

The Haunted House Model: Plot Structure Worksheet

Based on Shirley Jackson's "The Haunting of Hill House"

Part 1: Your House & Its History

The House as Character

House Name/Location: _____ Age of the house: _____ Architectural style/notable features: _____

What makes this house feel "wrong"? (subtle wrongness, not obvious horror)

The House's Dark History

Original tragedy/darkness: _____

How does this history seep into the present?

What physical traces remain? (stains, cold spots, architectural oddities)

The House's Influence

How does the house "call" to certain people?

What kind of person is vulnerable to the house?

Part 2: Character Setup - The Residents

Primary Vulnerable Character (Your "Eleanor")

Name: _____ Age/Background: _____
Why are they drawn to the house?
(desperation, curiosity, duty, etc.) _____

Personal psychological fragility: _____

What sanctuary are they seeking? (safety, belonging, escape, etc.) _____

Their greatest fear/insecurity: _____

Supporting Characters (2-4 people)

Character 2: Name: _____ Role: _____
(believer, skeptic, catalyst, protector, etc.) _____ How they react to the house: _____

Character 3: Name: _____ Role: _____
How they react to the house: _____

Character 4 (Optional): Name: _____ Role: _____
How they react to the house: _____

Part 3: The Corruption Timeline

Phase 1: Arrival & False Sanctuary (First 25%)

Initial impression of the house:

What seems welcoming/safe at first?

First subtle wrongness noticed:

Characters' initial reactions/hopes:

Phase 2: Settling In & First Disturbances (25-50%)

Characters establish routines/relationships:

First unexplained events:

1.

2.

3.

How do characters rationalize these events?

Which character begins changing first?

Phase 3: Escalating Corruption (50-75%)

How the house begins to isolate the vulnerable character:

Psychological changes in main character:

- Week 1:

- Week 2: _____
- Week 3: _____

Supernatural events become more personal/targeted:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How do other characters react to the changes?

Phase 4: Complete Corruption & Crisis (75-100%)

The point of no return - what happens?

Final supernatural confrontation/revelation:

How does the vulnerable character's psychology completely break?

The climactic choice: (stay/go, surrender/fight, etc.)

Resolution: How does it end for each character?

Part 4: Parallel Corruption Tracking

Supernatural Escalation | Psychological Deterioration

Week 1: Supernatural: _____

Psychological: _____

Week 2: Supernatural: _____

Psychological: _____

Week 3: Supernatural: _____

Psychological: _____

Week 4: Supernatural: _____

Psychological: _____

Final Stage: Supernatural: _____

Psychological: _____

Part 5: The House's Seduction Strategy

How the House Provides False Sanctuary

What does the house seem to offer the vulnerable character?

How does it make them feel special/chosen?

What needs does it appear to fulfill?

The House's Manipulation Tactics

How does it isolate them from others?

How does it make leaving seem impossible/terrifying?

What "rewards" does it provide for staying?

The House's Ultimate Goal

What does the house want from the vulnerable character?

How has it acquired this from previous victims?

Part 6: Atmospheric Elements

Sensory Corruption of Space

How do rooms change throughout the story?

- Initially: _____
- Midpoint: _____
- Climax: _____

Temperature/Physical sensations:

Sounds the house makes:

- Subtle: _____
- Obvious: _____
- Terrifying: _____

Visual distortions/changes:

Time and Reality Distortion

How does the house affect perception of time?

What reality distortions occur?

How do characters lose track of normalcy?

Part 7: Key Scenes & Moments

The Arrival Scene

First impression: _____ What detail hints at wrongness? _____ Character reactions: _____

The Seduction Scene

When does the house first "embrace" the vulnerable character?

How does this feel positive initially?

The Turning Point

When does sanctuary become prison?

What event makes this clear?

The Final Corruption

The moment of complete psychological break:

The house's final offer/demand:

The Resolution

How does it end? ☐ Character escapes but changed ☐ Character stays willingly ☐ Character becomes part of the house ☐ Ambiguous ending ☐ Other:

Part 8: Themes & Deeper Meaning

What the House Represents

Psychologically, what does your house symbolize? (isolation, depression, toxic relationships, family trauma, etc.)

The Corruption Theme

What kind of corruption are you exploring?

How does this reflect real-world psychological struggles?

The False Sanctuary Theme

What real-life "sanctuaries" can become prisons?

What's your story's warning/message?

Part 9: Revision Checklist

☐ Does the house feel like a living character with its own agenda? ☐ Is the psychological deterioration gradual and believable? ☐ Do supernatural events parallel and enhance psychological changes? ☐ Does the house provide genuine appeal before revealing its true nature? ☐ Are other characters' reactions authentic to the situation? ☐ Is the vulnerable character's psychology clear and sympathetic? ☐ Does the "sanctuary becomes prison" arc track throughout? ☐ Is the ending inevitable yet still impactful? ☐ Does the house's influence feel consistent with its history/nature? ☐ Are atmospheric details layered throughout rather than front-loaded?

Additional Notes & Ideas
