



# Gothic Story Kit

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*On the floor lay a strange object . It looked a bit like a small vegetable.  
I picked it up, and then dropped it quickly. It was a middle finger. It  
was fairly fresh, but not bleeding*

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From exploratory talk to presentational talk to collaborative writing to individual writing. A self assembly kit to provide the skeleton/ scaffold of a scary story which can be tweaked collaboratively and then told to the rest of the class and if required further developed into a written version. At any point in the story's creation, individuals can leave the group to tweak individually and to produce their own versions. The aim, of course, is for the skeleton to disappear and each story to achieve its own individual character.

The webaddress for this activity is

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/gothicstorykit.pdf>



## COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

Project Director: Stuart Scott

We support a network of teaching professionals throughout the European Union to promote inclusive education. We develop and disseminate accessible talk-for-learning activities in all subject areas and for all ages.

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## BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies that promote talk across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to develop and use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We want to encourage you to change them and adapt them to your classroom and students. We run teacher workshops, swapshops and conferences throughout the European Union. The project posts online many activities in all subject areas. An online newsletter is also updated regularly.

\*These activities are influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in non selective classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening . They provide teachers opportunities for assessment of speaking and listening.

\*They support differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills.

\*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in pupils' first languages and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

\*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

\*They are generally adaptable over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

\*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work more effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

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## Gothic Story Kit - Teachers' Notes

Here are five sets of four paragraphs. Each set needs to be printed in a different colour and cut up into separate paragraphs before the lesson. If you print all in one colour then the sorting is a longer and more challenging process. Providing you choose any one from each set you can produce the bones of a gothic story with growing suspense etc.. The idea was to provide scaffolding and inspiration to support pupils to write their own stories collaboratively and then move to individual versions. Groups could paste their chosen set of five paragraphs on a large sheet of paper in the order they choose and then start the process of personalising the story by adding and taking away words, phrases, clauses, sentences. We would strongly encourage you to demand an joint oral presentation before you consider a joint or individual written version.

## Gothic Story Kit - Instructions for students

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## Gothic Story Kit -Set One

The forest was dark and silent. Towards the end of the day our coach entered a deep gorge. Everything grew darker. Then a distant light shone out and we arrived in front of a large castle door.

All my friends dared us to visit that house at night. Everyone told stories about the house on its own at the end of the town. Nobody knew why it had been empty for years. The garden was overgrown, and the gate was rusty and broken. We crept up to the crumbling porch.

We were hiking in the mountains. It was beginning to get dark.  
"We must hurry! The weather is getting worse!" I said.  
"I don't know where we are. We must have taken a wrong turning," replied my friend  
"Isn't that a building over there? I think I saw a light."

This was a lonely and unfriendly part of the city. Tower blocks sat in empty car parks full of rubbish and broken glass. At last we found the address. The main door was wide open. The lift was broken. We slowly climbed the stairs to the top flat.

## Gothic Story Kit - Set Two

The front door was ajar, and creaked loudly as we pushed it. We looked inside and saw the flicker of a fire. Next to the fire was a big table covered in food. We crept inside and looked around.

We pushed cobwebs away from the front door and crossed the hall. The sitting room was dusty but cosy. There were velvet wall hangings, old cushions, a large table and a candle in a candlestick. The fire was laid with twigs. We lit the fire and the candle.

The front door was dark and heavy. We pulled the bell. We heard slow footsteps. A thin man dressed in black opened the door. He silently led us into a room full of books and then left us.

"Look the door is open a little," said my friend and pushed it further.  
"Oooh! What a nasty creaking noise," I replied.  
We entered and walked into cobwebs.  
"Shine the torch over here. I can see something."

## Gothic Story Kit - Set Three

On a small chair a book lay open. We began to read it aloud:

*"The room was peaceful and then we heard a quiet rustling in the corner. It came from a large cupboard....."*

We stopped reading. There was a cupboard in this room, but no noise. Suddenly a quiet rustling started.

We stood still and listened. A long way off we could hear a slow ticking. As we listened the noise grew louder until it seemed to be just outside the door. Then it stopped.

On the floor lay a strange object . It looked a bit like a small vegetable. I picked it up, and then dropped it quickly. It was a middle finger. It was fairly fresh, but not bleeding

"I think we'd better leave now. This place makes me feel shivery," I said.  
"No, let's look round. There is nothing to be afraid of," replied my friend.  
"What's that noise? It sounds like a wild animal in pain."  
" I think it's coming from behind that door."

## Gothic Story Kit - Set Four

Suddenly the window flew open. It suddenly became dark and it went very cold. We screamed as hundreds of shadowy figures rushed towards us. All the air seemed to rush out of my body and I blacked out.

The light went out without warning. I tried to move. My legs froze. I reached out my hand to my friend. I pulled it back quickly when I felt a cold slimy thing just in front of me. I could hear my heart thumping. I couldn't call out. I felt nausea.

I looked around. Was the room growing smaller? Was I getting bigger? We looked at each other and saw fear in each other's eyes. We rushed to the door. It was locked. The light went out. There was a terrible scream. Was it my friend? Was it me?

The light went out. I called to my friend. Silence. I felt a prickly sensation at the back of my neck. There was a sinking feeling in my stomach. There was a strong smell of decay. I felt a cold strong hand round my neck.



## Gothic Story Kit - Set Five

I woke up in bright sunlight. I was in a hospital bed. I looked at my hand. My middle finger on my right hand was missing.

And now it seems we must remain here forever. We have joined the other spirits. Unfortunately they are not very sociable. When will the next victims arrive?

Suddenly everyone started laughing. Someone switched on the music, and our special Halloween party began.

Someone poked me with a pencil. "Hurry up. You only have another half and hour to finish this writing exam. Remember to check your work.