

INSIDE YOUR EERIE MAGAZINE

THE CHILLING WORKS OF HELEN
CARTLEDGE, LUISA CONNORS, LAUREN
DICKEN, JOY GETLIFFE AND NIAMH
WALKER. WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
LAURA MICHELANGELI AND DEAN HILL,
AND A SPECIAL VIDEO CONTRIBUTION
FROM UOB'S DR JIMMY PACKHAM

In partnership with





WELCOME TO THE SPINE—TINGLING WORLD OF HAUNTED BIRMINGHAM



LAURA MICHELANGELI

Project Officer, National Literacy Trust – Birmingham

The National Literacy Trust empowers people with the literacy skills they need to succeed in life. We work in the communities to deliver place-based solutions using local partnerships. In Birmingham, our focus is supporting secondary aged young people and adults. In 2023 we launched the Haunted Birmingham campaign, a method of celebrating scary stories based in Birmingham. In partnership with the University of Birmingham, we encouraged people to write scary stories that were set in our wonderful, but oftentimes spooky city. We received hundreds of entries, some of which you can read in this magazine. The Haunted Birmingham campaign is one we plan to run annually so when Dean, a Literacy Champion for the National Literacy Trust, came to us with the idea of curating a magazine based on the project we jumped at the chance! What you have in your hands is several months of work from many of our amazing Literacy Champions. There are no tricks in here, only treats! I hope you enjoy reading.



DEAN HILL

Editor and Literacy Champion

Stories have the ability to transport us to other realms, to evoke emotions we never knew existed, and to connect us with something greater than ourselves. They are the whispers of the past, the echoes of the present, and the glimpses of the future. I believe that every story has the power to captivate, inspire, and ignite our imagination, and this initiative by the National Literacy Trust is so important for young people to not only read but try their hand at creative writing. So, as you immerse yourself in the pages of our haunted magazine, remember the importance of storytelling. Embrace the tales that linger in the shadows. And, above all, let the stories we share remind you that the greatest adventure of all is the journey into the unknown. Finally, a big thank you to all those who have contributed and made this magazine possible.



NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM – THE SPOOKY CREATURES HIDDEN IN BIRMINGHAM

LAUREN DICKEN

When the sun sets, the halls of the museum wake from their slumber, and the dead and all their terrifying tales come alive! This sounds like the stuff of spooky stories, but right here in Birmingham is home to some of this very activity - where long dead creatures lurk behind glass just waiting to be discovered!

Dinosaurs, giant insects, and other prehistoric beasts can seem like monsters out of a horror movie, but they used to live on Earth the same way you or I do now, just when the world was a very different place. The tyranasaurus rex lived around 67 million years ago and was about 12 metres in height weighing up to 14 tons. Can you imagine a creature weighing about three elephants with 60 serrated teeth the size of your hand, and just how bone-chilling it would be to come across one!

Luckily here in Birmingham we don't have any living dinosaurs (that anyone has come across yet!) but there are still lots of memories of these giant creatures, the environment they lived in and the creatures that lived there with them all around the world. Fossils are one of the best examples of these traces that long extinct creatures have left behind. These ancient remains of creatures that died long ago are one of the spookiest things you'll find in Birmingham. They're full of mystery - who knows what some of these incredible creatures looked like and what life was like for them?



The process of a mighty creature like a dinosaur dying and becoming just a stone reminder of what it once was is awe inspiring and a little spooky as it all happens right beneath our feet. It begins as the animal dies and rests on the earth, before being swallowed by layer after layer of sediment. Over time these layers crush the remains of the once terrifying creature and a transformation begins. Minerals seep into every nook and cranny, turning flesh to stone and creating an imprint that you can still see today in museums. These remnants of bone and fossils long outlive the insect, fish or even mammoth they came from!

So where can you go to come face to face with what's left of these formidable monsters? The Lapworth Museum of Geology is the most impressive collection of these specimens in the Midlands, with over a quarter of a million, including fossils and even meteorites! You'll be able to touch fossils and maybe even skulls of our prehistoric ancestors, if you can brave it!

Visiting places like the Lapworth Museum is a fantastic way to learn about the Earth's history and it's a chance to see some of these scary creatures up close, ask questions, and satisfy your curiosity about the world around you and the world millions of years before! And the best part about the study of fossils is there's still so much left to uncover: maybe one day you'll discover a spooky secret about the creatures that used to roam the Earth?

