



THE SOUND OF THE DARK

Teachers Notes

Written and edited by young Australians
Featuring Oliver Phommavanh and Maxine Beneba Clarke

Published by 100 Story Building in November 2019

SUMMARY

Do you ever get that creepy feeling? ... Like there's something spooky hiding under your bed? ...Like a rumbling growl from a dark alley as you walk past? ...Like that shivering sensation at the back of your spine, as if someone you can't see...is watching you?

Get ready to be freaked out! Fifteen young editors, mentored by children's author Tony Wilson and publishing industry professionals, put together this spine-chilling collection of stories on the theme of 'creepy horror'.

The collection includes 14 hair-raising tales written by young Australian writers between the ages of 8 and 12, alongside original contributions by childrens authors Oliver Phommavanh and Maxine Beneba Clarke. Andy Griffiths calls it "A white knuckle rollercoaster ride of pure terror!"

Featuring vivid illustrations from professional childrens book artists, including a spooky cover by award-winning author and illustrator Daniel Gray-Barnett, *The Sound of the Dark* will delight upper-primary readers of all levels and abilities. In addition to the stories themselves, readers will find a Choose Your Own Adventure, a quiz, jokes pages, a song, and a comic – all of which will keep them engaged and scared in equal measure.

Explore the haunted manor. Find out what happened to the editors who have disappeared. And watch out for the Manybeast!!

THEMES

- Fear
- Family
- Destiny
- Embarrassment
- Imagination
- Exploration
- Betrayal and Revenge
- Humour



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BACKGROUND

This book is the product of 100 Story Building's flagship Early Harvest program. Every year, a panel of fifteen young editors in Year 5 and 6 form an Editorial Committee. They commission cover art and illustrations, curate the story collection from submissions by their peers, and make all the creative decisions involved in putting together the book. Throughout the process, they are guided by publishing industry professionals — including authors, designers, artists and marketing experts.

In 2019, 100 Story Building supported teachers from four schools across Greater Dandenong to develop narrative writing units and strategies that integrated with the program. Children's writer Tony Wilson hosted a pair of video sessions sharing advice and thoughtful answers to student questions. And 100 Story Building facilitators guided students through workshops on writing and editing the perfect Creepy Horror story.

130 young authors submitted finished stories for consideration. From these, the Editorial Committee selected the 14 standouts published in this book, delivered feedback to everyone who submitted, and rounded out the collection by commissioning children's authors Oliver Phommavanh and Maxine Beneba Clarke to contribute their work.



Tony Wilson author video



The editorial team



Four editors with Oliver Phommavanh at the book launch



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WRITING STYLE

The stories featured in *The Sound of the Dark* are alternately humorous, scary, and somewhere in between. The editors were careful not to include material that would cross the line into disturbing or gory, instead choosing stories that were more suspenseful or eerie. Their target was readers from ages 8 through 12, though students on either side of that range may also engage with the book's visually rich and varied content.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION

The young authors featured in the book wanted to capture fear in all its forms. Some explored creepy moments in the everyday life of a primary-aged student, whereas others spun spooky tales in radically different settings and across time and space. The editors wanted their audiences to feel simultaneously energised and fearful – balancing between curiosity and fright.

MARKETING PROMOTION

The Sound of the Dark was published by 100 Story Building in partnership with Hardie Grant Egmont. In addition to in-store promotions at various booksellers, we offer school discounts, especially when purchasing more than one copy for a class or library. Meanwhile, we have undertaken a comprehensive marketing push amongst the professional contributors and supporters of the book, including Andy Griffiths, Tony Wilson, Oliver Phommavanh, and Maxine Beneba Clarke as well as all the illustrators involved.



