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Year 7 English
Spooky Stories! Creative Writing

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Work pack learning objectives:
- ❏ To be able to write an imaginative Gothic story which impacts your reader.
- ❏ To organise the ideas and events in your story so that it builds tension, makes sense and keeps the reader interested.
- ❏ To focus on using correct sentence structure, paragraphs, grammar and spelling.

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We have just finished studying Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.

TASK

Make a mindmap of all the Gothic conventions you can remember (anything that was frightening, suspenseful, mysterious and dark).

Supernatural elements - raising dead bodies.

Gothic conventions in Frankenstein

Scary Settings

In Frankenstein, you will have become familiar with Gothic old castles with spiralling turrets and sharp, decaying features.

TASK

1. Write down at least three other settings in which a Gothic horror story might be set.
2. Describing the smells, feelings, sights and sounds, write a paragraph detailing each of these settings.
3. Can you include similes and metaphors?

TASK

1. Study the image of a cemetery above. Note down at least 7 ambitious adjectives to describe the scene.
2. Imagine you were present at the setting. How might you feel? What thoughts might run through your mind? How might you move and behave?
3. Zoom in on one feature in the image. Describe it in detail using interesting language features to create a strong image in the reader's mind. Be as imaginative as you like.

   E.g. '*The weathered inscription on the crumbling blackened headstone read 'Elizabeth Ribbons 1790-1823, Victim Of The Beast 666'.*

TASK

1. Read the extract below. How many language techniques can you identify?

> The wind howled. Lightning stabbed at the earth erratically, like an inefficient assassin. Thunder rolled back and forth across the dark, rain-lashed hills. The night was as black as the inside of a cat. It was the kind of night, you could believe, on which gods moved men as though they were pawns on the chessboard of fate. In the middle of this elemental storm a fire gleamed among the dripping furze bushes like the madness in a weasel's eye. It illuminated three hunched figures.

2. Can you come up with an alternative simile to describe the night?
3. Highlight the description you find most effective. Can you copy the style of this sentence by replacing words to create a different scene? *E.g. Waves enveloped the cliffs hungrily, like a half-starved humpback whale.*

CHALLENGE: Can you copy the style of this entire paragraph, replacing words to create an alternative Gothic setting? (You can label each word by word-class first to replace with another from that same word-class).

Show, don't tell!

'Show, don't tell' is a writing technique in which story and characters are related through sensory details and actions rather than exposition. This makes the reader imagine the story more vividly, feeling as though they are present in the scene.

Simply telling the reader that 'Michael was afraid of the dark' is far less interesting than showing Michael's fear through describing his behaviour: *'As his mother switched off the light and left the room, Michael tensed. He huddled under the covers, gripped the sheets, and held his breath as the wind brushed past the curtain.'*

An effective way to help you show, not tell, is to act out the emotion and note down the body language which shows that feeling. For example, instead of saying 'the dog was angry', think about how the dog would be physically showing this.

TASK
Write a short paragraph using 'show, not tell' for the following scenarios, focusing on descriptive senses (smell, sight, sound) and physical signs. Don't be afraid to include similes and metaphors!

1. You can smell something disgusting coming out of your school bag.
2. The teacher has an irrational fear of pencil cases.
3. A man on the train feels sick.
4. The weather is dark and stormy.

5. You fall into a freezing lake.
6. The construction site outside your house is annoyingly loud.
7. You see a man with a funny haircut.
8. A child at the beach is extremely bored.
9. There is a ghost in the girls' toilets.
10. You are allergic to jellybeans.

TASK

Read the hair-raising 'true' story of Inez Clarke, the haunted statue.

The story goes that Inez Clarke was just 6 when she died in 1880. The girl was killed during a storm while on a family picnic and was buried in Graceland Cemetery in Chicago, Illinois. After her death, her parents had a life size sculpture made in the likeness of their dearly departed daughter. It was put in a glass case to protect it from the elements.

If the statue of a young girl, wearing old-fashioned clothes in a cemetery wasn't frightening enough, there are many ghost stories surrounding the grave site. People have heard weeping coming from the area. Other people claim that during thunderstorms the statue disappears, only to reappear later, back in its glass case.

1. Note down a list of adjectives, verbs, similes and short descriptions which first come to mind when you look at the image of Inez's grave statue and the story behind it.

2. Write a description of the weather in the scene using pathetic fallacy.

Pathetic fallacy - when the weather shows the mood. E.g, 'the wind howled over the flat, icy moors' creates a sinister atmosphere and you can expect negative events to occur.

TASK Write a story from the perspective of a little boy who, after visiting the graveyard with his mum, runs away and becomes lost, only to encounter the grave statue of the little girl…

Follow the instructions below to help structure your story.

