

WRITTEN BY GLEN HUSER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY STACY INNERST

INTRODUCTION

An elementary school teacher and teacher-librarian for most of my working life, I have always loved the special days that dot the months of a school year. In October, of course, I would scour bookshelves for stories and novels to read aloud as we headed into Halloween. Joanna and Paul Galdone's *The Tailypo: A Ghost Story* and Molly Bang's *Wiley and the Hairy Man* were favorites—maybe because they were scary but not too scary, and both had that appealing colloquial language that conjures up a feeling of tales told around a campfire at night. In the bibliography at the end of this guide, I've included these along with a number of other favorites.

Why do people enjoy hearing scary stories? They have been told since ancient times and remain popular today. Many fairy tales have scary elements in them. Monsters, ghosts and villains abound in children literature and in movies intended for child audiences. Words and images can give us the kind of thrill that we crave for entertainment (a mental roller coaster ride?). From the security of an armchair, a seat beside a campfire, or a cushion in a classroom or library story corner, it can be wonderful to wander through the dangerous territories of story.



THE ELEVATOR GHOST
Written by Glen Huser

JUVENILE FICTION

Ages 6 to 9

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But with young children we need to be aware that there is a fine line between stories that provide an enjoyable roller-coaster ride and those that end up giving a child nightmares. A scary story can be made palatable for a younger audience if it is told with humour and, of course, if the hero of the tale emerges triumphant or at least unscarred. In *The Elevator Ghost*, I decided to include the narrator of the stories as a major character, making her a figure with whom children would be comfortable.

I would encourage you to read *The Elevator Ghost* aloud as you work with the book. The stories throughout invite a reader to play with voice variation. Scary stories often build in tone, beginning quietly, conversationally and gradually escalating in pace and volume. Stepping into Carolina Giddle's sequined sneakers, you will have a chance to be a fierce skeleton hollering to get his missing bones back; wolves howling in the dark; a beaky, bat-winged movie monster croaking and cawing as it scrambles to life; rowdy pirates hurling threats at one another; and a ghostly extraterrestrial sobbing after a spaceship crash. A little nervous about doing these yourself? You might want to coach a few student "sound effect specialists" to step in at the right moments.

Have fun!

HOW TO USE THE TEACHER'S GUIDE

Discussion questions have been posed for each of the chapters. These are meant to invite students to bring personal responses to a reading of the book. Most of the questions do not have a "right" or "wrong" answer—they are intended to get a conversation going about what's happening in the story with connections to the children's own world of experience. Some of the questions encourage a close reading of the text and a look for implied meaning. They also invite the reader to look at a "storyteller's toolbox"—and consider how mood and drama and poetic sound are developed.

Activities have also been suggested for each chapter. There are likely far more activities than readers would ever want to tackle. They will serve as possibilities, though, for individual projects as well as small group or full group projects. Some involve researching (where a school library and the Internet can prove to be useful tools). You may want to dedicate an "Elevator Ghost Bulletin Board" for displaying some of the products students create as they journey through the novel.

A few activities are suggested that are not wedded to particular chapters. These invite students to use the novel as a springboard into writing, artwork, music and drama. Again, you will want to look at these with a “pick and choose” approach.

Throughout most of the guide, I have framed questions, suggestions and general comments in a voice that I would use myself if I were chatting with eight, nine or ten-year-olds.



AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

I grew up in a tiny hamlet in Alberta where Halloween was quite a different kind of celebration than it is today. Of course there were some things that were the same. We loved to dress up and go out trick or treating. But few of us had plastic costumes and masks. Many of us garbed ourselves as tramps (it was easy to find old patched and ragged clothing) and some of the girls wore cast-offs from their older sisters and moms and grandmothers that—because the skirts were long enough—could turn them into princesses. Add some strings of beads and a shawl and you could be a fortune-teller. An old sheet could always serve to make someone into a ghost (but you had to be careful about cutting eye-holes in sheets that your folks planned to put on a bed the next day).

