



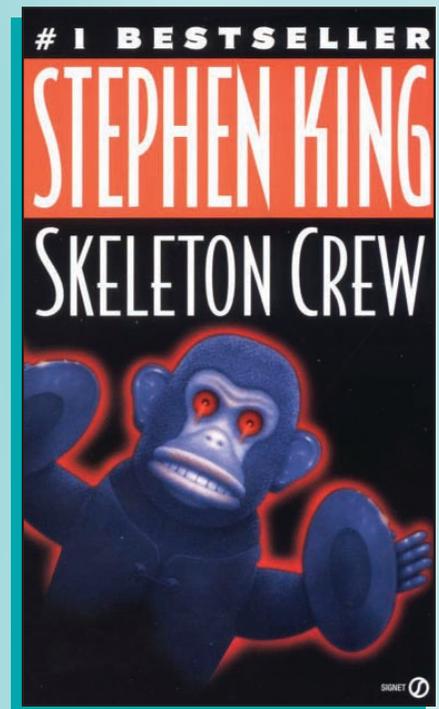
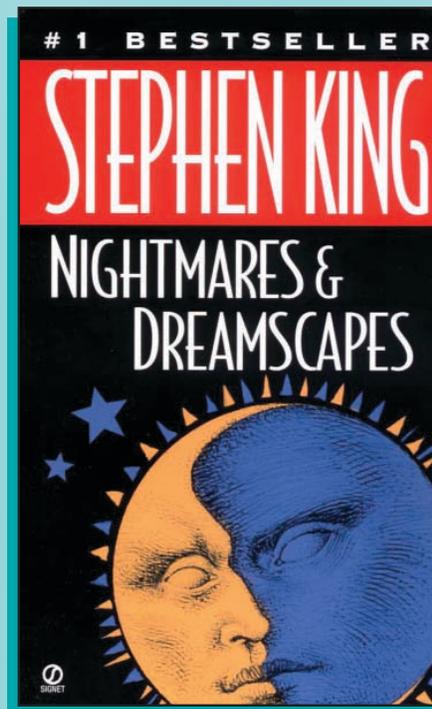
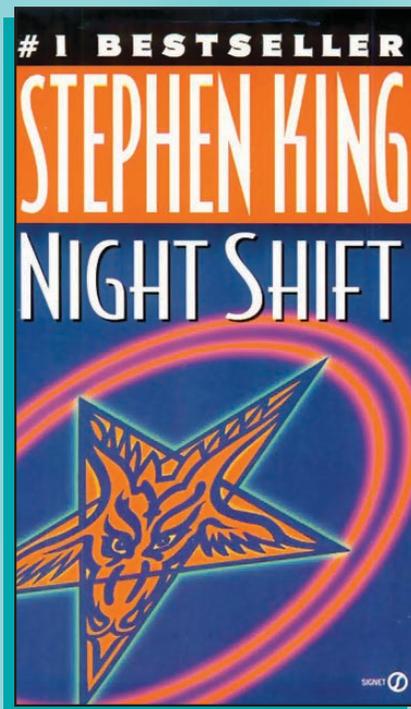
A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET EDITIONS OF

SELECTED HORROR SHORT STORIES OF

STEPHEN KING

from the Anthologies *Night Shift*, *Nightmares and Dreamscapes*, and *Skeleton Crew*

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INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that Stephen King is an incredibly popular author of horror short stories and novels. High school students who have not read his novels have probably seen films based one of them or others for which he has written the screenplays. Because of his popularity with the young, assigning a Stephen King short story to a class will certainly appeal to even the most reluctant readers. Students will read and enjoy his works. Although most teachers recognize the motivational quality of King's work, many have not considered teaching it in the classroom. His often strong language or the grossness of the horror in some of his stories may have been a barrier. However, King has many stories that are not only motivational, but worthy of study. Because students are already familiar with King's work and are intrigued by the genre of horror, they are willing to analyze the stories and use them as a model for their own writing. When introduced as the first readings in a unit on horror and suspense in literature, King's short stories can be excellent springboards to the work of the classic novelists.

