

Sinister Stories

Activity 1

Read the first part of the story 'Three Times is a Sentence', up to where it says "a complete nutter".

- What are your first impressions of the two characters?

Activity 2

Now read up to "I wonder where he's gone?"

- Make a prediction about what you think will happen next
- What do you think "three times is a sentence" means?
- I think that...
- I predict that...
- I think this because...

Activity 3

Read to the end of the story.

- What is your reaction to the story? How did it make you feel, and why?

Activity 4

Now, go through Three Times Is a Sentence. Can you find five examples of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs? Make sure you choose the most **interesting** ones you can find!

| Nouns | Verbs |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. |
| Adjectives | Adverbs |
| 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. | 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. |

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Activity 5

Look carefully at the words you have chosen.

- Why did you choose these words?
- What makes them powerful?
- What do they tell you about the characters, setting or events in the story?

Activity 6

Look at the picture below. What nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs can you think of to describe this place?



| Nouns | Verbs |
|------------|---------|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. |
| Adjectives | Adverbs |
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. |

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Activity 7

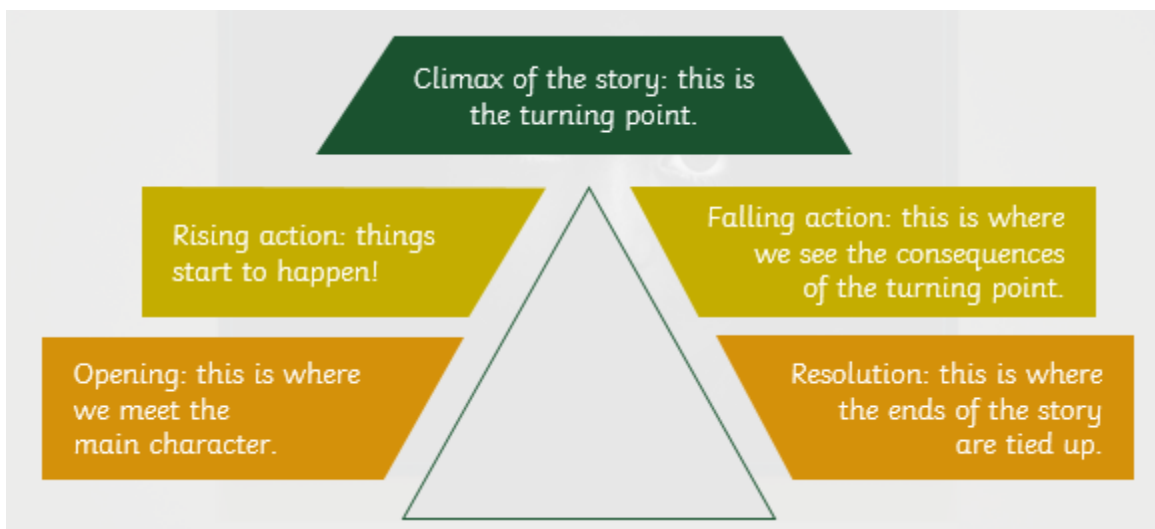
- Do you think it is reasonable to be scared of the dark?
- Why are some people scared of the dark?
- Can you think of any films or books which feature fear of the dark?

Activity 8

Read 'The Darkness' by Joanie Marc

Activity 9

All stories have a narrative structure. This is the way the story develops. A typical narrative structure usually looks like this:



- Can you chart the narrative structure of 'The Darkness'? Does it have each of these stages? Use sheet 4 to help you.

Activity 10

- Sometimes a story will subvert a reader's expectations. This means it will do something unexpected.
- Do you think The Darkness subverts narrative structures in any way? Think about the resolution of the story.

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Activity 11

Think back to *The Darkness*.

- How would you describe the setting of the story?
- Is this the sort of setting you would expect for a sinister story?
- How does the setting contribute to the mood and atmosphere of the piece?

‘The cupboard was really small, built into the side of the room and overhanging the stairs. He used it for keeping clothes and storing a few old toys and magazines that he couldn’t bear to part with. Like his X-Wing fighter, which he’d been given by Dad and which one day would be worth a fortune, provided he kept the box in pristine condition... There was no light in the cupboard and the door didn’t close properly, so there was always a sliver of darkness which he could see against the gleaming white of the door surround.’

Activity 12

Now, look carefully at the text. Can you highlight or underline any words or phrases the writer uses to make the setting become more sinister?

Unsettling Settings!

- Using a familiar, domestic setting can contribute to the spookiness of a story. If sinister events happen somewhere familiar and safe, then it can be very unsettling!

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Activity 13

Think of an everyday setting. Can you write a paragraph, describing it in as much detail as possible?

- What are the colours you can see?
- What do the surroundings feel like if you touch them?
- Is it clean/dirty/tidy/untidy?
- Are there any particular smells?
- Is there any furniture?
- Who do you think lives here or visits here?
- Can you hear anything in the setting?

Activity 14

Now, think about what could go wrong in your setting. Can you think of a sinister event which could change the mood and atmosphere?

Think about:

- what could happen;
- what it would look like;
- what it would sound like;
- how you would react to it.

Activity 15

You are going to think about writing a sinister short story of your own.

It's important to plan your work, so you know where it is heading. Having a plan is like following a map – it ensures your writing doesn't get lost, or side-tracked!



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Activity 13

You plan should:

- detail the characters, setting, events, themes and ideas of your short story;
- show the narrative structure of your short story.
- It is up to you how you lay out your plan. Try to keep it simple and easy for you to understand.
- Use sheet 4, the narrative structure worksheet, and sheet 5 ideas to include, to help