# Write a spooky ghost story

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Holly King-Mand is a writer, presenter and campaigner for literacy (the ability to read and write) who has inspired thousands of children to learn English. Holly loves creative writing and here she shares her top tips for writing a ghoulish ghost story.

The idea of ghosts, also known as spectres, has been around since ancient times in lots of countries. According to legend, a ghost is the soul of a dead person, which exists separately from its body and is able to haunt, or appear, on Earth. Whether you believe in spectres or not, ghost stories have existed for centuries. They were very popular in the 19th century, when people were fascinated with the supernatural (things that can't be proved by science).

Writing a ghost story is a great opportunity to practise your creative writing skills and experiment with a new genre (style) of writing. Ghost tales usually follow the same structure as other fiction stories but focus on a character and a supernatural event.

## Set the scene

To create a spooky atmosphere, pick a setting that is otherworldly or unsettling. Abandoned places or locations with a sinister history can help to add a fear factor to your story. Dark shadows provoke fear of the unknown and will add a feeling of tension. The time of day or year can also be important to consider – a misty autumn day or a dark winter night is perfect.

## Create a haunting

As well as deciding what your ghost looks like (if it's visible at all), think about why it has appeared and what it wants. It doesn't have to be a terrifying reason, although it could appear to be. Perhaps your ghost is haunting a house to punish someone who harmed them, or appearing in a patch of woods to stop it being cut down. It needs to be doing something that scares people, even if it doesn't mean to.

## Use sensory writing

Create a main character, or characters, and use the senses to describe their experience of the haunting. If you write about the feelings, sights, smells, sounds and tastes they encounter, the reader will feel like they are there too. It could be the eerie creak of a floorboard or a whisper of wind in a room – although the window is closed. You could also describe rotten odours or tastes and slimy things.

## Fright and then... flee?

After setting the scene and describing the spectre, all good ghost stories have a big climax. This is the most exciting part, when you can reveal what, or who, your ghost is and what it wants. This could mean a fright for your character or a sudden realisation. It is time to bring the story to a close. Your character might be left frozen under a curse or find it was just someone playing a nasty trick – you decide!

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