The goal of this teacher's guide is to provide a selection of King's short stories that are appropriate for classroom use. Without a doubt they are horrifying; however, they also have important messages about good and evil and human motivation. The vocabulary in the selected stories is frequently challenging, but rarely crude. When hard colloquial language is employed, it is appropriate to the characters and the story. Teachers, however, are warned to pre-read these stories before assigning them to a class, and to use only those that are most appropriate for the maturity of the students.

This teacher's guide will suggest ways to incorporate the selected Stephen King short stories into the high school or college English curriculum. It is divided into the following sections: Introduction, Overview of Stephen King and His Work, Suggestions for Teaching, Extending Students' Knowledge, and A Note About Censorship. The activities suggested require the students' active involvement in the stories and include ideas for discussion, writing, research, drama, and utilization of technology.

WHAT MAKES STEPHEN KING'S FICTION WORTHY OF STUDY?

Recent surveys of high school and college students indicate that the fiction of Stephen King is highly read. In terms of popularity, he is a major contemporary author who has mastered the craft of creating horror and suspense stories, both genres with long historic and literary roots. Such writers as Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, William Shakespeare, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Robert Louis Stevenson, Wilkie Collins, and Charles Dickens are just a few examples of classic writers who won similar popular acclaim in their day.

1. Stephen King is, first and foremost, a good storyteller.
2. He uses terror, horror, and "gross" techniques to captivate his readers.
3. He cleverly creates the unexpected.
4. Youthful and elderly characters are important in his stories.
5. He provides insights into the dark side of humanity.
6. The forces of good and evil are often equal combatants.
7. The fragility of life is a major theme.
8. He writes about "taboo subjects" such as death, destruction, and the unknown.
9. Characters often harbor evil and/or vengeful feelings that compel their actions.
10. He is not a moralist; his stories unfold naturally.

OVERVIEW OF STEPHEN KING AND HIS WORK

Stephen King was born in Portland, Maine, in September 1947. His father left the family while Stephen was very young, and his mother supported them with a variety of low-paying jobs. After moving several times, the family moved to Durham, Maine, where Stephen's mother took care of her aging parents.

Although Stephen's father was not a part of his life, he influenced him by leaving behind many fantasy-horror fiction books. A lonely child who wore thick glasses and was not good in athletics, Stephen preferred the solitary activities of listening to horror stories on the radio, reading scary books, and watching science fiction movies. As a youth, Stephen read avidly and enjoyed a wide variety of books by authors such as John D. MacDonald, Ed McBain, Shirley Jackson, J. R. R. Tolkien, Ken Kesey, Margaret Mitchell, Andre North, Jack London, Agatha Christie, and Thomas Hardy.

By the time Stephen was in high school, he was writing short stories modeled on the books he had read. They were set in small towns and included horror and suspense. He began sending them to science fiction magazines, and although none were published, he did win first prize in an essay contest. He was also developing other interests and becoming more social. He played football and the guitar with a rock-and-roll band. After graduating from high school, he received a scholarship to major in English at the University of Maine at Orono. While in college he had to work several part-time jobs to support himself. In 1971 he married Tabitha Jane Spruce whom he had met at the University and remains married to today.

By the time Stephen graduated from college, he had published two short stories for which he received a total of \$70. However, he could not support himself and Tabitha by writing, and he continued to work at one of his part-time jobs. Finally, he found a job teaching English at Hampden Academy, a private co-ed secondary school. Whenever he could find time, he wrote fiction. Periodically, he would sell a short story to a magazine; however, the young couple barely had enough money for food and other bills.

Discouraged, he threw away a book manuscript. Tabitha, always supportive of his writing, retrieved it and urged him to send it to an editor at Doubleday who had shown some interest in his efforts. Sure enough, Doubleday decided to publish his first novel, *Carrie*, and the novel's paperback rights were sold for \$400,000. Horror readers loved it, and his career was born. In 1976, Brian De Palma turned the novel into a financially successful movie. A paperback tie-in was released along with the film and over four-million copies were sold. Stephen was able to stop teaching and devote full time to writing.

