

Create Your Own Mini Horror Story

A. Pick a story starter that intrigues you:

1. "Imagine you are home alone at night, and you're in your bedroom getting ready for bed when you hear something rustling in the living room. A shiver runs down your spine and you know you won't be able to sleep unless you check to make sure you're alone. You walk out into the dark and you see this item has been placed in the living room. You look around, but nobody is there..."



2. "You're walking through the woods completely alone, and realize you're lost. You try to retrace your steps, but the winding trails all seem to take you deeper into the woods. You begin to panic as darkness engulfs the forest. You break into a cold sweat and run down the path, when suddenly you trip on something poking out of the ground. Curious, you turn and begin to dig up the item with your hands. With some of the dirt cleared you reveal this item in the dirt below."



3. “You’re at a friend’s house playing hide-and-seek. You scurry up to the attic to hide behind an old dusty rocking chair. As you crouch in the dark attic, you hear something move behind you. When you look back, there is an object that you didn’t notice before. It’s under a black cloth. You lift the cloth and reveal this item.”



B. Choose an object from MoPOP’s *Scared to Death* exhibit:



Stick figure prop from *The Blair Witch Project*, 1999
 Courtesy of Haxan Films and Eduardo Sánchez and Ben Rock.



Necronomicon Ex-Mortis, the Book of the Dead, featured in *Ash vs. Evil Dead*, Season 2, 2016-2017.



Lament Configuration Box from *Hellraiser: Inferno*, 2000. Courtesy of Kurt Root.



Concept art for Leatherface’s mask from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, 2003. Drawing by Scott Stoddard. Courtesy of Kurt Root.



Facehugger from *Aliens*, 1986. Allen Family Collection

C. Choose an element to enhance your story: You can choose:

1. Sound and music – What sounds or music can you hear in this scene?
2. Distance between characters – How close or far apart are the characters, and why?
3. Word choice – What descriptive language is being used? How do the characters speak? Are there any words that stand out as odd or intriguing?

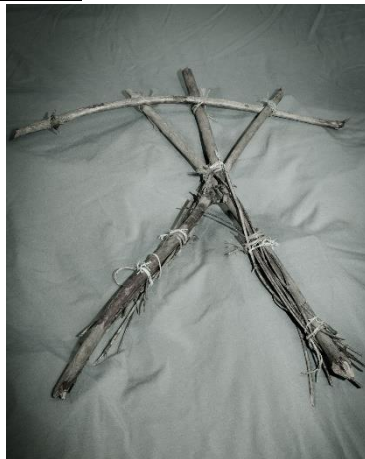
D. Start drafting the continuation of your short horror story.

Imagine you are the person in the story starter. Think of how you would feel in the given situation. What could this item mean? Is it a piece of a bigger thing? Is it alive? Possessed? Use your imagination along with the elements you thought about earlier to continue the horror story.

For example, if my story starter was:

“You’re at a sleepover, some friends dare you to go into the basement with the lights off and stay in there for 1 minute with only a flashlight to guide you. You accept the dare and descend the stairs into the damp and cold basement. You shine your light around to see what’s down there and come across **this item.**”

My object was:



Stick figure prop from *The Blair Witch Project*, 1999
Courtesy of Haxan Films and Eduardo Sánchez and Ben Rock.

And my element was:

sounds and music

ghoulissh voices droning and moaning

Sounds and Music

=
results in

Gives an eerie feeling/ possible connection with the occult

This audience reaction

I could continue the story by saying . . .

“I squinted in the dark and could faintly make out some sort of symbol made of sticks. As I drew closer to the eerie relic, I worried that it may be cursed. It might have been used for some sort of dark ritual. I lifted a trembling finger and reached out to touch the sticks crudely bound together by wire. I heard a strange chanting in my head drawing me in. Like a chorus of ghoulish voices droning and moaning and commanding me to come closer. Suddenly, my friends burst through the basement door letting in a flood of light. I jumped and turned towards them. “Minute’s up!” they shouted. I quickly ran back up the stairs. I didn’t mention a word of it to my friends. I started to think I had imagined the whole thing until later that night when I woke to the sound of voices chanting. It sounded like it was coming from the basement...”

