrap itself around the house before creeping slowly inside. Blazing log fires hardly seemed to warm the rooms and hissing gaslight was strangely dimmed.

BEN’S JOURNEY

The car engine seemed to cough a few times before it finally shuddered to a halt. Ben sighed in frustration. Fifty miles from home, in the middle of nowhere, half past midnight. His choice was simple: stay put in the icy darkness till the morning or leave the car and see if there was any sign of human life nearby.

The moonlight glimmered on the white frost which covered the road like a gossamer sheet and on the tussocks of grass standing stiffly and blackly along the roadside. The bushes cast strange shaped shadows in his path, and a solitary owl hooted from a nearby wood. He felt the skin at the back of his neck prickle with cold sweat. The clouds momentarily cut off the moonlight and the shadows melted into general darkness. The air was thick with darkness, so thick that he could almost touch it. His breath seemed to materialise into something solid in the icy air, and he could hear his heart beat like a drum. Something touched his face, something as cold as the grave and his teeth clacked and chattered uncontrollably.

1. Is this an effective setting?
2. What imagery do you find particularly effective?
3. Which words help to add to the eerie atmosphere?

TASK ONE

Read the following description of a setting and consider the differnt vocabulary options. Highlight the words you think are most effective for each part of the description.

a. The road up to the castle was littered with/covered in/full of stones that were so big/sharp/uneven that they caught the traveller unawares and cut/tore/sliced through his shoes or threw him off balance so that his ankles were sore/tender/racked with pain.

b. Around the castle there ran a deep river whose surface was covered with green weeds/slime/vegetation. A few wild birds floated hopelessly/uneasily/sadly in it, their feathers dull and drooping.

c. Overhead grey/stormy/cloudy skies cast a dull/dark/dead light over the castle. It seemed that the thick clouds would perpetually stop any sun from reaching/warming/touching the castle with its rays.

d. The walls of the castle were hidden/entwined/covered with tangled creepers which seemed to be trying to choke the life out of it. The creepers had pulled/dragged/wrenched stones from the wall so that the whole building threatened to/was about to/might fall on anyone who entered and kill/crush/hurt him.

READ THE FOLLOWING INTRODUCTION.

I entered the room and closed the door behind me. The room was big with bay windows and there were lots of dark corners. The blinds were drawn as were the curtains but I could hear the wind and rain outside. The bedside lamp was lit and there was a fire in the grate. Two large mirrors were hung high on the walls and on a wooden shelf stood two large brass candlesticks. I could hear the ticking of the grandfather clock.

NOT VERY FRIGHTENING, IS IT?

TASK TWO

 Using the five elements of setting, as well as the word banks which you added to, re-write the extract to create a more frightening atmosphere. Try to take away any description which seems ordinary, and add description which makes the atmosphere more menacing. You can add details of your own if you wish.

**USING LANGUAGE TO CREATE A CONVINCING ATMOSPHERE**

To add to your setting and create a convincing atmosphere, you need to:

* Use words or phrases which create a mood
* Use simile
* Use personification
* Use metaphor
* Use sound techniques – alliteration, onomatopoeia

TASK ONE

Read the following extract and note how the writer changes the mood/atmosphere from the first paragraph to the second.

Overhead the trees arched, and water birds, becoming used to my harmless presence, called out softly. Once or twice a kingfisher flashed. There were trout in the warm water, I could feel them brush gently against my bare legs every now and then as I waded knee-deep along the course of the brook.

And then – suddenly: fear. Where did it come from? I had no means of knowing. Menace. Cold fear was all around me – in the dark arch of the trees, the tunnel they make (into which the stream vanished), the sharp croak of birds, the icy grip of the water on my calves, the gritty scour of mud on my grimed and scraped hands. But most of all, in my own mind, as if down at the back of it, stood something hidden, watchful, waiting.

TASK TWO

Highlight the phrases in the second paragraph which match, but alter, the mood of the phrases from the first paragraph.