1. Describe the surroundings using a simile.
2. Next, include a simple sentence.
3. Describe a sound in detail.
4. Use pathetic fallacy.
5. Include a complex sentence.
6. Use the word 'irreparable' (meaning impossible to repair) in your next sentence.
7. Use a metaphor to describe the boy's feelings.
8. Use personification to give an object human-like features.
9. Include some dialogue (speech).
10. Use a one sentence, stand alone paragraph to build suspense.
11. Use alliteration.
12. Zoom in on an object close by which captures your character's interest.
13. Include a compound sentence.
14. Use another simple sentence.
15. Use zoomorphism by comparing a person or object to an animal.
16. Introduce a new character.
17. Begin your sentence with an interesting adverb (-ly word).
18. Include a list.
19. Use onomatopoeia.
20. Include a semi-colon.

STRUCTURE

TASK
Read the following extract:

The attic door creaked open. Something rustled in the darkness. I stared, but could see nothing beyond the vague shapes of old suitcases and trunks piled high. It smelt damp. I struggled up into the attic and wedged the door open. Light poured into darkness. The darkness in the head of the house. I balanced carefully upon the floor beams. I knew that if I stepped onto plaster I could fall straight through into the room below. A cobweb brushed my face and I felt the sudden tickle of a spider crawl across my cheek. As I made my way forwards, it grew darker and colder. I was blocking the light from the attic door. There were piles of old newspapers, brown bags tied with string cardboard boxes and ancient, moth eaten rugs that smelt of mothballs. Thick dust powdered every surface. I kept thinking that I could slip and put my foot through the floor. I stopped at a pile of old camping equipment. It was a jumble of guy ropes, torn canvas, poles, wooden pegs, metal skewers and a mallet. It was there that I saw the hand. It was quite still and white, like a marble. But then it moved.

1. What do you notice about the sentence lengths? Why are they important?

2. What atmosphere is created in the passage? How does the writer build tension?

3. What other techniques does the writer use to create the atmosphere?

TASK
Choose one of the following titles to plan your own Gothic story:

Ouija Board
The Slanted Mirror
An Unexpected Guest
The Hanging Tree
The Face
Hook House
Red Rain

Elements to consider when planning your story:

- First person or third person narrative?
- Choose one or two main characters
- Choose one setting
- Consider how much time can take place in the story?
- Consider the time sequence? Does your story take place in chronological order?
- Your story MUST be closely related to your title
- Your story MUST be original and interesting

TASK
Create a mind-map noting down ideas based around your title considering the bullet points above.

It is important that your stories are planned and organised in a way which encourages the reader to pursue the rest of the text. This means building suspense and intrigue - holding back
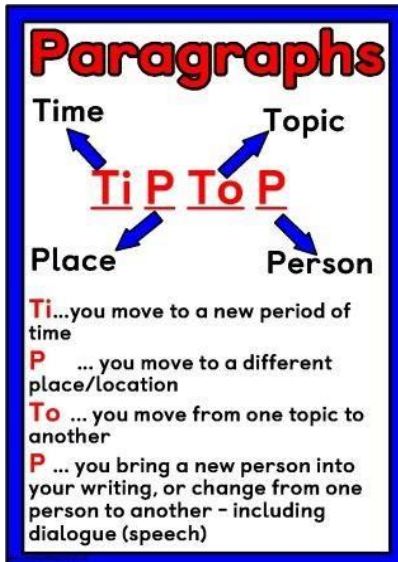
on information and the reader seeks to find out, teasing them with details and changing focus so that they want to read on.

TASK

Come up with an example of a narrative hook for each type as demonstrated in the chart.

A **narrative hook** (or hook) is a literary technique in the opening of a story that "hooks" the reader's attention so that he or she will keep on reading. The "opening" may consist of several paragraphs for a short story, or several pages for a novel, but ideally it is the opening sentence.

Narrative Hook	Example
The Puzzler—raises questions that puzzle the reader	*I'm never really sure if it's a real memory or just something that's become more solid over time. But I'm sure that my brother once tried to murder me.*
The Salesperson—stops the reader in their tracks and addresses them directly	*So you want to know all about me? Well, stay there and I'll begin…*
The Hinter—the subtle approach, drops hints so the reader has to put the pieces together	*It wasn't as if we hated each other. I don't really think he knew what he was doing. I wasn't much better.*
The Weatherman—sets the atmosphere	*The sky was a shade of midnight, the pavements shined with drizzle and reflected lights from lamp-posts and car headlights. I splashed along in my cozy rainboots.*
The Painter—paints a visual image of the scene	*My apple red rainboots shone as they splashed through the puddles on the black tar pavement. Multi-colored cars raced past, cutting through the drizzle and the dark of the winter night.*
The Comedian—the funny approach	*Being splashed by a car moving so quickly that you are soaked to your underwear is really funny. Unless it happens to you.*
The Interrupter—brings you in during a conversation.	*"I can't believe he did that! What happened next?" Liz demanded…*
The Scientist—uses an interesting fact or piece of data to begin	*Shock has been known to kill ten year olds. It can cause their brains to explode and their heart to stop dead still. These facts came to mind as I stood dumfounded in front of my fourth grade classmates. I wish I had stayed in bed!*

Make sure to start a new paragraph every time a new character speaks, is introduced, or you change the topic or setting. Single sentence paragraphs can create tension; you should aim to use one of these in each of your stories for dramatic effect.