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STUDY NOTES AND ACTIVITIES

- *The Sound of the Dark* is structured as if you are exploring an old haunted house. The four sections of the book represent different rooms in the house where the editors discovered each set of stories. Each room has its own short spooky description – but surely there are more rooms in a house that big! Choose a room and write your own spooky description, and then illustrate it yourself. Or, switch descriptions with a partner and illustrate theirs.
 - Once all students have designed and described their rooms, ask them to create a “blueprint” of the haunted house and where that room fits in. Make sure to label all of the danger zones!
- The Manybeast is the shapeshifting monster at the heart of the editors’ story explaining how the book came about. Working together as a class, create a picture of the Manybeast: use large butcher paper to create a basic outline, and then draw or cut out spooky shapes and appendages and stick them on. Then write short micro-stories about what the Manybeast would do if it were in your classroom.
- Maxine Beneba Clarke’s contribution is a poem/song written to fit the tune of “The Addams Family” theme song. Listen to the song, read the lyrics and map out the syllables and rhyme scheme. Then write your own verse! As an ICT bonus, have students record themselves singing their verse, and use the free Audacity audio editing program or iMovie to string it all together with this karaoke track underneath: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kb0OaSBwq54>
- The editors were very careful to include a full-page acknowledgment of country at the beginning of their book, and consulted with several indigenous experts about the appropriateness of using a personalised version instead of a more standard formal acknowledgment they’d seen used elsewhere. Discuss as a class – and then workshop your own acknowledgment that honours your local First Nations groups in a way that connects with what’s important to your class.



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STUDY NOTES AND ACTIVITIES (cont.)

- The editors chose Oliver Phommavanh and Maxine Beneba Clarke to contribute to the book in part because they are great writers – and in part because they are Australians with a culturally and linguistically diverse heritage that reflects the diversity of the other contributors and Australia as a whole. Open up a discussion with your class about students' heritage and what that means to them. Is it important to learn about your own cultural background? What role does culture play in each student's life?
- The Choose Your Own Adventure story has many options and many endings – and the only reason we didn't include more is because we ran out of space on the pages! Luckily, you and your students won't have that problem, so challenge your students to create a new branching storyline from the same starting point.
 - As an ICT tie-in, have students try out the free Twine computer application, which allows you to use basic coding to create text-based video games or Choose Your Own Adventure stories. They can put their new storylines in this format and test out each other's!
- In the story "Puppet Strings," a boy's favourite toy turns into a creepy monster. Ask students to think about their favourite toys and what would happen if one of those transformed into something scary. Working in small groups, have them create a story and then act it out in a short skit.
- In the story "The Rash," Sally has to go through a complicated step-by-step process to investigate the source of her rash. Ask students to map out the different parts of her investigation, and then create their own step-by-step scavenger hunt that can take place at school. Have students swap with their peers and try out the scavenger hunt!
- Based on the list on page 41, have students brainstorm more ways to "Un-Haunt Your House," or write more spooky jokes to fit into the jokes page. Open up a discussion: what is it about creepy horror that also fits so well with humour?



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STUDY NOTES AND ACTIVITIES (cont.)

- “The Tale of the Festival of the Wings” is a story that ends with a “cliffhanger.” Ask students: why do you think it’s called a “cliffhanger”? Why would an author choose to end a story without explaining what happened or resolving the problem? Can you think of other examples of stories, books, or movies that end that way?
 - As an extension activity, students write their own endings to one of the example cliffhangers they identified that finish up the plot or resolve the problem.
- In “Is This My Imagination,” Natali has to deal with a pretty crazy series of events from the moment she wakes up to when she needs to leave for school. The story ends with her saying “What you can do in a school morning is mind-blowing!” Have students create timelines of what they do in the morning from when they wake up to when they arrive at school. Then have them compare their morning routines – is there anything that they would change about the way they prepare for school?
 - As an extension activity, use the internet to research the morning routines of famous figures: scientists, writers, or other role models. Is there anything students would want to try doing themselves to see if it changes anything about their day?
- The quiz in the book is all about what monster you might turn into if you were bitten by the Manybeast. Task students with choosing a story from the book (or any other source) and creating their own quiz inspired by its plot or characters.
 - As an extension activity, compile all the quizzes into a collection with a table of contents and author bios, and share them with other classes.
- “Hunted” and “Discovering a New World” are both about explorers investigating unfamiliar places, with dark and tragic results. Open up a discussion about where students would be interested to travel or explore, and then ask students to create an itinerary and packing list that prepare them to safely get out of their comfort zones.
- The “Best Lines from Stories that Almost Made It” section is a treasure trove of inspiring excerpts. Have students pick their favourite and discuss why they’re drawn to that one, and then have them create a story that contains it.