TASK THREE

Make changes to improve the following passage in which a safe, comfortable setting / atmosphere becomes one of fear and menace.

The cottage stood hidden from the road, held protectively by the surrounding trees. Ivy climbed the walls, making it difficult to see what colour the stonework underneath had originally been. The windows peered inquisitively out at those who approached, while the door was always opened in a welcoming smile.

The little house was cosy and friendly. It smelt of woodsmoke and apples when you walked in and little squares of sunshine fell through its tiny windows. It offered no sound apart from the crackle of logs on the fire, or sigh of wind in the chimney.

New wooden floorboards had been laid in a couple of rooms over the bricks, for warmth, and these had shrunk as they dried; just sometimes you’d get the feeling as if somebody else had stepped on to the board you stood on, and made it bend a little.

**SIMILES**

Highlight any similes you find in the following extracts (there is at least one in each), and explain why you find them effective.

Sonny, who is a little troubled about this point, indicates the flat sheet of darkness to the right of the sign and extending to the next, smaller oak tree. As he looks at it, the darkness loses its two-dimensionality and deepens backward like a cave, or a black hole softly punched through the air. The cave, the black hole, melts and widens into the earthen road, about five and a half feet wide; it must have been there all along.

The streets were muddy then, the actual blocks islands above the gutters, and the entire city so dark compared to the cities of today. The lights were as beacons in a black sea. Even with morning rising slowly, only the dormers and high porches of the houses were emerging from the dark…

The waves crashed against the shore like angry stallions, as the wind roared above her head. In the distance, she could see the ship, it’s torn rigging illuminated by the moon like a ghostly skeleton.

**PERSONIFICATION**

**Windows gave no warming sunlight, only gloomy views of shadowed courtyards, at the back and the blank, blind faces of houses at the front.**

* Do houses have ‘faces’?
* What is the writer trying to suggest by saying they are ‘blind’?
* What is this technique called?

**After sunset a shroud of darkness seemed to wrap itself around the house before creeping slowly inside.**

* Why is ‘shroud’ a good choice of word here?
* What is the writer trying to suggest about the darkness in this extract?

**The clouds cut off the moonlight and the shadows melted into general darkness.**

* What does the word ‘melted’ suggest to you about the shadows?

**The moon was smiling down on him and the clouds looked like soft balls of cotton wool.**

* What is suggested about the protagonist’s mood here?
* How is this suggested?

**Wind sighed mournfully through the rhododendron bushes.**

* What mood is suggested by the writer’s use of personification?

**ALLITERATION** and **ONOMATOPOEIA** can be used to good effect.

The **b**lank **b**lind faces at the front

The *hissing* gaslight was strangely dimmed

The bushes cast **s**trange **s**haped **s**hadows

His teeth *chattered* and *clacked* uncontrollably

It offered no sound apart from the *crackle* of logs on the fire, or *sigh* of wind in the chimney

**WORD CHOICE**

Your word choice is very important. It creates meaning.

**Careered** is a stronger word than **ran.**

**‘Shroud** of darkness’ has a different meaning than **‘cloak** ofdarkness’.

**‘**He felt **helpless’** is more effective than **‘**he **didn’t know what to do’.**

TASK FOUR

Now write the opening paragraph to describe the setting for your own story.

* Remember the five elements for setting
* Remember to choose your words carefully
* Remember to use figurative language/imagery
* Remember to use word sounds

TECHNIQUES TO USE TO HELP IMPROVE YOUR WRITING

* When describing setting and creating atmosphere, use details based on senses – sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.
* Base your settings on a place you know and then add invented details.
* Use real as well as invented names to bring characters and places alive
* Create atmosphere by writing about what is hidden, what is dangerous, what looks unusual, what is out of place.
* Describe the weather, time of day and season, as well as the place.
* Use a mixture of long and short sentences to vary pace. Short sentences help to increase tension and a sense of panic in your characters; long sentences with lots of verbs or repeated use of ‘and’ can add to the impression of heightened activity.
* Use sentence fragments to build tension.
* Ask questions to make your reader empathise with your characters.