LAPWORTH MUSEUM OF GEOLOGY

Explore life over the past 3.5 billion years









Lapworth Rocks

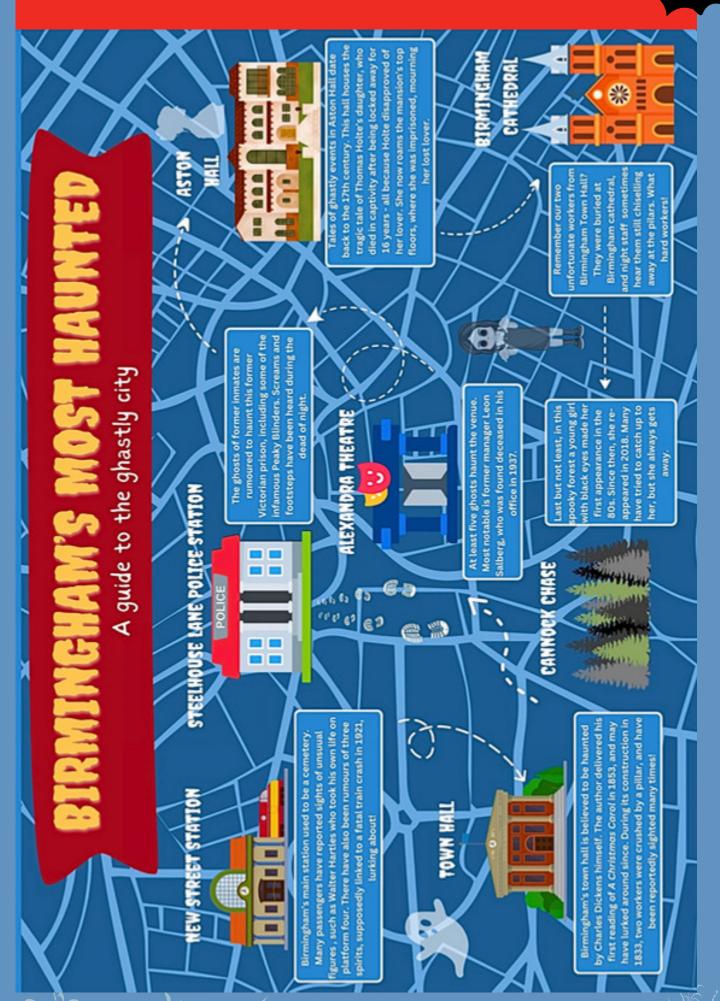


The Lapworth Museum of Geology dates back to 1880 and is named after Charles Lapworth, one of the most important and influential geologists in the late 19th and early 20th century. It is one of the oldest specialist geological museums in the UK and holds in excess of 250,000 diverse and fascinating objects.

The Museum recently underwent an extensive £2.7 million redevelopment and our visitors can now explore life over the past 3.5 billion years. The Museum showcases exceptional objects from one of the UK's most outstanding geological collections with many of the items now on display originating from the Midlands area. A visit to the Lapworth Museum provides a fascinating insight into how the Earth formed and changed over time, and how life on Earth developed and evolved.



CREATED AND WRITTEN BY LUISA CONNORS



To view this guide, please visit https://ibb.co/wQ37sx5



Jessica parked her car in front of a row of terraced houses on Cuckoo Road. The one she was looking for was unassuming, like any other, with a white brick exterior and shrivelled ivy scaling the walls. The curtains were drawn back in the window, with a hazy view of Ikea furniture. The whole house suggested nothing out of the ordinary, and that the occupant was just as ordinary, but Jessica couldn't believe this. She had received a phone call two days earlier from a man claiming to have a story. There was an urgency in his voice, but he refused to give her any details. Instead he had begged her to come over to his house for an interview. Intrigued and desperate (it was almost Halloween and she needed a spooky story for the Birmingham Mail), she had accepted and arranged to come and interview him as soon as possible.

She rapped loudly on the door of number 12, the sound of her knuckles on the wood piercing through the strange silence of the street. A man with brown hair and a feathery beard answered, slightly squinting as if the light outside was too bright for him.

'You must be Stanley?' Jessica asked.

'Yes,' the man replied, 'Come in, come in.'