When we went from door to door, calling out, “Trick or Treat!”, once the door was opened we were expected to sing a song, do a little dance, or recite a small poem before receiving a treat. The goodies might be homemade cookies, candy, and puffed-wheat balls—or they could be store-bought candies and chocolate bars. Apples and unshelled peanuts were also handed out. Sometimes the older kids actually did focus on “tricks”—some of them not very nice, such as tipping over outhouses. It was probably young men who managed to get a farmer’s wagon up on top of his barn roof.

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO **THE ELEVATOR GHOST**

Once I became a schoolteacher and began working in school libraries, I loved decorating story corners with Halloween props and figures. A friend gave me a poster of Frankenstein that was as big as the actual monster—so that was always on display. Every October would find me carving jack-o-lanterns. And, of course, all of the display shelving was filled with scary—or funny—Halloween books. When videos became available, I sometimes watched the wonderful Halloween sequence in the classic movie *Meet Me in St. Louis* with my students.

When I became a published writer, I thought often about crafting a Halloween story. I'm not too sure just when Carolina Giddle worked her way into my consciousness. Maybe she was having one of her séances and some spirit karma drifted my way. However she came to me, I've thoroughly enjoyed the year I've spent with her at the Blatchford Arms as she fashioned stories for her babysitting charges.

The Elevator Ghost is my seventh book for children and young adults. My other ones are:

Touch of the Clown, Greenwood, 1999.

Jeremy's Christmas Wish, Hodgepog, 2001.

Stitches, Greenwood, 2003.

Skinnybones and the Wrinkle Queen, Greenwood, 2006

The Runaway, Tradewind, 2011,

Time for Flowers, Time for Snow, Tradewind, 2013

For a more complete biography, check my website: www.glenhuser.com



CHAPTER BY CHAPTER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

CHAPTER ONE: HALLOWEEN NIGHT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The children living in the old Blatchford Arms apartment building have fun dressing up in costumes and going from door to door collecting treats. What do you do on Halloween day and evening? What is your favorite costume to wear? Why do you think most of the children stay in the building rather than going along the nearby streets?
2. What is there in Aunt Beulah's letter to Carolina Giddle that suggests the Blatchford Arms is a haunted building?
3. What are some words and phrases that the author uses to create a spooky mood in this chapter?
4. After reading this chapter, what do you know about these characters: Herman Spiegelman, Carolina Giddle, Dwight and Dwayne Fergus, the smallest Lubinitsky girl, Benjamin Hooper, Angelo Bellini, Hubert and Hetty Croop and Aunt Beulah?
5. What do you predict is going to happen now that Carolina Giddle has moved into the building?

ACTIVITIES

1. If you were trick-or-treating with the children in the Blatchford Arms, how would you dress up? Draw or paint a picture of what you would look like in your costume. You might want to include, alongside yourself, the Blatchford kid you'd most enjoy having as a companion on Halloween night. Post your pictures on the Elevator Ghost Bulletin Board.
2. Using details from this chapter, show what Carolina Giddle's car---and what it is loaded with---looked like as it drove past the Fergus twins. In the car window, you might show Carolina Giddle at the wheel.

CHAPTER TWO: THE BONE GAME

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Dwight and Dwayne Fergus spend a good deal of their time playing pranks on people. What do you think is the worst thing they do? Have you ever played a prank on someone? Tell about it.
2. The story that Carolina Giddle tells the Fergus boys is from a ghost story pattern that has been around for ages. Look at these picture-book versions—Joanna and Paul Galdone's *The Tailypo* and Barbara Seuling's *Teeny Tiny Woman*. How has Carolina Giddle adapted the story for her own telling?
3. Do you think the detail of human bones being found in a running shoe washed up on a beach is true? How might you find out?
4. As Carolina Giddle is telling her story, she says, "Yes, sometimes there is a skeleton in a closet." What do you think this old expression means—and how did it come about?
5. In the sunroom, at the end of the chapter, Carolina Giddle is not the only one listening to the old phonograph record. Who do you think the other character is?