CHARACTER

You should aim to give the reader an impression of your character’s personality by the way you describe him / her. You should also aim to make your reader respond to your character in the way you want. Do you want your character to be liked, feared, hated, pitied, etc?

Vyvyan’s dress did nothing to render him less scary. A beige burn mask (or a right elastic hood designed to suggest a burn mask) covered his enormous head. His eyes were visible through the mask’s eyeholes; they were too small for his head, as glassy-yellow as an alley cat’s, and so phlegmy that their continuous discharge had left umber-orange tear tracks on either side of his monstrous nose. His lips showed through an oblong cut-out like a pair of helically twisted wisps of liquorice, black and oddly glossy.

Which words or phrases are used here to create revulsion in the reader?

Which words suggest that this character is to be feared?

His face was a strong – a very strong – aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

How does the writer create the impression of potential danger in this description?

**CHARACTER 1**

TASK ONE

Edit the following example, giving a clearer description of the ghost, as well as some indication of whether it is to be feared or not. Remember to use the techniques you learned when looking at setting and atmosphere.

Tom tossed and turned before his eyes finally opened. There at the foot of the bed he saw a strange white shape. It was standing quite still. The head nodded slowly, and the white hair moved in the darkness. Black eyes stared at Tom, and the mouth opened as if to speak.

CHARACTER 2

TASK TWO

This is a description of the character of Tom. He is supposed to be a sympathetic, innocent child. Rewrite this, improving it as much as you can.

Tom was twelve years old. He was small for his age, but strong. He had red hair and very white skin. His eyes were dark blue and small. He had a miserable look on his face because he hadn’t wanted to leave the only place he had ever known as home, and come to live in the old cottage which his father had bought.

**A MONSTER**

Now read the following passage about a monster and his encounter with a group of people.

The creature opened the door and entered the room, oblivious to the stares which met him. Knocking a chair out of the way, he reached the mantelpiece and picked up the photograph of Eva which sat upon it. A strange noise came from the being, who did not seem to realise until that moment that he was being watched. He looked into the eyes of each person there, before dropping the picture frame, where it smashed on the hearth. As suddenly as he had entered, he was gone.

DOESN’T REALLY TELL US MUCH THOUGH, DOES IT?

TASK THREE

Rewrite the paragraph for each of the following options.

1. The creature is a very dangerous monster. He has been the subject of legends for many years and is known to be cruel and bloodthirsty. You are trying to influence your reader to be afraid of the creature.
2. The creature is a gentle, man-like beast. He has been the subject of legends for many years, but is associated with good luck, and has been said to help humans in trouble. You are trying to influence your reader to like the creature and to sympathise with him.

**CHARACTERS AND SPEECH**

Characters reveal themselves through **WHAT THEY SAY**, and **THE WAY** in which they say it.

1. “Heavens and earth, no!” cried Arthur in a storm of passion. “Not for the wide world will I consent to any mutilation of her dead body.”
2. “I d-d-don’t know what to do. I won’t b-b-be able to do it. I just can’t…” whispered Ellen.
3. “Okay,” Ty says. He speaks in a high, whinny voice. He hopes he sounds scared out of his mind. God knows it shouldn’t be hard to sound that way. “Okay, okay, just don’t hurt me, I’m doing it now, see? See?”
4. In a voice which, though low and almost in a whisper, seemed to cut through the air and then ring round the room he said, “How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all” This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him, or you’ll have to deal with me.”
5. Lestat smiled, as if he’d just thought of a joke. “This is your funeral, dear. You see, you were at a dinner party and you died. We drank your blood.”
6. Van Helsing rose up and said with al his sternness, his iron jaw set and his bushy eyebrows meeting, “ No trifling with me! I never jest! There is grim purpose in all I do.”

**CHARACTERS AND SPEECH**

We can often see what kind of person a character is through what he / she says. In a short story, this is an effective way of developing your characters, as well as your plot.

