

Writing Scary Stories Glossary

Term and Definition

A

anticipation

Anticipation means forcing your reader to wait for a long time before revealing something exciting. You could explain a rumour about the spooky setting and then give them clues which offer hints about what is to come.

atmosphere, atmospheric

Atmosphere refers to the feeling, emotion or mood that a writer conveys to a reader through the description of the setting and objects. A description of brightly coloured furniture and dazzling sunshine gives a light-hearted atmosphere, whereas peeling wallpaper, mouldy smells and darkness create a scary atmosphere.

B

build-up

A build-up is a gradual increase of excitement or fear. The reader begins feeling calm but gradually ends up feeling afraid or excited. You can create a build-up by making your sentences gradually shorter.

C

cliffhanger

A cliffhanger is a point in the story where the reader is left wondering what has happened. You might tell them the answer eventually, or you might never let them know!

Luca rounded the corner and stopped abruptly. When he saw what Jack was looking at, the bottom almost dropped out of his stomach.

climax

A climax comes at the end of the build-up. When the reader has become more and more frightened, the end of the journey is the climax – when things are at their scariest.

E

ellipsis

An ellipsis is a piece of punctuation made up of three dots. It is used to show that part of a sentence is missing and is great for making your reader wait a little longer.

At first, there was nothing. Then, as he cocked his head to one side for a better chance of hearing, a faint sound broke the silence...

Tick.

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F

figurative language

Figurative language is anything which uses a figure of speech to improve a description and spark the reader's imagination. Examples are metaphors and similes.

Even from the outside, it had a look of being infested with sadness.

foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is an early clue of what is to come later in the story. Near the beginning, explain that when a character sees something in particular, something bad will happen. This means that later, when the character sees that clue, the reader can get excited or scared about what they know will come next.

Jack had stepped closer to one of the clocks. "This one has stopped," he called out. "You're not going to believe what time it says..."

Luca didn't need to be told. Something inside him was already screaming the time.

"...10:31."

I

imagery

Imagery means when an author has used words to create a picture, or image, in the reader's mind.

The skeletal remains of a chair sat solemnly in the corner, spilling springy insides out from amidst a rotten frame.

M

metaphor

Metaphors are descriptions which describes something as something else, because the two things are so similar. Metaphors help to conjure up an image in the reader's mind.

Her heart was in her mouth.

A knot twisted in her stomach.



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O

mystery

Mystery means withholding certain information from the reader. Making them wait to find out what you are describing can increase suspense.

Descending the stairs one careful, agonising, creaking step at a time, a hunched silhouette shuffled out from the darkness.

onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia is any word which, when read, sounds like the noise that it describes. Use onomatopoeia to help your reader to imagine the sounds in your spooky setting.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

Creak.

BANG!



S

senses

To help your reader to imagine themselves in your scary story, your writing should appeal to all of their senses: touch, smell, sight, sound and taste.

The first thing he noticed was the stale air, which seeped into his mouth and nostrils.

simile

A simile is when an author describes something by comparing it to something else, to help the reader to imagine it. Often, similes use the word 'like' or 'as'.

Aging grandfather clocks stood proudly, evenly spaced on opposite sides along the hallway, like soldiers stiffly standing guard.

surprise

A surprise involves allowing your readers to think that the situation is calm and safe, before surprising them with something very scary all of a sudden. It will keep them on their toes!

suspense

Suspense is a feeling created when a reader thinks that they know what is about to happen, but is forced to wait before they find out

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for sure. Suspense can be created with paragraph breaks and short sentences which don't give the reader much information.

She was met with a sight at the top of the staircase which all but turned her to stone...

Something was moving.

Alice watched numbly, as...

synonym

A synonym is a word which means the same thing as a root word, for example: **scared** and **terrified**. Using impressive synonyms keeps your writing exciting – if you use the same words again and again, the reader stops being afraid and gets comfortable.

tension

Tension is a word that refers to any feeling of nervousness, upset, unease or suspense. You can create tension in your writing by describing things which are unpleasant. Things can be tense without suspense.

Although Luca could see the shadowy outlines of doorways leading off from the hallway, the darkness swallowed up any objects which lay further down the corridor.



T