ACTIVITIES

1. Research to see what you can find out about the kind of spider Carolina Giddle keeps as a pet. On your Elevator Ghost Bulletin Board, post a picture of Chiquita and surround it with slips of paper. On each slip, write one interesting fact about tarantulas.

2. This chapter ends with Carolina Giddle playing an old phonograph record of the song “Alice Blue Gown.” It is easy to find a version of this to listen to on YouTube. Here are the words to one verse. You may want to play it again and sing along:

In my sweet little Alice blue gown,
When I first wandered down into town,
I was so proud inside,
As I felt every eye,
And in every shop window
I primped, passing by.
A new manner of fashion I'd found,
And the world seemed to smile all around.
'Til it wilted, I wore it,
I'll always adore it,
My sweet little Alice blue gown!

Do you have a favorite piece of clothing that you've worn until it wore out or became too small for you to wear any more?

CHAPTER THREE: SHADOW KILLER

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Most of us have something that we find quite scary. Hubert Croop is very afraid of shadows. What is something you are afraid of? Do you think there might be a way you could overcome this fear? How?
2. In her stories, Carolina Giddle likes to use description to set the scene. What are some of the details you remember? Does she use comparisons? She also likes alliteration (using words close together that begin with the same consonant). Can you find an example of alliteration in this chapter?
3. Do you think Carolina Giddle actually knew the boy—Jack Scrumble--in her story? She says, “The mountain king’s wife visited me too.” Why do you think she puts herself into her stories?
4. Before Carolina Giddle leaves the Croop apartment, she gives the radiator that’s been making moaning noises a little tap. Why do you think she does this?

5. Did you guess why Carolina Giddle decided to take Trinket out for a drive instead of going into the sunroom for a drink of tea at the end of this chapter—or was it a surprise? Do you think the ghost of Aunt Beulah will like a new home at the Blatchford Arms? Why?

ACTIVITIES

1. Carolina Giddle has Hubert and Hetty Croop singing campfire songs as they walk through the park. It is easy to find a YouTube version of “Boom, Boom, Ain’t it Great to Be Crazy”. You might enjoy singing along:

A horse and a flea and three blind mice
Sat on a curbstone covered in ice
The horse he slipped and fell on the flea
“Whoops,” said the flea, “There’s a horse on me!”

Chorus:

Boom, boom, ain’t it great to be crazy?
Boom, boom, ain’t it great to be crazy?
Giggly and foolish the whole day through
Boom, boom, ain’t it great to be crazy?

Way down South where bananas grow
A flea stepped on an elephant’s toe
The elephant cried, with tears in his eyes
“Why don’t you pick on someone your size?”

(Sing the chorus again)

Way up North where there’s ice and snow
There lived a penguin and his name was Joe
He got so tired of black and white
He wore pink slacks to the dance last night!

(Sing the chorus again)

Eli, Eli had some socks
A dollar a pair and a nickel a box
The more you wear ‘em the better they get
Put ‘em in the water and they don’t get wet!

(Sing the chorus again)

What other campfire songs do you think they might have sung?

2. Carolina Giddle shows the Croop children how to make shadow creatures using her hands. You can have fun doing this yourself. All you need is an adjustable reading lamp (one that allows you to “aim” a strong light at the wall in a darkened room). See what creatures you can make by using your fist and your fingers. People have been doing this for centuries. Here is a chart of some creatures you can make (from a French encyclopedia that is over a hundred years old)—but you might like to try making up your own creatures and monsters! (See line masters at the back of the guide.)

CHAPTER FOUR: EYES OF THE MOVIE MONSTER

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Lubinitsky girls are quite intrigued with their father getting ready for a date. What do you notice about your parent (or parents) when they are getting ready to go out on a special date? Luba asks if she can go on the date with her dad. Do you sometimes wish you might go out on a date with your parent(s) too?
2. Carolina Giddle talks about playing “double-dare dressup” when she was a child. But she doesn’t tell us how this game was played. How do you think it was played?
3. Have you ever watched any of the famous old monster movies such as *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *The Wolf Man*? Were you frightened? Are there other scary monster movies people watch today?
4. She also uses dialogue—characters talking to one another—to make the story dramatic and, in places, funny. Did the speech of anyone in this chapter make you smile? Where is dialogue used dramatically (as you might find in the exciting part of a movie or TV show)?
5. Sometimes an author includes a “teaser” at the end of a chapter—something that is mentioned but not explained, leaving the reader with the feeling that this “something” is going to show up later in the book. What is the teaser at the end of this chapter?