When writing dialogue, remember:

To make sure that the dialogue reveals something about the **CHARACTER’S PERSONALITY**;

To make sure that you consider not only **WHAT** is said, but **HOW** it is said;

To use dialogue **SPARINGLY** and only where it is **APPROPRIATE**.

When writing dialogue, also consider:

When to speed up the dialogue by not adding in the name of the person who spoke it;

When it is appropriate to use the simple word ‘said’;

When you should use more expressive words such as shouted, whispered, muttered, etc;

When you should put the verb before and when after the speaker. (said Robert or Robert retorted)

When you should also use an adverb, such as sadly, angrily, etc.

**DIALOGUE**

“What now?” whispered Laura.

“I don’t know, but I’m not going to stay here and become lunch for one, that’s for sure,” Dawn muttered determinedly.

The vampire arose from his chair at the end of the room. “I can assure you, my dear, I have no intention of turning anyone into lunch, as you so charmingly put it. I do, however have plans for you both.” As he smiled, the girls saw the glistening points of the demon’s teeth.

“And then you’ll let us go?” asked Laura, her voice almost pleading.

“Of course he won’t let us go!” scoffed Dawn. “Are you really that stupid?”

“Oh, but I will, my dears,” the vampire seemed to glide across the room as he spoke, his voice almost entrancing them, “the last thing I want to do is hurt either of you.”

“And if we refuse to go along with your ‘plans’, what then?” demanded Dawn.

“Dawn, don’t make things worse…” Laura begged.

“Things can’t get much worse, or hadn’t you noticed!” retorted her friend.

“If you should become difficult,” the vampire breathed, “then I should have to become less … accommodating.”

TASK FOUR

For each of the characters in the passage above, discuss what we learn about their personalities from the dialogue.

TASK FIVE

Edit the following piece of dialogue to reveal the **PERSONALITY** of the speakers, making the writing more **REALISTIC**.

PAUL: A quiet boy, easily frightened and often picked on by others. Desperate to be accepted by his peers.

JOHN: A popular boy, but a bit of a bully. Often in trouble, both in and out of school. Laughs at others’ fears and mistakes.

The two boys approached the graveyard cautiously, John pushing Paul ahead of him. Paul stumbled, and caught himself just before he cried out in shock and pain. John tutted and scowled at the other boy in annoyance, as if he wanted Paul there even less than Paul himself wanted to be there.

“Watch what you’re doing, won’t you?” said John.

“Sorry, I couldn’t help it,” said Paul.

“If you’re too frightened to do this, you know, I’m sure there’s plenty other lads who would rather come with me,” said John.

“I’m not frightened,” said Paul.

“I’ll bet. Come on then, I’ll give you a leg up over the gate,” said John.

“You mean, I have to go in first?” said Paul.

**PLOT**

This is what an author (E. M. Forster) said:

*‘"*The king died and then the queen died”is a **STORY**’.

*‘"*The king died, and then the queen died of grief*"*, is a **PLOT**.’

In your story, something must happen to which your protagonist will react. Without a **MAIN EVENT** your story will be, quite simply, not a story, but a piece of writing. Some simple ideas for a turning point are:

protagonist sees something What is it? What does she / he do about it? Why?

protagonist hears something What is it? What does she / he do about it? Why?

protagonist finds something What is it? What does it do? What does protagonist do about / with it? Why?

ghostly figure appears Who is it? Why? What do they want? What can protagonist do about it?

protagonist is attacked By whom / what? Why? How can she / he resolve this?

**STRUCTURE**

**STRUCTURE** refers to how the **PLOT** is put together**.**

Most stories are structured using a chronological or linear **TIME** structure.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **BEGINNING** | **MIDDLE** | **END** |
|  |

Beginning: This **INTRODUCES** the reader to the **SETTING** in which you have placed your **PROTAGONIST**. This also introduces your protagonist and lets your reader see the kind of person he / she is.