He ushered her inside with a slightly jittery manner. She waited politely for him to show her into the living room, her eyes grazing over the dark hallway. The living room wasn't much lighter, a few lightbulbs in the light fixture had clearly stopped working. Jessica sat down on the crisp, cold black sofa and Stanley sat opposite her, watching with guarded interested as she took out her reporter's notebook. 'Thanks for coming, I know I didn't give much away when I phoned you.'

'No problem, now what is this story that you have for me?'

Stanley stared intensely at her. 'Let me tell you about the black-eyed Girl of Cannock Chase.'



He was a paranormal investigator, and he had actually come across the black-eyed Girl by accident. 'You've probably heard that Cannock Chase is a magnet for ghosts and ghouls.' When Jessica shook her head, he frowned in surprise. 'No? The pig-man?' She shook her head. Getting over this surprise, he continued, 'Ah, well it seems to be quite a supernatural place. Lots of sightings of UFO's reported, et cetera, but I'm getting off topic.' He was investigating reports of a beast last week in Cannock Chase woods, wandering around for a bit, checking out the areas that it had been sighted before setting up his camera in one location. Didn't see anything for hours, so he was just considering going home when there was a flash of white which quickly disappeared again behind the trees. Maybe it was the beast, but no one had recorded it as being white, all the witnesses said it was black. He hastily packed up his equipment and ventured deeper into the woods, and the white being, closer this time, flittered like a bird in front of him. Losing it again though, he started running, following it. He spotted it again and it didn't move, so he got a good look at the creature. It was a girl, quite small in a white dress. Her hair was lank and greasy, and for a moment he felt worried for her, thinking she had got separated from her mother. Then he looked closely at her face, and what he saw was terrifying. She had no eyes, her eye sockets were deep and black, like coal. A shiver ran up his spine, and then she disappeared.

He waited another hour, pushing through plants and trees that brushed against him like fingers, but she never reappeared. The mood in the forest had changed though, there was a sudden chill that settled in the air like a mist. He had returned home and researched a black-eyed Child in Cannock Chase woods, but nothing had come up.

'Have you told anyone else about this?' Jessica asked.

Stanley shook his head. 'You're the first person I've told.'

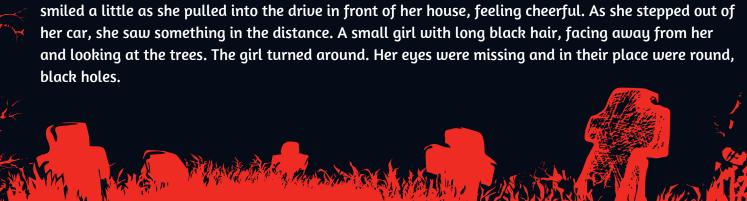
Jessica nodded, putting away her notebook. 'Don't tell anyone else about it. Not yet anyway.'

'Will you write an article about it?' Stanley asked. She couldn't tell whether he was nervous or just curious.

'I think it's an interesting story, I'd certainly like to write about it.'

'I thought so.' Stanley replied carefully, showing her to the door once she had her coat on.

As Jessica drove back home, she thought about Stanley's story. She didn't believe in paranormal stuff, she chalked these kind of sightings up to people's imagination, but she was pleased with what Stanley had given her. She had a scoop, a new urban legend that no one else had heard yet. She





CONJURING FEAR: THE POWER OF A HORROR MOVIE TITLE

HELEN CARTLEDGE

Imagine this: you are walking along a busy pavement, dodging pedestrians and the blustering wind. You wrap your coat firmly around you, digging your hands deeper into your pockets. You glimpse up and a bus hurtles past. Its advertisement briefly flashes past. A horror movie. It goes on past and strangely you hear yourself repeating the title in your head. You find yourself thinking what is it about? How scary will it be?

Like Nathaniel Hawthorne, American novelist and short story writer, once said "words - so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary, how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them". I think this goes beyond the traditional use of language in literature and politics but highlights the extraordinary power it can gain through only a few words carefully chosen.





This can definitely be seen within horror movie titles. For example, returning to 'The Silence of the Lambs' which made \$275,726,716 in the Global Box Office practises this idea of combining words to create powerful images. Strong feelings of unease and disquiet are evoked through its title. The combination of 'silence' and 'lambs' not only emphasises this disquiet but also conjures an image of innocence and vulnerability. Most importantly it suggests this is going to be disrupted. It creates an irresistible tension in the viewer to understand how the silence is going to be broken or why it was enforced in the first place.

