

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49) is one of America's most famous writers. He lived an unhappy life: he was often close to madness, often drunk and always poor. He worked on magazines and newspapers and wrote science fiction, horror and detective stories. He married in 1836, but his young wife died only eleven years later. 'I became mad after that,' he said. His own death was a famous mystery. He was found drunk in a bar in Baltimore in someone else's clothes. He died in hospital a few days later.

ACTIVITIES

1 Underline the correct words in each sentence.

- 1 The *old man* / young man tells this story.
- 2 The young man plans to kill the old man because he *wants his money* / *hates his bad eye*.
- 3 The young man can't kill the old man on the first seven nights because the old man's eye is *closed* / *open*.
- 4 The old man thinks he can hear *the young man* / *the wind*.
- 5 The young man feels *happy* / *angry* after he kills the old man.
- 6 The young man puts the old man's body under *the floor* / *the bed*.
- 7 The police come to the house because *they* / *a neighbour* heard a scream.
- 8 The old man's *money* / *body* is under the young man's chair.
- 9 *The young man and the police* / *Only the young man* can hear the beating noise.

2 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why does the young man hate the old man's eye?
Because he thinks the eye is evil.
- 2 Why can't the young man kill the old man when his eye is closed?
.....
- 3 Why does the young man say he killed the old man when he doesn't need to?
.....
- 4 Is the young man mad?
.....

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–73) became a journalist and story writer as soon as he finished college. He lived all his life in Ireland, a country rich in old, magical stories. His first ghost story came out in 1838, when he was in his twenties and ghost stories were a new idea. Le Fanu wrote many more ghost stories, as well as other tales of mystery and terror. He married Susanna Bennett in 1843, but his wife went slowly mad and died in 1858. After that Le Fanu lived alone in the middle of nowhere, writing and writing and writing.

ACTIVITIES

1 Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 The girl is very relaxed when she arrives at Applewale House for the first time. ☒
- 2 Mrs Wyvern is friendlier than the girl's aunt. ☐
- 3 The girl's aunt takes her into Madam Crowl's bedroom for the first time. ☐
- 4 Madam Crowl was not the lost boy's mother. ☐
- 5 The girl is alone when Madam Crowl's ghost appears in a cloud of red light. ☐
- 6 Squire Chevenix is very angry when he hears the girl's story. ☐
- 7 There is a dead cat in the cupboard. ☐

2 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why is the girl so nervous at the beginning of the story?
.....
- 2 Why does Madam Crowl need three people to look after her?
.....
- 3 Why does the ghost lead the people in the house to the cupboard?
.....
- 4 How does the Squire know that the bones are those of Squire Crowl's first son?
.....

Montague Rhodes James (1862–1936) taught for most of his life at Cambridge University and then at Eton, one of England's oldest and most famous schools. Ghost stories were his hobby. Every year he wrote a new ghost story to tell to his friends on Christmas Eve by the fire. He wanted his listeners and readers 'to feel pleasantly uncomfortable when walking along a lonely road at nightfall'.

ACTIVITIES

1 Match the two parts of the sentences.

- 1 Mrs Mothersole is hanged because ☒ e
- 2 Sir Matthew does not come down to breakfast because ☐
- 3 The villagers are amazed because ☐
- 4 Sir Richard does not sleep well because ☐
- 5 The gardener falls from the tree because ☐
- 6 The spiders run out of the tree because ☐
 - a it is on fire.
 - b Mrs Mothersole's body has gone.
 - c he hears strange noises.
 - d he is dead.
 - e people think she is a witch.
 - f he sees something terrible.

2 All these messages appear in the story. What do they mean?

- 1 'There will be guests at Castringham Hall.' (page 23)
.....
- 2 'Cut it down.' (page 26)
.....
- 3 'Her young ones also drink blood.' (page 26)
.....
- 4 'You will look for me in the morning and I will not be there.'
(page 28)
.....

Ambrose Bierce (1842–1914?) was a miserable man who hated the world. He was born into a poor family. There were thirteen children, and all their names began with 'A'. Bierce fought in the American Civil War and saw some terrible things. Later he became a journalist. He wrote ninety tales of war, terror and the Wild West. In 1912 Bierce went to Mexico. He never returned, but his death was not recorded and his body was never found. The last news of him was a letter he posted in Chihuahua in Mexico in 1913.

ACTIVITIES

1 Put the sentences in order.

- 1 Henry Armstrong sits up in his coffin. ☐
- 2 Jess and the two young men run away screaming. ☐
- 3 Henry Armstrong goes to sleep in his grave. ☒
- 4 Jess is waiting there with the body of Henry Armstrong. ☐
- 5 The older man, Jess, takes the top off the coffin. ☐
- 6 The two young men go back to their college. ☐
- 7 They take his coffin out of the ground. ☐
- 8 Three men start to dig him up. ☐

2 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why doesn't Henry Armstrong try to get out of his grave?
.....
- 2 Why is it easy to dig up the coffin?
.....
- 3 What do the young men want a body for?
.....
- 4 What does Jess do after the young men run away from the graveyard?
.....