Soon after, Stephen signed a multimillion dollar contract with New American Library, who still publish his paperbacks, and since the publication of *The Dead Zone* in 1979, Viking has published his new hardcover books. Today, Stephen King's novels and short story anthologies have been turned into popular films. While each new book rises to the top of the best-seller charts he, Tabitha, and their three children continue to live modestly in Maine. The King family is very close and talk about the kinds of things many families discuss: little league, books, and movies. The Kings, although famous, lead a normal life. Stephen King admits to having many fears, but he also has many interests and still enjoys reading, radio, and rock-and-roll.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Stephen King has been interviewed by many people. As a best-selling author and master craftsman of tales of horror, he frequently appears in the popular press and media. Through King's own words, students can get a good picture of the man and the writer. Teachers can use King's remarks to encourage discussions about writing and his stories. King's comments have been grouped by topic for easy reference and discussion.

READERS AND READING

"Horror fiction was conservative and that was its appeal to teenagers—the two things go together because teenagers are the most conservative people in American society. You know, small children take it as a matter of course that things will change every day and grown-ups understand that things change sooner or later and their job is to keep them from changing as long as possible. It's only kids in high school who are convinced they're never going to change."

From "An Evening with Stephen King at the Billerica Massachusetts Public Library," 1983. (© by Colony Communications, Inc.)

"I think you can do more with creative writing in high school than you can in college.... the thing about high school is that the students look at school in a different way."

"I had my college students read *Double Indemnity* by James M. Cain...and I had them read a novel by David Morrell called *First Blood*.... I had them read primarily novels...and I wanted them to read, to think, and to write about what they had read."

From "An Interview with Stephen King" by Paul Janeczko. Published in *English Journal*, February 1980. (© 1980 by the Nation Council of Teachers of English.)

"I can't think of half a dozen movies that would compare with the books that spawned them."

From "Interview with Stephen King" by Michael Kilgore, Published in the *Tampa Tribune*, August 31, 1986 (© 1986 Michael Kilgore.)

"The horror story makes us children, OK? That's the primary function of the horror story—to knock away all of this stuff...we cover ourselves up with. Horror is seen as this barren thing that's supposed to take us over taboo lines, to places we aren't supposed to be.... And children are able to feel things adults can't, because of all the experience we've had."

From "The Dark Beyond the Door: Walking (Nervously) into Stephen King's World" by Freff. Interview originally published in *Tomb of Dracula*, Issues No. 4 and 5. (© 1980 Marvel Comics Group.)

FEARS

"People ask what scares me. Everything scares me. Bugs are bad.... Sometimes I think about taking a bite into a great big hoagie, you know...full of bugs.... Getting stuck in elevators.... Airplanes. The dark is a big one. I don't like the dark.... Just about everything frightens me."

From "An Evening with Stephen King at the Billerica Massachusetts Public Library," 1983. (© by Colony Communications, Inc.)

"I don't walk under ladders; I'm scared...I'll get seven years' bad luck if I break a mirror; I try to stay home cowering under the covers on Friday the thirteenth.... But I have a thing about the number 13 in general; it never fails to trace that old icy finger up and down my spine."

From "Playboy Interview: Stephen King," June 1983. (© 1983 by *Playboy*.)

EVIL AND HORROR

“The [horror] genre exists on three basic levels, separate but independent, and each one a little bit cruder than the one before. There’s terror on top, the finest emotion any writer can induce; then horror and on the very lowest level of all, the gag instinct of revulsion. Naturally, I’ll try to terrify you first, and if that doesn’t work, I’ll try to horrify you, and if I can’t make it there, I’ll try to gross you out.”

From “Playboy Interview: Stephen King,” June 1983. (© 1983 by *Playboy*.)

“A lot of people retreat into fantasy worlds because the real world is kind of a gruesome place.

“I think most people see horror writers as depraved individuals who are strange, weird, a little bit creepy, probably unlovely, somebody who would be clammy to touch.