In contrast the title 'FeardotCom' merely confirms its genre as a horror movie through its use of the word 'fear'. Whilst it could suggest the involvement of the digital world the vagueness of the title does not conjure an excitement or tension, but simply communicates the audience should be feeling terror. Critically it is telling and not showing. A fatal flaw.

This is not me suggesting that the lack of words is its limiting factor though. 'Jaws' despite being composed of one singular - albeit very powerful - noun is the second highest grossing horror movie. The fact that it was released in 1975 shows the sustained popularity and how the imagery of consumption, the unknown, and death continues to captivate audiences.

So which horror movie would you rather watch? 'The Exorcist' or 'Slither'? 'Jaws' or 'FeardotCom'? 'The Silence of the Lambs' or 'Psycho'?





HAUNTED HORROR STORY

HELEN CARTLEDGE

The darkness was complete. Black. A deep black. The only light coming from the glow of the clock on the old clock tower. He was hurrying along in the strong wind, his coat clasped tightly around his body, his collar turned up to protect from the freezing breaths of wind that escaped down his neck. He momentarily glanced up to see the clock's hands move to seven. He mutters under his breath. Why does he have to finish uni at this time? His footsteps quickened despite the weariness that submerged him as if underwater.

The wind quickened growling its complaints, as leaves scuttled out of its warpath. A sudden sense of urgency grasped him. He looked behind as a shiver ran down his spine. He felt deathly cold.

Again he glanced up at the clock tower. The nervous trilling of his heart - like fingers tapping on a desk - stopped. It was completely still. A hush had descended as if the world's red curtain had descended on the play. But just for a moment. He could have sworn he saw a movement. A flash of a face.

He had stopped now and was craning his neck skywards. It was then that he saw it again. A face. Severe in its linings, its eyebrows arched in a challenge, its lips unmoving. Their eyes locked. He couldn't tear away. His hands had fallen down by his sides and were stiff with cold. It went unnoticed.

The man's face continued to glare down at him. His lips began to move his words somehow leaking down into the night. "Help me!". Only now did the boy realise the man's fingers grasped on to the edge of the clock tower, bone white in the clock face's luminance. He was getting closer to the edge, his whole body swaying over the precipice. The hard concrete gleamed as if about to welcome the falling, helpless body.

Dong. Dong. The clock boomed as its hands shifted towards quarter past. Both boy and man (ghost?!) jumped backwards. The boy took a sharp intake of breath. His mind was whirring. Where had he seen that face before? His heart leaped into his throat. Surely not. But it must be. Old Joe. Joseph Chamberlain. It clicked together like a key turning a lock.

The boy turned and fled into the night.



HOW TO WRITE YOUR OWN STORY

NIAMH WALKER

Whilst reading fantastic stories is a great way to relax, expand your vocabulary and explore new worlds outside of our own, writing our own stories can be just as rewarding and fun! Would you like to have a go at penning your own tale? Have you a thrilling plot in mind? Would you like to give fiction writing a go but just don't know where to start? Below are some helpful tips and tricks to get you on track to writing your own masterpiece – remember: your story doesn't have to be perfect, but you may surprise yourself with how much you enjoy it. Happy writing!

STEP 1 - GET YOUR IDEAS DOWN ON PAPER

Sometimes, breaking the ice and putting a pen to paper can be really daunting, so focus on just one idea that you think would be good to try out. Mind map, jot, sketch — whatever way works best for you when getting some initial ideas down. Some points to consider could be:

- What would I like to write about? Love?
 Fear? Worry? Anger? Bravery?
- What kind of story would I like to write? An adventure? A spooky story? A romantic tale?
- Are there any details that I can take from my own life that I would like to base a story around? Hard times? A lovely memory? A time I overcame a real challenge?



STEP 2 - CREATE YOUR PROTAGONIST



Your protagonist (or 'main character') is the real centre of your story, so it's worth taking some time to figure out who they are and where they fit into your story. Consider filling their character out: what is their name? What do they look like? What is their life like? What are their flaws? What are their strengths? What does your story have in store for them?

Some famous protagonists include Harry Potter, Katniss Everdeen, Charlie Spring, Alice from Alice in Wonderland, the Gang in Scooby Doo, and so many others!