TASK
Use the graph below to help plan the structure of your story.

First Sentence: Narrative hook: direct speech, exclamation, question …
Beginning (Exposition): What do you need to tell your reader about the characters, setting and plot to keep them engaged?
Middle (Problem): What do you need to add to keep your reader interested? How can you build suspense/tension?
Climax: What is the event that occurs before the problem is solved and the readers' questions are answered?
Ending (Resolution): How will you end so that the problem is resolved and satisfy the reader? Will you create an unexpected ending?

TASK
Now you have planned the structure of your story, let's focus on some of the descriptive language which will bring the narrative to life.

Make a grid dividing descriptions for sensory imagery you plan to include in your writing. Remember to include plenty of figurative language such as similes, metaphors, personification, zoomorphism and pathetic fallacy!

Sight	Sound	Smell	Feeling

Using a thesaurus, create a vocabulary list for the following words. The first one has been done for you.

Slim: thin, trim, slender, lean, wiry.

Cold:

Hot:

Happy:

Sad:

Use the new words from your vocabulary list in a sentence. The first one has been done for you.

Slim: The teenage girl was very slender.

Cold:

Hot:

Happy:

Sad:

Make these sentences more interesting by using similes, metaphors, personification, adjectives and adverbs. The first one has been done for you.

I was very sad: Tears of sorrow streaked my face.

He was proud:

The wind was strong:

I was excited:

It was a hot evening:

TASK

Now you have successfully planned your story, it's time to write your first draft. Make sure to re-read it again, checking for punctuation and spelling, and don't be afraid to make improvements. Most authors rewrite their work many times before the finished result; you can always find something to improve - whether you replace a word or change an entire idea!

Narration Styles

TASK

In "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, it's clear by the end that the narrator is not sane. But when did she cease to be sane? Or was she never sane to begin with? That questionable sanity, the fact that we can't trust what she's saying, helps to build the unknown in Gothic fiction. It's also good to have a character who is sane but fears for his or her sanity.

This is known as an unreliable narrator, where the reader is tricked into assuming that the narrator (the voice telling the story) is truthful and realistic, however their version of reality is distorted.

Read these four tips from a successful, published author on how to create an unreliable narrator.

1. Keep your reader in the dark. Readers are used to having more information than the characters. Try flipping that scenario: have your narrator withhold certain information from your reader and see how it impacts the story.
2. Your narrator should be unreliable from the start. People are inherently unreliable when telling a story since their point of view is filtered through their experience and beliefs. Your narrator won't suddenly become unreliable: hint at any qualities that might compromise them and their story early on.
3. Let other characters be a sounding board. Picture a story with 15 first-person narrators. That's exactly what William Faulkner does in his epic tale *As I Lay Dying*. Fifteen points of view reflect on one tragedy, and their stories don't all align. Every character's interpretation of events is filtered through their own lens. While you don't need this many perspectives in your story, use other characters to reflect inconsistencies in your narrator's story.
4. Experiment with just a pinch of unreliability. Unreliable narrators aren't all as off-the-wall as Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho*. There are varying

degrees of unreliability, which can create interesting, multidimensional characters. Even a morally good soul like Harry Potter occasionally gives the reader misinformation simply because it's what he believes. In *Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry spends most of the book running from an escaped prisoner he thinks killed in parents only to find out it was all a lie. Even if your main character is well-intentioned, give them unreliable moments to make them slightly flawed—and thus, more believable.

TASK

Have a go at writing from the perspective of an unreliable narrator. Feel free to experiment with your own ideas, however, if you are stuck, you could write from the perspective of a murderer, slowly revealing that the supposed victims are in fact alive and well… This could include lies that come to light, and exaggerated language, contrasted with other characters.

TASK

As you can remember, *Frankenstein* is narrated in the epistolary form (a series of letters). This allows for multiple characters to show different perspectives of a story. The reader is given an insight into the mind of both Frankestein's monster, the victims, and Victor Frankenstein, creating a rounded narrative.

Create a story using a series of letters from different characters to forward the plot.

Letter 1: An account from a vampire hunter to their close friend back home.

Letter 2: An account from a near-victim of a vampire attack to the vampire hunter.

Letter 3: A letter from the vampire to another character if your choice.