“Most of the ones [horror writers] I know are big, hale and hearty, cheerful, outgoing, friendly people, and I think one of the reasons they are is that you have to have a certain confidence in yourself to be able to create a human monster.”

From “Would You Buy a Haunted Car From This Man?” by Edwin Pouncey. Published in *Sounds* magazine, May 21, 1983. (© by Spotlights Publications Ltd.)

“Nobody in this field talks about good. Everybody talks about evil. Evil is a tremendously attractive force—a tremendously potent force. You’ve got more and more books where evil wins, where evil proves to be the stronger. *Rosemary’s Baby* is one. And even in *The Exorcist* it’s very hard to tell what happens in the end.”

From “Shine of the Times,” an interview with Stephen King by Marty Ketchum, Pat Cadigan, and Lewis Shiner. Published in *Shayol*, Summer 1979, Volume One, Number Three. (© 1979 by Flight Unlimited, Inc.)

“Horror is one of the ways we walk our imagination. It’s a way to relieve bad feelings rather than something that causes them.”

From “Novelist Loves His Nightmares” by Jack Matthews. Published in *Detroit Free Press*, November 12, 1982. (© 1982 by *Detroit Free Press*.)

WRITING

“Writing is necessary for my sanity. As a writer I can externalize my fears and insecurities and night terrors on paper... And in the process, I’m able to write myself sane.

“Those avatars of high culture hold it almost as an article of religious faith that plot and story must be subordinated to style, whereas my deeply held conviction is that story must be paramount... All other considerations are secondary—theme, mood, even characterization and language.”

From “Playboy Interview: Stephen King,” June 1983. (© 1983 by *Playboy*.)

“I would say plotting is the most difficult thing. Characterization is only hard because sometimes I feel I get so interested in it that I want to talk too much about the characters and that slows the story down.

“I start with ideas and I know where I’m going but I don’t outline. I usually have an idea of what’s going to happen...but I never write any of it down because that sort of closes you off from an interesting sidetrip that might come along.”

From “An Interview with Stephen King” by Joyce Lynch Dewes Moore. Published in *Mystery* magazine, March 1981. (© 1980 by Joyce Lynch Dewes.)

“A writer learns by reading: how important motivation is to the story.”

From “An Interview with Stephen King,” by Paul Janeczko. Published in *English Journal*, February 1980. (© 1980 by the National Council of Teachers of English.)

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING

BEFORE READING THE STORIES

- Introduce the genre of horror and suspense with a film, such as *The Haunting*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, or *Psycho*. Have students identify and analyze the elements of suspense and horror in the film.
- Orally read a horror story, such as Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" to the class. Discuss why it is so horrifying.
- Compile a collection of horror and/or suspense stories with which the students are familiar.

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

- As an introduction to a unit on horror and suspense, small groups of students can each read a different Stephen King selected short story, and discuss and write about the stories using the question and activities below. After reading, discussing, and writing about the King stories, students can read one or more of the classic works suggested in the bibliography. Students can utilize their knowledge of the genres of horror and suspense learned from reading the King stories to analyze the classic fiction.
- Students can keep a response journal, recording their reactions to the stories. They can select their own topics or respond to the questions below.
- The response journal might be followed up with students working in reading groups. Students who have read the same story can share their ideas and, thereby gain other insights into the story.
- These questions are appropriate to discuss or write about after reading any of the suggested short stories:

What is the nature of evil?

What is the embodiment of evil in the story?

How does King develop the suspense in the story?

What elements of surprise are built into the story?

Who is the protagonist? Is she or he a victim? How does King make you empathize with the protagonist?

Who or what is the antagonist? When do you discover who the antagonist is? How do you feel after you discover this?

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES FOR SUGGESTED SHORT STORIES

Each of the selected short stories listed below are appropriate for classroom use, and the questions and activities are designed for the indicated short story. The questions should allow students to respond to the stories orally or in writing. They may be used with the entire class or with small groups of students. Teachers may find other stories in the three anthologies that are appropriate for their particular students.