ACTIVITIES

1. Play a game of Mix 'n' Match with two or three friends. On a standard-size piece of white computer paper (or writing paper), use a ruler to mark the length at 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (7 cm.) and 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (14 cm.) on both sides. Use these marks to fold your paper. Draw the head and shoulders of your funny character in the top section, the body in the middle, and the legs and feet in the bottom. Cut the paper along the creases. Mix and match the strips and glue them on a new sheet to create even funnier characters. You might want to post some of these on the Elevator Ghost Bulletin Board.
2. Draw and color (or paint) a picture of what you think *The Scaly Batmonster of Scuggins Creek* looked like. Create a display for the Elevator Ghost Bulletin Board. See if you can find pictures on the Internet of famous movie monsters such as *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Wolf Man*, and *The Mummy*. Add these to make a "Scary Movie Monsters" display.

CHAPTER FIVE: GHOST SHIP

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Bellini family has a problem with five-year-old Angelo who has temper tantrums or "meltdowns" whenever anyone crosses him. Do you know any little children like this? What do you think is the best way to get someone headed for a meltdown to behave?
2. The ghostly Tantrumolos, pirates of the *Horribilis*, are a nasty and wild bunch. How are they like (and how are they different from) the pirates in *Peter Pan* and in the Johnny Depp movie *Pirates of the Caribbean*? Are you reminded of other pirate stories?
3. In earlier chapters, we've noticed how Carolina Giddle uses a "storyteller's toolbox"—descriptive language, similes, alliteration, and dialogue exchanges—to set the mood in her stories and make them come to life. Can you find some examples of these in the story she tells of Barney Boonswagger and the ghost ship?
4. What is a séance? In Mrs. Floss's apartment, Carolina Giddle serves as a medium. What is the role of a medium in a séance? Why is Carolina Giddle blushing at the end of the séance?

ACTIVITIES

1. Many legends have grown up about ghost ships. Check online and find one that interests you. Prepare a short presentation to your class about the ship and make a poster showing the ship and telling a bit about the legend to post on the bulletin board. Famous ghost ships include *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Mary Celeste*, *The Octavius*, *The Eliza Battle*, and the *SS Valencia*.
2. Imagine you are part of a team making this *Ghost Ship* chapter into an animated (cartoon) movie. Choose one task and, when you are finished, be ready to share it with your classmates. The tasks:
 - choose one of the characters and make a picture to show what he would look like in costume
 - create a design showing the *Horribilis*—or one part of the ship
 - research and draw one of the props needed in the movie (swords, pistols, rum barrels, pirate treasure, etc.)
 - work with a partner to create a sound tape with spooky music and some of the pirates' cries.



CHAPTER SIX: ALIEN GHOSTS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Lucy says, “Benjamin is space crazy.” What does she mean by this? If you were accused of being “crazy” about a certain topic—what would that be? Benjamin uses some big words when he talks about his topic (such as “extraterrestrial incursions”). Do you know some words about your special topic that you think others might not know?
2. Do you believe there might be life on other planets? Would there maybe be creatures quite a bit like human beings—or do you think they would be quite different? In what ways might aliens be more advanced than earth’s humans? Do you think it might actually be possible for an alien to communicate with a dog as Maroo does with Bedelia’s dog, Muffin?
3. What do you think happened to make the UFO crash?
4. Once again, Carolina Giddle uses a “storyteller’s toolbox” to put her story of alien ghosts together. Do you remember what she likes to include? Did you notice any examples?
5. In the sunroom that evening, Carolina Giddle is visiting with her ghost friends and begins to say something about the rhyming man: “If I’d known he stayed right there all these years...” But she doesn’t finish. What do you think she was going to say?

