

Dead Letters: Classic Ghost Stories

While lately the world's focus on the paranormal has been investigation, what's gotten lost is the field's root: Stories. Stories that have been told, written, and passed down over generations whose purposes were to entertain, frighten—or warn.

So this month, in celebration of what made us love the paranormal in the first place, I encourage all of us to put down the burden of proof, light a fire, pour a brandy, and let ourselves once again feel the tingle of fear inspired by a classic ghost story.

I've found the richest coffer of free classic ghost stories on the 'net at HorrorMasters.com—there are literally hundreds available from masters such as Daniel Dafoe, Guy De Maupassant, M.R. James and Nathaniel Hawthorne, and many others.

If haunted houses scare you most, you won't be disappointed. There's "The Spook House" by Ambrose Bierce, "The Empty House" by Algernon Blackwood, and "The Closed Window" by A.C. Benson.

If you prefer your nature a little red in spirit, try Bessie Kyffin-Taylor's "The Wind in the Woods," in which an artist finds his beloved childhood forest harbors much more than a place for respite. Elia W. Peattie's "On the Northern Ice" is a chilling tale of love lost at the top of the world, and William Harvey's "Across the Moors" will have you thinking twice about being grateful for the company of strangers on a dark, rainy night.

There are more than just stories of haunted houses and lands. There are tales of séances gone awry, possessed objects, revenge from beyond the grave and relatives who don't want to move on. But no matter which story you choose, it's in easy-to-print PDF format, and there's no registration required.

One of my favorite spooky stories of all time is "The Monkey's Paw" by W.W. Jacobs. If you haven't read it in a long time, you're due for a re-read. If you've never read it, I won't spoil the surprise.

I'll leave you with this: if you stand in the Witch's Circle in a particular Connecticut cemetery, will you actually hear someone whisper the last word you'll ever utter on earth in your ear? Or was that just a story your parents told you to keep you from drinking beer among the dead? Do you really want to find out? Or is it just more fun to tell the tale again and again and break into a sweat every time you have to visit the grave of a dead relative? I'll let you decide.

HorrorMasters.com Classic Ghost Stories Main Site
<http://www.horrormasters.com/Themes/ghosts.htm>

"The Spook House" by Ambrose Bierce
<http://www.horrormasters.com/Text/a0179.pdf>

"The Empty House" by Algernon Blackwood
<http://www.horrormasters.com/Text/a0235.pdf>

"The Closed Window" by A.C. Benson
<http://www.horrormasters.com/Text/a1567.pdf>

"The Wind in the Woods" by Bessie Kyffin-Taylor
<http://www.horrormasters.com/Text/a1509.pdf>

"On the Northern Ice" by Elia W. Peattie
<http://www.horrormasters.com/Text/a0133.pdf>

"Across the Moors" by William Harvey
<http://www.horrormasters.com/Text/a0297.pdf>

"The Monkey's Paw" by W.W. Jacobs
<http://gaslight.mtroyal.ca/mnkypaw.htm>