STORIES FROM *NIGHT SHIFT*

"JERUSALEM'S LOT"

1. As a writing technique King uses a series of letters to explain what is happening in Chapelwaite. How effective is this technique as he spins his haunting tale?
2. The eerie setting is established early in the story. Describe your reaction to Calvin's comments about townspeople stating: "What was said, sir, was that anyone who would live in Chapelwaite must be either a lunatic or run the risk of becoming one."
3. What does Charles learn about his ancestry from Mrs. Cloris? What does Charles learn about the house?

4. Explain Mrs. Cloris's statement, "Some die not...some live in the twilight shadows between to serve—Him!"
5. Why do you think King tries to involve all of one's senses in describing Jerusalem's Lot? How effective is he?
6. Charles states that he thinks he knows why "Jerusalem's Lot is a shunned town." What reasons can you give for this plausible conclusion?
7. What is a "Satan's Mass"?
8. How does Mrs. Cloris explain the evil things that have happened since Charles and Calvin have arrived? What does she recommend? If you were in their places, would you leave? Explain. What history about Chapelwaite does she offer?
9. King wants to increase the sense of horror as Charles and Calvin explore the house. What do they discover in the cellar?
10. What is meant by "nosferatu—the Undead"?
11. What does Calvin seem to indicate when he writes: "It seems we wait in the deceptive Eye of the Storm"?
12. What evidence is there that "blood calls to blood"? What does this mean?
13. Describe the horror that takes place when Calvin and Charles return to the church.
14. What part does James Boon play in "Jerusalem's Lot"?
15. How does King conclude this tale? What twists are added to the tale? What do you think might happen?

"GRAVEYARD SHIFT"

1. In ten words or less, describe Hall at the beginning of the story.
2. What element of horror does King use to introduce this tale?
3. King skillfully establishes the setting and action for the tale. If you were Hall, would you accept the job offer? Explain your answer.
4. What do you think Hall's premonition is that involves Warwick?
5. How does King appeal to all of the reader's senses as he describes the setting and circumstances? How effective is the author?
6. Wisconsky describes the rats, "It almost seems like they think. You ever wonder how it'd be, if we was little and they were big?" To what extent does this enable the reader to foresee the structure of the action within the story?
7. What horrible thing happened to Ray Upton? What is the reaction among the workers?
8. As the story develops, what is the relationship between Hall and Warwick? How does Hall confront Warwick with town ordinances? What is the effect?
9. What do the men discover in the sub-cellar?
10. How does King skillfully end the story? What is your reaction to his technique?

"NIGHT SURF"

1. What seems to bond the young people together? What are your feelings about these people?
 2. What is "A6"? Compare it to similar diseases throughout history.
 3. How do you explain the Bernie-Susie relationship?
 4. What has changed since "A6"?
 5. What would be your thoughts and activities if you and five friends were the last inhabitants on earth?
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“I AM THE DOORWAY”

1. What in your mind, are the achievements as a result of space flights? What is the cost of a space flight program? What are your personal feelings about maintaining such a program? What tragedies and near tragedies have taken place over the years of the U.S. space flight programs?
2. What happened to Arthur as he came down from his space flight? How has this affected him? What was the shocking discovery he made about his itchings?
3. What does Arthur mean when he says, “I am the doorway”?
4. What leads Arthur to his final decision?

“GRAY MATTER”

1. What is the setting for this story? Why is it so important?
2. How does Henry react to Timmy's plea?
3. What is the horrible tale Henry tells the others as they are carrying the beer to Richie's? What are their reactions? What are yours?
4. How do you explain the end of the story?
5. How does King draw the reader's senses into this grotesque tale?

“STRAWBERRY SPRING”

1. What is “strawberry spring”? How does this become a part of the story?
2. Listen to a recording of “Love is Blue” or “Hey, Jude” or “Scarborough Fair” to get a sense of the times—the late 1960s. Also, note that Stephen King is an avid radio and rock-and-roll fan.
3. Who is “Springheel Jack”?
4. Research information about Jack the Ripper.
5. Near the end of the story, King has a paragraph that refers to “draft protesters,” a “sit-in where a well-known napalm manufacturer was holding interviews.” Find information about the late 1960s in newspapers and magazines to see how common such situations were. Why did people feel this way? Could such activities happen today? Explain.
6. What is your reaction to the ending of the story?