ACTIVITIES

1. See what you can find out about Roswell, New Mexico, and UFOs. Prepare a short presentation for your class. Indicate whether or not you believe the sightings of UFOs and aliens actually happened. What other explanations would there be? It would be interesting to poll the rest of your class to see what they believe.
2. Create a drawing or a painting showing the alien creature Maroo or the spaceship he was traveling in before it crashed.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE ELEVATOR GHOST

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Some of the children at Carolina Giddle's Halloween party dance to the music of "Dance Macabre." Listen to this music. Why do you think it is often played at Halloween time? What does the title mean? What are some other pieces of music that would be good for a Halloween party?
2. It is easy to find a YouTube video online of the song Grace asks Carolina Giddle to play on the gramophone back in the sunroom, after the party. Here are the words to the chorus:

After the ball is over,
After the break of morn,
After the dancers leaving,
After the stars are gone;
Many a heart is aching,
If you could read them all;
Many the hopes that have vanished
After the ball!

Do you think the words of the song might have special meaning for Grace and Beulah? Why would this be a favorite for them?

3. What do you think Carolina Giddle meant when she told the caretaker that "it wasn't so much reason as rhyme that was calling her"? What has made her decide to leave the Blatchford Arms?
4. Dwayne says he believes Carolina Giddle will come back. Do you?
5. Do you wish Carolina Giddle might move close to where you live and might be your babysitter? What do you think her ghost story would be about if she babysat at your place?

ACTIVITIES

1. Plan a "Carolina Giddle" kind of Halloween party, with invited guests receiving invitations shaped as masks. Have a program with people who volunteer to tell ghost stories. (They could make up a ghost story—or they could tell one they've read or heard.) Do you know someone who likes to cook who would make some

of Carolina Giddle's special snacks (you could offer to help them)? (Teaching note: see the section on recipes.) Have fun figuring out a great costume to wear. (Maybe one based on a famous painting—such as Elsa and Luba Lubinitsky wear.) Decorate the room for the party in a way that you think Carolina Giddle and the children in the story would have enjoyed. Do you think you could make a swamp monster as good as Dwight Fergus's?

2. Make a picture showing Carolina Giddle in the costume she wears. Check the description on page 146. Or...make a picture of Beulah, Grace, or Ada from the story Carolina Giddle tells. (Teaching note: there are online images of “party dresses of the 1910s,” “Pierrette costumes” and “Spanish dancer costumes.”)

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

LET'S LOOK AT THE ILLUSTRATIONS

Award-winning artist Stacy Innerst, from the American Southwest, created the illustrations for *The Elevator Ghost*. Which is your favorite? Why do you think he chose not to show some of the key items in the book such as the Scaly Batmonster of Scuggins Creek and the alien ghost? After reading the novel, does the cover design surprise you? You might enjoy reading one of the picture books Stacy Innerst has illustrated:

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Johnston, Tony. *Levi Strauss Gets a Bright Idea: A Fairly Fabricated Story of a Pair of Pants*. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2011.

Krull, Kathleen. *The Beatles Were Fab (And They Were Funny)*. HMH Books for Young People, 2013.

Krull, Kathleen. *Lincoln Tells a Joke: How Laughter Saved the President (and the Country)*. HMH Books for Young Readers, 2010.

Krull, Kathleen. *M is for Music*. HMH Books for Young People, 2009.

WRITE A GHOST STORY OF YOUR OWN

You have heard some of Carolina Giddle's scary stories. It might be fun to write one of your own. Carolina Giddle has borrowed some of the patterns for her stories and I'm sure she wouldn't mind if you used similar patterns, but there are many other possibilities. With others in your group, brainstorm for ideas. Here are a few you could include:

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- your character visits a haunted house
- a poltergeist decides to take up residence where your character lives
- your character discovers a ghost car on an old country road
- gremlins decide to live in your character's computer
- your character encounters a ghost animal
- your character finds a new friend and the friend turns out to be a ghost
- an old bottle found on a beach is uncorked and a monster comes out of it
- you are a ghost telling the story of your life and death

Use the “Ghost Story Plan Sheet” to figure out how to develop your story.

