

THE MORAL GHOST STORY WORKSHEET

A Victorian Christmas tradition: Ghost stories that teach us how to live

PART 1: THE LESSON (Start Here)

What truth about life does your story teach?

Examples: Forgiveness heals both parties / Greed destroys what matters / We owe debts to the past / Love survives death / Cruelty has consequences / Family bonds can't be escaped / Kindness to strangers matters / We become what we practice

Your story's moral:

Why does this lesson matter at Christmas specifically?

PART 2: THE LIVING CHARACTER (Who Needs to Learn)

Name: _____

What are they doing wrong? (Being cruel, ignoring family, chasing money, refusing to forgive, wasting time, breaking promises, forgetting where they came from)

What do they tell themselves to justify it? ("I'm too busy" / "They don't understand" / "I earned this" / "It's too late to change" / "They deserved it")

What will they lose if they don't change?

Where are they when the story begins? (Alone in a big house? At a family gathering they don't want to attend? Working on Christmas Eve? Visiting a grave?)

PART 3: THE GHOST (Who Teaches the Lesson)

Who is the ghost? (A relative, old friend, former lover, stranger they wronged, someone they failed to help, their future self, a child)

What's their relationship to the living character?

Why are THEY the perfect messenger for this lesson? (They made the same mistake / They were hurt by the character / They represent what the character is losing / They know a secret)

How did they die? (This should connect to the moral)

What do they want from the living character? (Not revenge - they want: change, acknowledgment, forgiveness, to prevent the same fate, to be remembered, to deliver a warning)

What's their tone? ☐ Sad and pleading

☐ Stern and warning

☐ Gentle and forgiving

☐ Angry but not cruel

- ☐ Mysterious and cryptic
 - ☐ Loving but firm
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PART 4: THE HAUNTING (How the Ghost Appears)

When does the ghost first appear? (Christmas Eve at midnight? During a family dinner? While the character is alone by the fire? At a grave? In a dream?)

How do they appear? (Choose the mood you want) ☐ Fully visible, looks alive at first

- ☐ Translucent, clearly a spirit
- ☐ Only a voice or presence
- ☐ In mirrors or reflections
- ☐ Through objects (moving things, leaving signs)
- ☐ In a vision or dream
- ☐ Felt but not seen

What's the first thing the ghost says or does?

How does the living character react? ☐ Terrified

- ☐ Disbelieving
 - ☐ Guilty
 - ☐ Defensive
 - ☐ Hopeful
 - ☐ Angry
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PART 5: THE MESSAGE (What the Ghost Shows or Tells)

What does the ghost reveal? (A forgotten memory, a truth the character has been avoiding, what others really think of them, the consequences of their actions, a future they're heading toward)

Does the ghost: ☐ Show visions of the past

- ☐ Show what's happening now (that the character can't see)
- ☐ Show a possible future
- ☐ Simply speak the truth
- ☐ Ask a question the character can't answer
- ☐ Make the character feel what someone else felt

What's the most powerful moment of the haunting? (The one image, line, or revelation that breaks through)

PART 6: THE RECKONING (Does the Character Change?)

How does the living character respond to the ghost's message?

Do they change? ☐ Yes - complete transformation

- ☐ Yes - small but meaningful change
- ☐ They try, but it's too late
- ☐ No - they're doomed to repeat their mistakes
- ☐ Unclear - that's the point

What action do they take? (Or fail to take?) (Reconcile with family? Make amends? Give something away? Visit someone? Confess? Change their ways? Or refuse and face consequences?)

How does the ghost leave? (Fade away satisfied? Vanish in anger? Stay until the lesson is learned? Leave a sign they were real?)

PART 7: THE ENDING (What's the Moral?)

By the end of your story, what has the living character learned?

What do you want readers to feel at the end? ☐ Hopeful - change is possible

- ☐ Warned - don't make this mistake
- ☐ Bittersweet - some things can't be undone
- ☐ Peaceful - death isn't the end
- ☐ Chilled - some people never learn
- ☐ Grateful - for what they have

The final image of your story:

BONUS: THE CHRISTMAS CONNECTION

Why does this ghost appear at Christmas? (The season of forgiveness / Family gatherings force confrontation / The year's end is a threshold / Winter darkness thins the veil / Time for reckoning / Love and memory are strongest now)

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Now write your ghost story. Make it mean something.