Rhoda Broughton (1840–1920) was a writer at a time when few jobs were open to women. She wrote her first novel in six weeks and showed it to her uncle, Sheridan Le Fanu. He liked it and printed it in 1867 in monthly parts in his *Dublin University Magazine*. More books followed and Broughton was able to try writing ghost stories for fun. She was very well known in her lifetime, but very few people know her work today.

ACTIVITIES

1 Underline the correct words in each sentence.

- 1 The storyteller *does* / *doesn't* want to go to the seaside.
- 2 *Elizabeth* / *The storyteller* has the idea of going abroad.
- 3 Elizabeth dreams about the man *in Brussels* / *in Germany*.
- 4 Elizabeth sees the man *in Brussels* / *in Wiesbaden*.
- 5 *The storyteller* / *Elizabeth* wants to have a lot of money.
- 6 The storyteller *returns* / *doesn't return* to Lucerne quickly.
- 7 They have been married for *three* / *almost five* weeks when the storyteller returns to Lucerne.
- 8 Elizabeth *wanted* / *didn't want* to leave with the man.

2 Answer the questions

- 1 Why doesn't Elizabeth want to go to the Lake District for their honeymoon?
.....
- 2 Where do they decide to go for their honeymoon?
.....
- 3 Why does the storyteller leave his wife in Lucerne?
.....
- 4 Who else sees the man in Lucerne?
.....
- 5 Where do you think Elizabeth is?
.....

There was never enough time in the day for **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle** (1859–1930). He went into politics, played top level cricket, fought in the Boer War, designed a new gun and invented cross-country skiing. And of course he was a writer. He wrote poems and plays, as well as science fiction, sea adventures, crime and horror stories and historical tales. But people today remember him for only one thing – his famous detective, Sherlock Holmes.

ACTIVITIES

1 Who or what do the underlined words in these sentences refer to?

- 1 He likes spending money, but he has no job. *Marshall*
- 2 He has got a rich brother.
- 3 It has gardens full of animals and birds.
- 4 They don't seem to be a happy couple.
- 5 It lives in a cage inside a large room.
- 6 He's the only human who can touch the cat.
- 7 He tricks him into staying in the cat's room.
- 8 The cat eats him in the morning.
- 9 He dies on the same day as Everard.

2 Answer the questions.

- 1 Why was Everard's wife rude to Marshall when he arrived at Greylands?
.....
- 2 Why did the cat suddenly want to kill Everard?
.....
- 3 Why did Everard's wife thank Marshall after Everard was killed?
.....
- 4 Why did Everard want to kill Marshall?
.....

Edith Nesbit (1858–1924) is well known for her children’s books but not many people know that she wrote horror stories. Nesbit married very young and brought up five children, not all her own. She wrote to earn money to run the house. Her house was always full of people, but she could sit in a corner and write happily.

ACTIVITIES

1 Underline the mistake in each sentence. Write the correct words.

- 1 The letter-writer can’t see any other houses. *windows*
- 2 The storyteller loved Valeria many months ago.
- 3 The storyteller is excited about climbing over the roofs.
.....
- 4 John climbs onto the carriage house first.
- 5 Miss Rowsley tries to kill John with the kitchen knife.
.....
- 6 Miss Rowsley invited Valeria to come and live with her.
.....
- 7 Miss Rowsley says she hated the storyteller when they were young.
- 8 The girl falls from the window and dies at the end of the story.
.....

2 Answer the questions.

- 1 Who is the storyteller’s son?
.....
- 2 Who does Miss Rowsley think Sophia is?
.....
- 3 Who is William?
.....
- 4 What is the ‘brown ink’ in the title of the story?
.....

Charles Dickens (1812–70) enjoyed quite a happy childhood. But when he was twelve, his father was suddenly taken to prison. He had borrowed a lot of money and could not pay it back. The Dickens family, except Charles, went to prison with him. When he was still a child, Dickens worked ten hours a day in a factory. He later travelled the country as a newspaper reporter. He used his experiences of life and the people he met in his great books and stories.

ACTIVITIES

1 Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- 1 The storyteller doesn't see the murder. ☒ T
- 2 Everybody in Piccadilly sees the two men walking down the street. ☐
- 3 Everybody in the courtroom sees the murdered man. ☐
- 4 People in the courtroom change their stories when the ghost comes near them. ☐
- 5 The jury doesn't find the prisoner guilty. ☐
- 6 The murderer sees the storyteller in a dream. ☐

2 Complete this story from the next day's newspaper.

'BEDROOM MURDERER' GUILTY!

The 'Bedroom Murderer' was found guilty yesterday by a jury of ¹..... men at the Old Bailey. The trial lasted for ²..... days. On the ³..... day, the jury was shown a ⁴..... of the dead man. This was found in the ⁵..... pocket. Many people spoke in court. Some of them, including a woman and a ⁶....., strangely ⁷..... their stories. The jury took ⁸..... hours to find the prisoner guilty.