“THE LAST RUNG ON THE LADDER”

1. King enjoys using children in his stories. How does he capitalize on their secrets and curiosities in this tale?
2. How effective is the transition from the results of jumping into the hay to the news item Larry has about his sister?
3. Why did the contents of the letter move Larry?
4. What are your feelings about Larry?

“THE MAN WHO LOVED FLOWERS”

1. How would you best describe the young man? If you were in a position to make a television program based on the story, what actor could play this part? What criteria did you use to make this decision?
 2. How do the radio news items contrast with the season and the young man's feelings?
 3. What was meant by the statement, “His name was love”?
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“THE WOMAN IN THE ROOM”

1. Why is the man who is visiting his mother in the hospital upset by the thought of the “cortotomy”?
2. Find out as much as you can about Michael Crichton’s *The Terminal Man* and Ken Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. How do these works inform King’s story?
3. King makes an unusual comparison as he describes patients walking slowly in the hospital hall. “It is the walk of people who are going nowhere slowly, the walk of college students in caps and gowns filing into a convocation hall.” What is your reaction to this comparison?
4. The doctor says, “Your mother can no longer count time in terms of seconds and minutes and hours. She must restructure those units into days and weeks and months.” What do you think he means?
5. What is your reaction to what Johnny does to help his mother out of her condition? Do you think mercy killing is ever justified? Explain.

STORIES FROM NIGHTMARES AND DREAMSCAPES**“SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN”**

1. Why do you think Miss Sidley picks on her students?
2. How might you explain how she seems to know what her students are thinking or doing?
3. Why is Robert her major nemesis?
4. What does Robert mean when he says, “There’s quite a few of us”?
5. Why does Miss Sidley bring a gun to school? Do you think she was justified in using it? Explain your response.
6. How would you explain the ending of the story?

“THE DOCTOR’S CASE”

1. Explain the title of this story.
2. What is meant by “I might as well set it down before God caps my pen forever”?
3. Identify Lestrade, Watson, and Holmes.
4. Why does Lestrade bring Holmes into the case?
5. Who solves the murder? How?
6. Compare this story with a Sherlock Holmes mystery by Arthur Conan Doyle and note the differences in the characters of Dr. Watson and Holmes.

STORIES FROM SKELETON CREW**“WORD PROCESSOR OF THE GODS”**

1. What did the title suggest to you before you read the story?
 2. Describe the word processor Jon created. Why did he build it?
 3. Would you prefer Jon or Seth as a friend? Give your reasons.
 4. The Jon we meet at the end of the story is somewhat different from the Jon at the beginning. Discuss how he has changed and what events have made him different.
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5. What is Nordhoff's role in this story?
6. Can you justify Richard using the EXECUTE button the way he did? Explain your answer.

“THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT SHAKE HANDS”

1. How does the author build suspense in this story?
2. What is meant by “IT IS THE TALE, NOT HE WHO TELLS IT”?
3. Who are George Gregson's fifty-three “good friends who saw me through my time of trial”? How is this an example of the use of irony?
4. What events lead to Brower never shaking hands? How does George learn of these events?
5. Compare this story with King's novella, “The Breathing Method” in *Different Seasons*.

“THE REAPER'S IMAGE”

1. Who is the reaper in this story? Where is he seen?
2. What kind of place is the Samuel Claggert Memorial Private Museum?
3. Describe the characteristics of Mr. Carlin and Johnson Spangler. What kind of person is each one?
4. What does the author tell us about Delver Mirrors?
5. Do you like the ending? Give your reasons. Continue the story with an additional episode.