Now you try!

Which story starter did you choose?

#1

#2

#3

Which element would you like to focus on? (Sound and music, distance between characters, or word choice.)

What impact does the chosen element have on your audience?

_____ = _____
Your element results in This audience reaction

How would you continue the story? What happens next?

Congratulations! You've created your own horror story. You learned how to combine many different elements to elicit a specific feeling in your audience. Now it's time to share your story with others. Find someone in your home to tell your story to, and see how they react. Post it to social media and tag #MoPOPDontStop!

There are many ways to continue the creativity you've started today. You could:

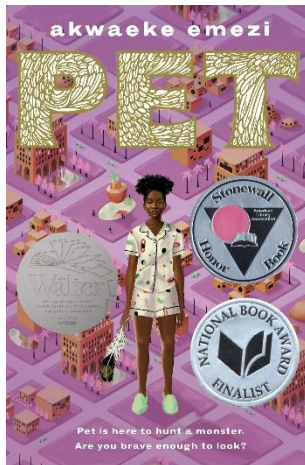
- Turn your story into a graphic novel.
- Film your story as a short video or TikTok.
- Take a series of photos that shows each step of your story.
- Continue adding to your written story.

What will you create next?

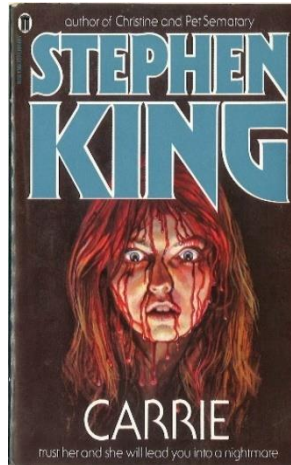
Extra Inspiration

On the following pages, we've listed some horror novels and films that might spark your imagination: (Please let your teacher or guardian help you select these - many contain mature content.)

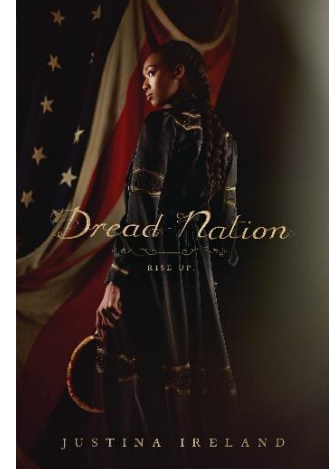
Novels:



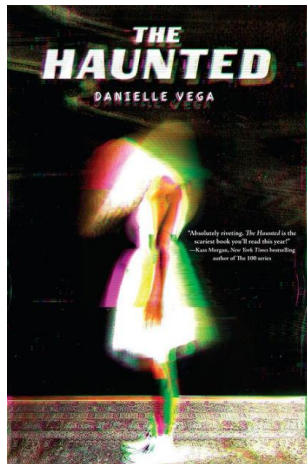
[Pet by Akwaeke Emezi](#)



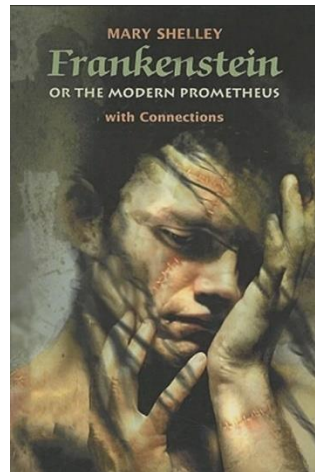
[Carrie by Stephen King](#)



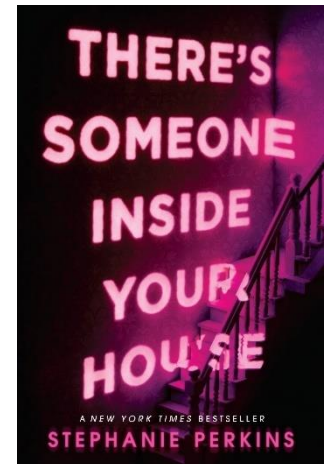
[Dread Nation by Justina Ireland](#)



