

Project 3: Gloom House

Objective

To use setting and characterisation to engage readers' interest (Year 4 Strand 9).

What's on the CD-ROM

Gloom House

- Select a location on the map and roll over it to reveal questions to answer about how it could form a scary setting.

Wild cards

- Select cards containing features that will form the basis of a scary story.

Scary plan

- Complete the story planning frame.

My scary story

- Compose a story using the writing templates.

What to do

For this project the children select key elements to incorporate into a scary story.

- Open the CD-ROM file 'Gloom House'. This map provides a starting point and questions to prompt thoughts about a story setting. Ask the children to select a location from the map, think about how it may feature in a story, then call up, discuss and answer the questions.
- Hand out copies of photocopiable page 40 'Gloom House' and encourage small groups of children to plan a route through the map. Ask: *Why would someone go there? Could they be there by accident? Who or what would they encounter? Where would they end up?* As they suggest ideas, invite them to write on their own copy of the map. Gradually, the step-by-step development of a story will emerge.
- Different groups can work on developing ideas for selected settings and address the CD-ROM questions. They should think of descriptive words to draw the atmosphere around their account of this setting.
- Next, open the CD-ROM file 'Wild cards' (or use photocopiable page 41) and click on one card from each category (character, setting and object). Then as a class use the features on the three selected cards and build up ideas around them which will form key elements to a scary story. After linking these features together to make a story, the children can add other characters, settings or objects as they wish.
- Ultimately, this can lead to the children writing a story involving all the wild cards and their own features. However, it is worth bearing in mind some aspects of writing that are particularly supported by these cards:
 - Character cards encourage thought about the personality they inject into their story, rather than just writing about some flat characters.
 - Setting cards encourage movement around an imaginary region.
 - Objects raise questions that can suggest a whole narrative, such as: *Why is there a piece of paper inside the bottle?*
- Using two character cards, a pair of children could devise a conversation. They could say the dialogue aloud, reworking it as they develop a scene.
- This material is open-ended. The children could devise new wild cards, imagine what lies beyond the edges of the map, plan the inside of Gloom House, or invent a system of tunnels connecting a few locations.
- When the children have a collection of ideas they need to bring them together and form a plan for a story using the 'Scary plan', which is on photocopiable pages 42–43 or in the 'Planning' section of the CD-ROM.
- When their plans are complete open the CD-ROM file 'My scary story' and select a blank layout to open a page. Explain that this is going to be the first page in their story. Demonstrate how to add text and insert and resize images from the 'Image bank' (see Help file). Once the children understand how the writing templates work allow them to start writing their own scary story.