As you are writing your story, think about the “storyteller’s toolbox” that Carolina Giddle used. See if you can include descriptive words and phrases, a simile or two, some alliteration and, of course, dialogue exchanges.

When you’ve finished your story, key it into a computer word document. You might want to give it a full title page and leave room for a couple of illustrations before you print the document. Have fun illustrating your story and sharing it with classmates, family and friends.



CREATE A TAPED READING

Choose one of Carolina Giddle's stories and tape a reading of it. (So you'll want to cut out the parts where Carolina Giddle is involved with the children she's babysitting—and you could change a few sentences if you needed to.) You might want to work as a group with members taking different speaking parts. It would be great to have background music and sound effects. When I went online and googled “spooky background music” I found a number of sites that offered free music for downloading. As a Halloween special, you could dim the lights and offer your taped presentations to classroom guests. You could add a battery-lit candle or two (or real candles if an adult is in charge of them).

DESIGN A BOOK JACKET

Imagine that you have been hired by the publisher of *The Elevator Ghost* to design a cover for the novel. (Pretend that you haven't seen the actual jacket for the book.) You may want to use card stock for your cover, do the lettering on a computer, print it and then work in your cover illustration. Decide the medium you would like to use—crayons or pencil crayons, felt pens, water colors, or even paper collage (look at some of Eric Carle's picture books to see how this is done).

CREATE AN ELEVATOR GHOST GAMEBOARD

Use ideas from the novel to create a gameboard with a playing track of squares and cards to pick that can advance a player—or send the player back. Use two pieces of cardboard the same size to make a folding gameboard and then fold a piece of construction paper (also the same size) to glue along the spine and hold it together. Make playing-track squares of different colors. Decide whether your track will simply follow the edges of the board or wander like a snake over it. As you write your rules for the game, indicate that landing on a certain color means the player must pick a card. Use a computer to create your cards with some “good luck” messages such as “Go ahead to the ghost ship”, and some “bad luck” messages such as “Return to the UFO crash and lose a turn.” Mix these up, of course. You will also need dice and some tokens to move along the squares.

CREATE A SPOOKY PEEP BOX

Use a shoebox to create a three-dimensional scene of the Carolina Giddle ghost story you liked the best. Cut a circle in one end of the box (for the viewer to look through) and a bigger circle or rectangle in the top of the box (to shine a light

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through). Tape a strip of colored cellophane over this skylight. Cut paper to fit the interior sides. Paint background scenes on these and let them dry before gluing them on. Paint the inside bottom of the box. Use scrap paper to plan the objects and characters you want to include in your scene. You can use small boxes, found objects, as well as painting objects and characters on cardboard and propping them up with another piece of folded cardboard (a flap glued to the bottom of the box, and another flap glued to the back of the cardboard figure). Get an adult to help you figure out a good way to have a light ready for shining through the peep-box top. (See the line master diagram.)



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Teaching note: If you like to fill your classroom with related books during a novel study, here are some suggestions for picture books, story collections and novels that resonate in one way or another with *The Elevator Ghost*.