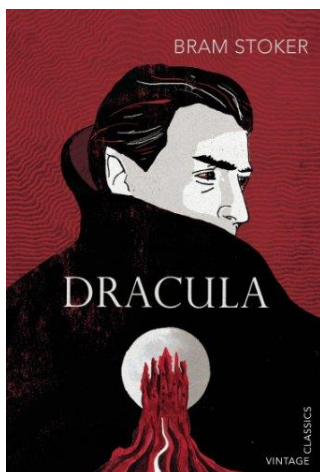
[The Haunted by Danielle Vega](#)



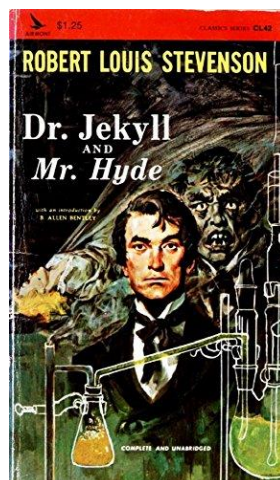
[Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus by Mary Shelley](#)



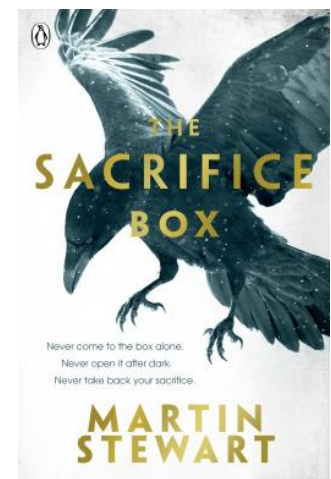
[There's Someone Inside Your House by Stephanie Perkins](#)



[Dracula by Bram Stoker](#)

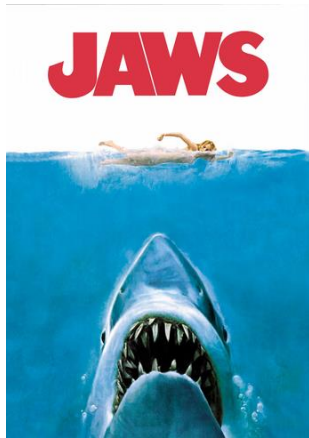


[Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson](#)

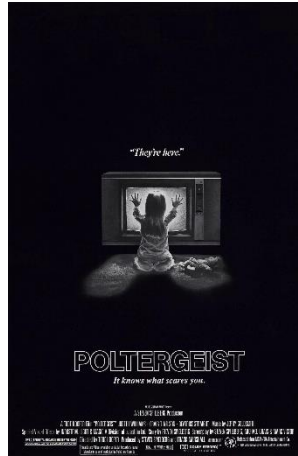


[The Sacrifice Box by Martin Stewart](#)

Films:



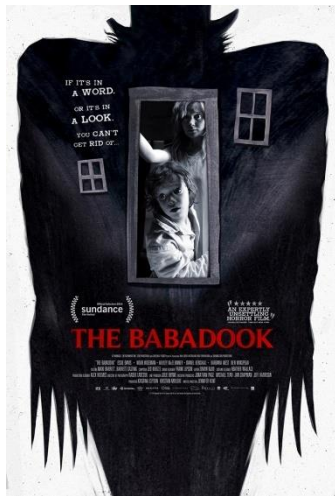
[Jaws \(1975\) rated PG](#)



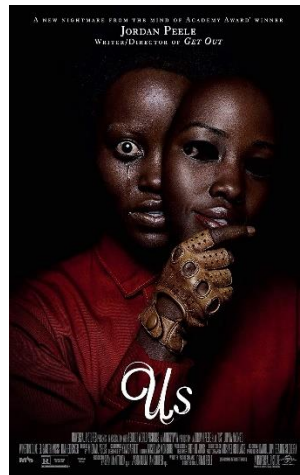
[Poltergeist \(1982\) rated PG](#)



[The Sixth Sense \(1999\)
rated PG-13](#)



[Babadook \(2014\) not rated](#)



[Us \(2019\) rated R](#)



[The Others \(2001\) rated PG-13](#)



[The Ring \(2002\) rated PG-13](#)



[Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark
\(2019\) rated PG-13](#)



[Cloverfield \(2008\) rated PG-13](#)