7 TIPS to write a good ghost story

-1- Write a catchy first paragraph

To start your story, you can:
- present the protagonist doing something, thinking or talking
- present an event right away
- present the surroundings and the protagonist's relations

-2- Setting the scene and the atmosphere

Choose an atmospheric setting

- a large empty-looking house/ a mansion house. This house could gleam brightly with a fresh coat of whitewash or have aging, peeling, long-heavy paint. It could give the impression of a gaping skull with sightless windows as eyes and a door forever closing its mute mouth. It could stand on a bleak, windswept moor.
  Adj : - abandoned/ -derelict/- creaky/-spooky
- a museum/ -an ancient cathedral/ -a lonely motel /-a desolate highway strip /a spooky graveyard/-a crypt/-a decaying castle/-a neglected family home

Remark:

→ You have to place the characters in an unfamiliar setting (example of young adults backpacking in a foreign country. They are looking for fun. They go to a strange forbidden place and there, they encounter terror beyond their imagination.) (The kids have no idea how this world works and how to survive.)

Describe nature and the weather precisely

Turbulent weather: It was a dark and stormy night... People were rushing back to a farmhouse, racing against the approaching tornado...

Weather: The city was brilliantly lit by a full moon.
  Fog rolled all over the city.
  It was frosty outside.
  It was a beautiful cloudless night.

Because of the weather: The family is shut inside. They can't leave the house. When ... attacks, there is no escape. They are trapped/ locked /maybe injured in a specific room.

Opening paragraph of Jane Eyre:

There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering indeed in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (we dined early), the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre and a rain so penetrating that further-outdoor exercise was now out of the question.

If you want to write a gothic story, use a large Victorian house with lots of secrets → secret passage ways, rooms, attics, graves that are either secret or misidentified → curses, spells or terrible personal secrets, skeletons in closets.
Use a heroine who is in sort of trouble or grave commitment → aristocratic in status or at least behaves that way → love interests and obstacles to overcome → threat of grotesqueness or death

-3- Strong definite characters
→ an impressionable or sensitive characters


Remarks:
Appearance gives the reader a visual understanding of the character.
Action → shows the reader what kind of person your character is by describing actions rather than simply listing adjectives.
Speech → develop the character as a person.
Thought → bring the readers into your character's mind, show them your character's unexpressed feelings, fears and hopes.

-4- The supernatural creatures + fantastic elements
→ ghostly creature : « the roses in her cheeks »
   ivory faced/ silver haired
   an odd look
   eyes like burning flames
   paler than
   a drawn haggard look
→ human moods : ill contained impatience
   … break out in a great flame of anger
   ape-like fury
→ supernatural or otherwise inexplicable events (apparition of ghosts, vampires)

→ Describe the sounds and noises

-5- How to create mystery and suspense
- The discovery of an antiquarian object, perhaps an old book or an old weapon
- The discovery of a secret
- A sense of foreboding (a boken mirror is an omen of bad luck/ ominous silence in the house/ a preternatural rain)
Ex: Looking up, I saw a cloud cross the shimmering blue sky above us as we stood in the morning heat of Sin City.

You are standing outside the building. → What do you see? What is the weather like? How do you feel?
You approach the door/entrance. → What sound do your foresteps make? Describe the door.
In your mind, open the door : What sound does it make?
You enter the building. Look to your left. What do you see? Look to your right. What do you see?
You move into a room. Describe an object that you see on one of the shelves.
There's a chair in the room. What does it look like?
What can you smell in the room? What can you hear? What are you feeling? What sensation do you feel on your skin?
You listen hard; all is silent except the pounding of your heart.
Then you hear an unexpected noise behind you. You turn around. What do you see?
-6- Creating conflict

→ explosion or hook = a thrilling, gripping, stirring event or problem that grabs the reader's attention right away.

Conflict: The protagonist against another individual/ nature/ society/ God/ the Devil/ evil/ himself or herself

Exposition: Background information required for seeing the characters in context

Complication: 1 or more problems that keep a character from their intended goal

Transition: Image, symbol, dialogue that joins paragraphs and scenes together

Flashback: Remembering something that happened before the short story takes place

Climax: when the rising action of the story reaches the peak

Falling action: Releasing the action of the story after the climax

Resolution: when the internal or external conflict is resolved.

→ It's the solution to the conflict → Show that the characters are beginning to change in some way or start doing things differently

Clear ending

-7- Useful vocabulary

Violence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hailing down a storm of blows</th>
<th>A mangled body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A twisted mind</td>
<td>Agony: She lay there in agony</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fear:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To be frightened</th>
<th>To be scared to death</th>
<th>To be petrified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To be transfixed or paralyzed in a place</td>
<td>To have one's heart in one's mouth</td>
<td>To brick it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get cold feet</td>
<td>To get the wind up</td>
<td>To have the creeps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be horrified</td>
<td>To be horror struck</td>
<td>To be panic stricken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be appalled</td>
<td>To be witless</td>
<td>To be aghast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her knees are knocking</td>
<td>She is trembling/quivering</td>
<td>She is shuddering/quaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

She had droplets of sweat on her forehead.

Five senses:

A place can exude acrid, pungent or choking stench.
The protagonist can hear clanking sounds.
A scary character can speak in a dark, steely, sepulchral, sibilant or guttural voice.
A drink or item of food can taste sour, fetid, foul or rancid.
Objects can feel slimy or grimy.
Ambiguous descriptions: an atmosphere [sic] creature, hazy air, opaque waters, tenebrous valleys, an
unintelligible sound.

For a scary story, use vocabulary such as gloomy, somber, dreary, forbidding, creepy, dreadful. Buildings can appear intimidating and a forest can look menacing.

Your teacher is going to show you/ or make you listen to or read a series of documents. Take a notepad and write all the words and feelings and ideas that you may find helpful.

Ready for your plan or your story-board?