Middle: This is the bulk of your story and usually starts with something happening. You need an **EVENT** or a **PROBLEM** which pushes the action forward. The middle of your story will continue with your tale of how your protagonist handles this occurrence.

End: This is where your story comes to its **CLIMAX**. The problem is either resolved or your protagonist is defeated. Finally, if you choose to, tie up any loose ends, explain anything as yet unexplained, and conclude your story. Don’t drag your ending out - it should be no more than two paragraphs long.

**TENSION**

A good ghost story builds up **TENSION**. Something has to happen to move the action forward towards a **CLIMAX**.

Read the following extract and then answer the questions at the end.

Margaret’s uneasy sleep was disturbed by a tapping noise which seemed to penetrate her dream. She tossed from side to side before her tired eyes finally opened and adjusted to the darkness of her new room. She sat up in the strange four poster bed, and listened. At first she thought it was part of her dream but just as she turned her pillow round ready to resume her sleep, she heard it again. This time it was louder than before.

1. What happens next?
2. Then what happens?
3. What is the climax?
4. How is the problem resolved?
5. How does the story end?

**ENDINGS**

There are many ways to end a short story but the most popular and effective ways usually:

* Tie up all the loose ends in the story
* Answer all the questions in the reader’s mind
* Bring a resolution to the problem
* Often offer a surprise, something the reader did not know about
* Have a ‘twist in the tale’
* May be a line of dialogue
* Can be a cliff-hanger, whereby the writer gives some hint in the final line that the danger is not over but will return …

Here are just a few examples.

* **THE PROTAGONIST IS CAUGHT BY THE GHOST/MONSTER**

… the door clicked open and the motorcycle boots crossed the room toward where he lay. Over his bed he could see the picture of the Road Virus’ car idling in front of his house with the driver’s-side door open.

The driver’s-side bucket seat, he saw, was full of blood. *I’m going outside, I think*, Kinnell thought, and closed his eyes.

* **THE PROTAGONIST’S ARE TRIUMPHANT AND WILL PASS THE TALE ON**

We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us! This boy will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her sweetness and loving care; later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake.

* **THE MONSTER LIVES ON AND THE HORROR WILL CONTINUE**

The monster stared out the window to where the snow still fell, quietly now, the blizzard having moved on leaving only this calm memory of its storm winds in its wake. He gave no indication that he was listening to the old woman, but she went on talking all the same.

* **AN IMPORTANT CHARACTER IS DISCOVERED TO HAVE DIED BEFORE THE ACTION IN THE STORY BEGAN**

“Why! What!” Through the mud upon his face he went white, up to the roots of his hair. He turned to us with startled eyes. Joyce died in Brixham Hospital nearly an hour ago. The hospital people have telegraphed to say so.”

* **THE HORROR IS OVER AND LIFE CAN GO BACK TO NORMAL FOR THE PROTAGONIST**

His ordinary life of school and friends and games and music, a life where there were schools to go to and crisp sheets to slide between at night, the ordinary life of a thirteen-year-old boy (if the life of such a creature can ever, in its colour and riot, be considered ordinary) had been returned to him, he realized.

* **THE PROTAGONIST DOES THE RIGHT THING AND SAVES HIMSELF (AND OTHERS) AT THE LAST MINUTE**

The knocking ceased suddenly, although the echoes of it were still in the house. He heard the chain drawn back, and the door opened. A cold wind rushed up the staircase, and a long loud wail of disappointment and misery from his wife gave him the courage to run down to her side, and then to the gate beyond. The street lamp flickering opposite shone on a quiet deserted road.

* **THE ACTION IS OVER BUT THE PROTAGONIST IS HAUNTED BY THE MEMORY**

But that’s not the worst. The worst is that sometimes I’m convinced she’s still out there, and I’ll see her again. Not the little girl in the bunny costume; Marguerite. I can’t get rid of the idea that some Halloween night when I look out past the little witches and clowns and spacemen on our porch, she’ll be there too: standing halfway down the path in her pale raincoat under a bat-black umbrella, waiting for me.