

Three Tips for Writing Spooky Stories

By Paul Westmoreland

Everyone loves spooky stories filled with haunted houses, creepy castles and ghostly goings on, especially around this time of year.

So how do you tip-toe across the creaking floorboards of writing spooky stories and find your way to a world filled with terrifying monsters and stinky slime that makes your readers want to scream and hide in terror?

Tip 1:

If you want to really scare your readers, start by thinking about what in the world scares you? Chances are, if you find it terrifying, writing about it will scare other people too, even if it sounds absurd because a great horror writer can make anything scary.

A good example is what happened to a friend of mine... She was scared of cupboards. Now, cupboards might not seem very scary to you or me, but the night she moved into a new house my friend couldn't sleep because the place was full of cupboards she'd never opened. This might sound silly, but it was seriously scary to her, because that night all she could think about was what might come out of all the cupboards if she dared to fall asleep.

If that's not a great start to a spooky story, I don't know what it! So start by thinking about what scares you!

Tip 2:

It's easy to make a monster look scary, or act in a scary way. Just look at any episode of Scooby Doo. But the way to make your monsters truly scary is to decide why they're scaring your characters. Zombies are scary because they look horrible, but it's the fact they want to eat your brains that makes them truly terrifying. Vampires make you jump by stepping out of the shadows or rising from the grave, but it's their desire to drink your blood that makes us all run a mile at the first sign of trouble.

So pick your monster's motivation and let them run riot on a blood-curdling rampage!

Tip 3:

Truly terrifying monsters have a lot of tricks up their sleeves. Ghosts can move things, glide effortlessly through walls. Count Dracula can turn into a bat, a gas, hypnotise people, and even crawl up walls! These things are terrible for the characters your terrifying, but they're

great for writers because they enable your monsters to scare your readers in lots of different ways. And the more you can scare them the better your story!

On the flip-side of all these skills are their weaknesses. Again, Count Dracula is sent running by sunlight that'll turn him to dust, garlic chokes him, Christian crosses scare him and a stake to the heart will even kill him! These things all give your heroes a fighting chance to survive and that's vital for a great story. You have to give your characters the hope of surviving, this makes your readers root for them, hope they can make it through the night, and keep reading to the very last word of your story, even if it ends with certain doom!

Bonus Tip:

The most important thing about Halloween is also the most important thing about writing, and that's to have fun. So even if getting scared isn't your idea of a good time, you can still enjoy yourself and write a great Halloween story.

This is exactly what I do when I write my books about Rudy and his adventures. He might be a werewolf who's best friends with a mummy and a ghost girl, but they always work together and make sure everything works out, even if their adventures take them to scary castles in the middle of a thunderstorm or deep into gnarly forests at the dead of night.

So as I say, have as much fun as you can and you're sure to write some fantastic Halloween horror stories. Good luck!

Paul Westmoreland is the author of the *Rudy* series for children aged 6-8,
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