STEP 3 - SETTING

Where would you like your story to take place? Setting is crucial for setting the tone for your story, and for providing a place for your action to take place. Below are some picture inspirations to get you started on thinking about what your setting might be. If you're an arty person, why not draw your setting to help you



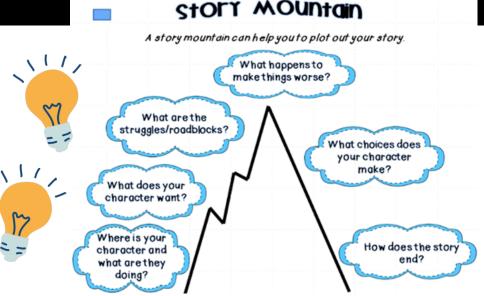
STEP 4 - CONSIDER AN ANTAGONIST



An antagonist (or 'villain') can be great to include in a story, not only to add to the action and to help the plot move forward, but to also reveal more about your protagonist through their encounters with them. Antagonists don't have to be monstrous villains like Voldemort or the Demogorgon (although they can be, if you like!); antagonists can also look like Regina George from Mean Girls, or Rodrick from Diary of a Wimpy Kid the choice is yours.

STEP 5 - PLANNING

The key to clear writing is planning before you begin as this means that you have a clear idea of where your story is going before you start. You may be familiar with the 'Story Mountain' model from school: it sets out a mountain-shaped map of your story's action, where you can establish the opening and hook (what grabs your reader's attention), the rising action, the crisis, the resolution and the ending.



STEP 6 - GET WRITING



The best way to start writing is... to just start writing! It may feel daunting staring at a blank page, but you don't have to write a masterpiece straight away. Once you start getting words on paper, you may start to relax and the writing process will gradually feel more natural. Some tips for writing include:

- Little and often make a little bit of time to regularly work on your project. That way, it can seem less intimidating and more fun!
- Find somewhere quiet space to focus and be with your own thoughts is important when writing. Maybe find a space at home or, if this isn't possible, a local library or maybe even a classroom during break or lunchtimes (but ask your teacher if this is okay first!).
- Show things as well as tell them whilst it is important to direct your reader, it is so important to describe what is happening as part of this! You can use similes, metaphors, personification, the five senses (touch, smell, taste, sight, sound)
- Take a break if the words aren't coming, don't force them. Take a break and come back to it later at a better time where you feel a bit more capable.
- Have fun writing your own story is meant to be fun above anything else, so prioritise having fun with it!



This is where you look back at the fantastic work you have done to see if you would like to make any changes. You may like to compare it to that first plan that you made to see if you stuck to it, an where you may have made/need to make change and why. If you have used an online application such as MS Word, you could use the 'Read Aloud' option under the 'Review' tab to pick up any spelling and grammar errors that you may miss if you are just silently reading it. Also, reach out to friends, family, and/or carers to see if they have any advice on what you could do to improve.





STEP 8 - TAKE PRIDE AND CELEBRATE

Congratulations - you have written a story! This is no mean feat - take pride in all the hard work that you have put into this piece and reflect on what you have learnt during this process. Your voice matters and deserves to be heard: share your story far and wide with people you trust if you feel comfortable to. You never know... it may open a whole new perspective to them and even encourage you to keep writing. Even if you decide not to share it, you can always come back to your story to read and take pride in privately.

We are all full of so many stories; use these tips (and more that you learn along the way) to keep telling yours!



WHAT MAKES A GOOD SETTING FOR A SCARY STORY?

LAURA MICHELANGELI

Project Officer, National Literacy Trust – Birmingham



Task one: Fill in the boxes with ideas.

What makes a setting spooky?

- Darkness
- Old or crumbling buildings

•

•

Why do these make a setting spooky?

Darkness

Because characters can't see what's going on in front of them

· Old or crumbling buildings

Because it hints at the history of the house and what creatures might lurk within

•

•

Task two: Now think about your own local area...

What is the spookiest place near where you live and why?

Task three: How could you include this setting in your story?

Have a look at the bubbles below and come up with your own idea for how to include the setting!

Is the setting where the characters live?

Is the setting where the characters visit?

Is the setting where the characters share their spooky story? The setting is where the characters...