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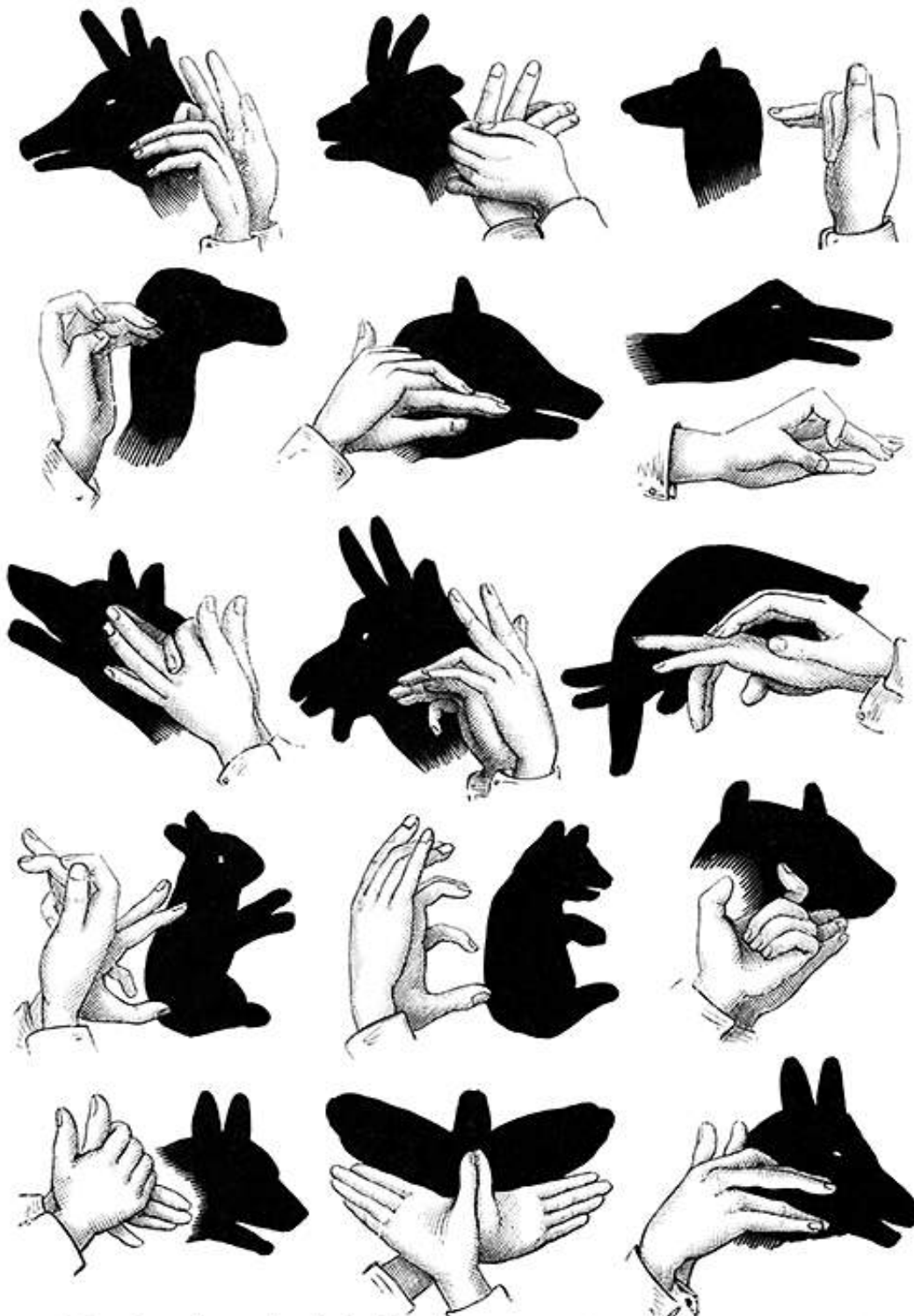
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FOR PHOTOCOPYING



Ombres de la main. — Renne, chamois, brebis, chameau, porc, oie, loup, chèvre, éléphant lièvre, ours, loup, chien, papillon, âne.

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GHOST STORY PLAN

My Story Idea:

My main character is:

Other characters in my story:

Some ways to start:

Begin with a character's thoughts. For example:

More than anything Madison didn't want to take the dare. But if she backed out now, would she ever be accepted into the club? And what if she wasn't able to spend all night in the old Garvy house?

Begin with dialogue. For example:

"So what do you think, Madison?" Josh pitched a rock into the middle of the weed-strewn lawn in front of the old Garvy house. "You brave enough?"
"Did you say 'all night'?" Madison tucked her hand into her pocket so they wouldn't see it shaking.
"Do ghosts prowl on Halloween night?" Brittany laughed. "Of course it's all night."

Set the scene. For example:

It was scary walking by the old Garvy house any time but it was spookier than ever on Halloween night. A weathervane on its sagging roof poked at the moon. Most of the windows were broken and bits of glass glinted in the weeds below...