

Ghost Story Elements and Other Things to Think About

Not sure where to start? Not feeling creeped out by your own story? Consider adding some of the following elements to your work.

1. Righting a crime or an injustice may cause someone to linger after death.
2. Make the reader feel the fear and other emotions characters are experiencing.
3. The reason for the haunting must make sense and must be clear.
4. Spin a good back story that explains what is currently happening.
5. Stories told as true to real life as possible, except for this one strange thing, create a nice dissonance.
6. When you reach the end of the story, stop. Neatly wrapped stories take the air out of the experience. Do not explain.
7. Avoid showing blood and gore explicitly. No, really. Your reader will fill in the blanks far more effectively on their own.
8. Throw in a sudden twist at the end if you want your reader jumping.
9. Focus on sensory detail—sound, touch, smell, temperature, sight, sense of time.
10. Use scary/atmospheric locations, ones that are hidden, abandoned, isolated, dark, old, dangerous.
11. Throw in a weather disturbance—menacing clouds, lightning strikes, downpour, ice storm, dense or wispy fog.
12. Things a ghost might do include moving things around, making noise, creating disturbances, warning of danger, causing harm, finishing something left undone, leading living people to something lost or in danger.
13. Some signs that a ghost is present include strange noises; unexplained happenings; sudden temperature changes; deep, impenetrable silences; creaking doors and floorboards; doors opening, closing, slamming; whispering; strange sensations in your body.