EXCLUSIVE VIDEO

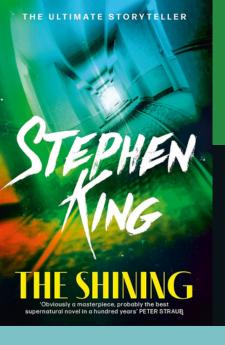
Dr Jimmy Packham University of Birmingham



To get you all trembling in your boots we have a special treat from Jimmy Packham, a senior lecturer and gothic author at the University of Birmingham. Watch as Jimmy teases us with a terrifying tale featuring a factory owner, a horrible accident and strange worm-like creatures. Jimmy explores the presence of gothic and ghost-like stories and influence in the Midlands and how we can use ghost stories to better understand where we come from.

TO VIEW, SIMPLY SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT...





A HAUNTING JOURNEY: A REVIEW OF STEPHEN KING'S "THE SHINING"

DEAN HILL

Editor and Literacy Champion



Stephen King's "The Shining" is a stellar example of psychological horror, crafting a terrifying story that explores the darkest corners of the human mind and the sinister entities that dwell there. First released in 1977, this enduring masterpiece enchants audiences with its intricate storyline, well-developed characters, and hair-raising suspense. Located in the remote Overlook Hotel hidden in the Colorado mountains, the plot traces the Torrance family – Jack, Wendy, and their young son Danny – as they assume the roles of winter caretakers for the ominous establishment. With winter settling in and the hotel isolated from the world outside, the family discovers they are not alone. Shadows lurk within the Overlook, harbouring malevolent secrets and a menacing presence that preys on their deepest fears and doubts.

Central to the narrative is Jack Torrance, a struggling writer tangling with personal demons. King's depiction of Jack's spiral into madness is captivating and haunting. The intense portrayal of his inner battles, provoked by the sinister influences of the hotel, captivates readers as they delve into his unravelling mindset. Equally captivating are the secondary characters, especially Danny Torrance, whose psychic gifts – known as the "shining" – enable him to witness the hotel's dark history and the chilling secrets it holds. Through Danny's perspective, readers glimpse into the past, uncovering the haunting truths that shadow the Overlook Hotel and its residents.

King's artful writing and meticulous descriptions evoke a tangible sense of unease that seeps through each page. From the echoing creaks of the floorboards to the spectral figures that wander the hotel's hallways, the air is thick with tension and a sense of impending doom. Despite the terrifying events that unfold, there are instances of deep emotional significance within the story. The tense dynamics within Jack's family provide a moving backdrop to the unfolding horror, adding layers of complexity to the storyline.

"The Shining" delves deeper than just a supernatural thriller; it delves into the human mind's vulnerability and how fear can push us to extremes. Through his exploration of themes like addiction, abuse, and the perpetuating cycle of violence, King shines a light on the darker aspects of humanity with insightful precision, ultimately lifting the narrative beyond mere entertainment.

Ultimately, "The Shining" takes readers on an eerie expedition into the depths of the human psyche. It serves as a testament to Stephen King's unmatched storytelling skills and his knack for tapping into our collective fears and anxieties. This timeless masterpiece continues to linger in readers' minds long after they turn the final page, demonstrating the enduring impact of horror literature.

THE HAUNTED BIRMINGHAM MAP

EXPLORE HAUNTED BIRMINGHAM: A CITY FILLED WITH SPOOKY STORIES

In winter 2023, we asked young people and adults across Birmingham to write scary stories set in their local area. We received submissions of stories set all over the city: from Kingstanding to King's Norton, Aston Hall to Khan's Fish Bar. Writers imagined nightmarish versions of local heritage sites, schools, parks, restaurants and more.

Use our interactive map to explore all of the Haunted Birmingham stories and the places in which they are scarily set. But tread carefully – who knows what ghostly creatures you will find along the way!







HAUNTED PUZZLES SECTION

My Haunted House Adventure



X R Т Т P G Q X X O В U Ε S M G Н Т Т Υ M D S J Ε Т В S K Α G Ε Z R Q Ε I C D S Ε G 0 S C C Н F M Т F S D Z Ν S G Н S K Н G Α Z Т D G G C P D В В K Υ G O В C Α

Attic
Bat
Chilly
Cobwebs
Coffin
Creak
Curse
Damp

Dark
Decay
Eerie
Flashlight
Gate
Ghost
Hallway
Lightning

Mansion Midnight Mist Moan Moon Owl Raven

Scream



THANK YOU FOR READING