



SPINE - CHILLERS

WHAT LURKS IN YOUR
IMAGINATION?

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**Today you are going to write a mini saga for
Young Writers' Spine-Chillers competition!**

**You will learn about tension, suspense and
atmosphere to help you write a
spine-chilling tale!**



**Grab a pen or open Word, etc
to make any notes...**

Let's get started!

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You're going to watch a short video to introduce you to the activity, then you are going to write a mini saga for Young Writers' Spine-Chillers competition!

Then we'll learn more about a mini saga and what you could write about.

Fun Fact...

the voiceover on the video is exactly 100 words! Yep, our instructions are a mini saga too!



<https://youtu.be/CuR6yW4sQ>



**Your teacher will now let
you know any
Learning Outcomes &
Success Criteria
for this lesson.**



What is a mini saga?

A mini saga is a story told in up to 100 words!



3 golden rules of mini saga writing

1. Be original! Your work can be inspired by other stories, but add a twist, make it your own!
2. Keep to the 100-word limit – make every word count!
3. Remember that mini sagas must have a beginning, a middle and an end!



Let's look at creating tension, suspense and atmosphere in your writing...

Do you know what tension, suspense and atmosphere are?

Tension, suspense and atmosphere play a key role in creating a spine-chilling story. Blood, guts and gore sometimes shock a reader, but often bore them and won't make an original, compelling story! Creating a story that is creepy, that gives you goosebumps or has a surprise humorous ending, are so much more enjoyable to write and to read!

Quick Activity

Write down or explain to your teacher what you think tension, suspense and atmosphere are...



Tension Definition

Mental or emotional strain; intense, suppressed suspense, anxiety or excitement.

Example

As I walked past the abandoned house, I felt like I was being watched...



Suspense Definition

A state or condition of mental uncertainty or excitement, such as waiting for a decision, action or outcome with apprehension or anxiety. An element of risk is usually involved.

Example

I reached for the door, my hand shaking, unsure what was on the other side...



Atmosphere Definition

The mood, environment or emotional tone in a piece of writing.

Example

The old, ivy-clad barn disappeared as the thick fog rolled in, silencing nature.



Writing Activity

Choose one these 3 settings:

- an abandoned house
 - a church
 - a forest

Write a sentence or two that describes each one on a bright, sunny day.

Now repeat the activity using awful weather at dusk or at night.

How do they compare?



Setting the scene...

Set the scene using location and weather/time of day/time of year.

Darkness, inclement weather, isolated property, ruins, graveyard etc., automatically give the reader a sense of something sinister afoot.

One or two short sentences can set the scene leaving the remainder of your mini saga to develop the plot.



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Your teacher will now split you into groups and provide each group with a large sheet of paper to write on.

- **Group 1** need to write ideas for settings – where can you think of that an exciting or thrilling story would be set?
- **Group 2** need to write down character ideas – who could appear in your tale?
- **Group 3** need to write down what could happen in the story – a chase, a discovery, searching for something, etc
- **Group 4** need to write down ways the story could end – what happens to end the story? A cliffhanger ending? Something funny? Was it a dream, etc.



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- You have 1 minute to write down as many ideas as you can...
- Then pass your sheet on to the next group, you have another minute to add as many ideas as you can to the new sheet (aim for 3 from your group).
- Repeat this until each group has written ideas on each piece of paper.
- Once your time is up, look through the ideas as a class – if you like an idea say, ask questions and talk about different ideas to help you find an idea to write about.



Example Mini Saga 1

Off-Limits

"Stop, Jess! You know it's off-limits," exclaimed Charlie with fear in her eyes.

"I know," Jess replied but she had already begun edging down the cold stone steps which led to darkness. Above her, bottle-green windows rattled menacingly as the wind howled against them. Her hands were trembling as she slid the tight lock open which protected the secret she was about to unfold. Towering shadows were cast around her, her heart paced as footsteps surrounded her. A gloom-filled mist crawled along the deserted corridor as a sharp nail wrapped around her chestnut curls and pulled her down...

By Hannah Foy (13) – Spine-Chillers 2020 winner



Example Mini Saga 2

The Rambler

Fog was creeping in, I wouldn't make it back before dark. I saw an old church. *I'll wait there and call Tom*, I thought. Fog weaved around weather-beaten tombs. I shivered. I crept between crumbling gravestones, heading for the church. The door latch was rusty but unlocked. I entered and shut the door behind me. "Hello?" No answer. I called Tom.

"I'll be there in 20 Liz!" he said as I sat on a dusty pew.

Moonlight cast dancing shadows through stained-glass windows. *Bang!* "Tom?" The shadows, still moving, grew bigger. A cold hand touched my shoulder. "Tom?" ...



Planning Your Mini Saga

Consider the following points:

- Will there be a ghost/apparition or will you just suggest that through the power of words?
- Will the events be in the character's mind or real?
- Will the ending have a twist, cliffhanger or be funny?
- Will the reader be lulled into a false sense of security?
- Will you opt for description, dialogue or action?
- Will you plunge your reader straight into the situation or spare a sentence or two to set the scene beforehand?



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Use the planning sheet to write down your ideas for your setting, character and beginning, middle and end of your mini saga.



It's time to get writing!

Your mini saga must be inspired by the spine-chillers theme.

Remember the 3 golden rules of mini saga writing:

1. Be original! Your work can be inspired by other stories, but add a twist, make it your own!
2. Keep to the 100-word limit – make every word count!
3. Remember that mini sagas must have a beginning, a middle and an end!

If you have any questions, please ask your teacher now!



Mini Saga Writing Tips

- Use contractions to save words e.g. 'it is' becomes 'it's'.
- Use your title to give readers a clue.
- Use ellipses (...) to help suggest tension and suspense.
- Be brutal! Edit out any unnecessary words/sentences e.g. 'cold snow' can just be 'snow' – the reader knows snow is cold!
- If using dialogue, don't write 'said the main character', use strong verbs to you show the reader what they are feeling, so you don't have to explain it. E.g. 'shrieked/cried/laughed/stammered'.



Review your mini saga:

- Is it 100 words or less? If not, edit it down
- Does it make sense?
- Does it have a beginning, middle and end?
- If you have used speech, is it clear who is speaking and when?

If you are able to, share your story with a classmate to provide feedback to you please do! Ask them to tell you why they like it and one thing you could do to improve it.



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It's time to submit your work to your teacher.

**MAKE SURE YOUR NAME
IS ON YOUR WORK!**



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