“UNCLE OTTO'S TRUCK”

1. King cautions readers, “Most of you... will not believe.” How does he make this a believable story?
2. The author compares the final break-down of Uncle Otto's truck with the “wonderful one-Hoss shay” in Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem “The Deacon's Masterpiece.” Based on that poem, write your own description of the truck's demise.
3. What observations led to the narrator's suspicion that Uncle Otto murdered his partner? How? Why?
4. Give some examples of how King uses humor in this tale.

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

DRAMA

- Have a small group of students develop a classroom dramatic presentation of one of the stories for the class.
- Sponsor a Stephen King Storytelling Festival. Students can sign up to tell their favorite tale. This can be either a group project where several participate in telling a story, or an individual project. The emphasis is on oral interpretation and making the story come alive. Adaptations are permissible.
- Do a class “campfire” in which each small group of students tells their story utilizing good storytelling techniques. Students should orally capture their listeners' attention as King captures his readers' attention.

MEDIA

- “Inner Sanctum” was a popular radio program. Several cassette recordings have been made and are commercially available. Play one or two of these and compare them with the King stories you have read. Adapt one King story for a similar radio program. Present the adaptation via the school public address system or make a recording for use in another class.

- View one or two “Twilight Zone” videotapes. How well do you think Stephen King’s short stories could be adapted for this series? Try choosing one story and make a film/videotape or screen adaptation.
- Several of Stephen King’s novels have been made into movies. Choose from the following list and make a comparison between the book and film versions: *Carrie*, *Misery*, *The Shining*, *Dolores Claiborne*, *The Shawshank Redemption* (based on “Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption” in *Different Seasons*), or *Stand By Me* (based on “The Body” in *Different Seasons*).

WRITING

- Encourage students to write their own horror stories. By using a copy machine or computer, publish a story collection. Some students might serve as editors and illustrators. This would be a great Halloween project.
- Using one or more of King’s short stories as models, write a horror story in which suspense builds and there is an element of surprise.
- Write a first paragraph for a suspense/horror story that captures the readers’ attention in the way King does.
- Setting the scene is important in horror and suspense. Discuss King’s settings and develop one of your own for a horror or suspense story.

READING

- Read what Stephen King has written about evil and analyze the story you have read applying his comments.
- Compare King’s plots to the plot of any other horror or suspense story you have read. Discuss why King is such a popular writer.

TECHNOLOGY

- There are several electronic newsgroups for fans of Stephen King. Have students monitor a group and then post a question or new topic for discussion. Many Stephen King homepages can be found on the internet.

EXTENDING STUDENTS’ LEARNING

ACTIVITIES

- Have students write a critical review of one of King’s short stories. Discuss how the author builds the suspense and introduces the horror. Examine how he deals with evil, captures the readers’ attention, and utilizes elements of surprise. Submit your review to the school literary journal or newspaper.
 - Read about the lives of other horror or suspense writers. Compare their fears to the fears King writes about.
 - Read what King says about writing. Read other authors’ comments on writing. What similarities and differences do you find?
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A NOTE ABOUT CENSORSHIP

In spite of the quality of Stephen King's short stories, teachers have been reluctant to use them in the classroom because of his notoriety as a horror writer. Horror, even when considered classic, is often the target of censorship. For this teachers' guide, we have selected stories for their quality and appropriateness for classroom use. However, it is important for teachers to carefully read each of the stories selected and be sure that they fit the goals of the English program and will benefit the students who read them.

The best way to deal with censorship is to avoid it. Here are some suggestions:

1. Develop a department or school selection policy in which you clearly indicate criteria for selecting literature to be read, as well as a procedure for dealing with complaints should they occur.
2. Once the policy has been established, involve as many people in the selection process as possible. Include teachers, administrators, students, and parents on your selection committee.
3. Write a brief rationale for using Stephen King's short stories in the classroom. Emphasize their literary quality, their appropriateness in meeting the goals and objectives of the English program, their appropriateness for the maturity and ability of the students being taught, and their ability to motivate students to read and to write. Include comments from this teachers' guide and any other critical comments about Stephen King's short stories. File this rationale with your department chairperson and/or school administrator.
4. Several weeks prior to requiring students to read the short stories, send home brief descriptions to parents or guardians. Be sure to include parts of your rationale and the fact that some of the language and/or content may be found objectionable by some people. Invite parents to borrow copies of the short stories to read prior to giving their children permission to read them. Be sure to indicate alternative selections for students who are not permitted to read them (i.e. short stories by Poe or Hawthorne).
5. A week prior to reading the short stories in class send permission slips home for parents to complete. Phrase the slips in such a way that signing them and returning them indicates that permission has not been granted. Ask parents to suggest a preferred short story of equal literary and motivational value if they know one.
6. Be sure to make adequate provisions, avoiding stigmatization, for students who are not permitted to read the short stories. This may mean having to work individually with one student, grouping the class to allow for the reading of two or more alternative short stories, and/or placing the student(s) in another class during the reading and discussion of the short stories.

Should a censorship issue arise in spite of your precautions, be sure to do the following:

7. Follow all school/department policies.
8. Suggest an option for the student(s) involved. Try not to be defensive or angry; keep reminding yourself that every parent has the right to object to what his/her child is reading, and parents want what they believe is best for their child.
9. Ask the individual(s) objecting to the short stories to complete a "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of a Work" (available from the National Council of Teachers of English, 111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096, 1-800-369-6283).
10. Report the complaint to your department chair person and/or school administrator. Confirm your next steps with that administrator. The next steps should be clear in your school/department policy.
11. Other than allowing the student(s) involved to read another book, do not do anything until the "Citizen's Request Form" is returned. In most cases the forms are not returned.
12. If the form is returned, and the censor demands that the short stories be removed from the classroom and the curriculum, do not proceed alone. If you have followed the recommendations for avoiding censorship, you will have a large support group, and once the censor is made aware of how the short stories were selected and who was involved in the selection process, the issue is usually dropped.
13. If the issue is pursued, you and your school should continue to follow the policy, seeking professional help, usually through professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English of the American Library Association.

ABOUT THE EDITORS OF THIS GUIDE

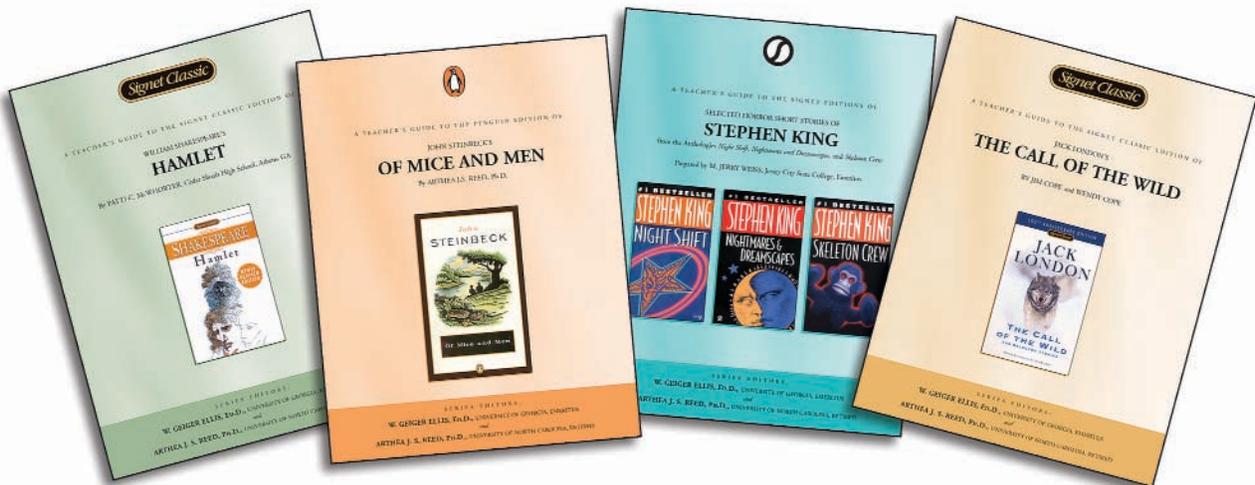
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