

Prison Reading Groups (PRG) was created in 1999 to set up, support and fund informal reading groups in prisons. We now support more than 60 groups in over 45 prisons nationwide. PRG is part of Give a Book.



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Finding a Good Read: Horror

A regular column to help you find a good read.

It's October and Halloween is on the horizon. So what better topic than HORROR?

Horror stories frighten, startle and shock. So why are they so pleasurable? One theory suggests:

'The rush of adrenaline feels good. Our hearts pound, our breath quickens, and we can imagine ourselves on the edge...They also make us think, and remind us that the world is not always as safe as it seems.'

Whatever the reasons, horror is a hugely popular genre, with lots of different ways to send chills down your spine. Here are some of the big names that are in almost every library;

- **Stephen King:** he pretty much covers the horror bases, from bloods-soaked slashers like **The Shining** and **Carrie**, to psychological nightmares like **Misery** and **It**. And he's published more than 60 books so lots to choose from.
- **James Herbert:** author of 25 novels that range from post-apocalyptic bestsellers like **The Rats** and **The Fog** to supernatural/psychological horror including **Others**, **Haunted** and **The Dark**.
- **Dean Koontz:** his 100+ novels are billed as suspense thrillers but often have a horror edge. A few titles to whet your appetite: **Demon Seed**, **Intensity**, **Phantoms**, **Odd Thomas**.
- Other writers to check out: **Clive Barker**, **Shaun Hutson**, **Neil Gaiman**



Vampires

If you want your terror blood-stained, vampires are a sure winner. The daddy of them all is Bram Stoker's **Dracula** which has been made into more than 200 films and inspired dozens of books. Authors to look out for:

- **Anne Rice:** her 17-novel series The Vampire Chronicles features a 200-year old French aristocrat and his vampire wanderings across the world.
- **Charlaine Harris:** her 15-novel Southern Vampire series is set in Louisiana and stars the wonderful Sookie Stackhouse – waitress, mind-reader, and girlfriend of a vampire. More laughs than shivers but they're a good read and inspired the HBO True Blood series.

Psychological terror

This is the kind of horror that explores what fear does to the mind and makes us unsure about what's really there.

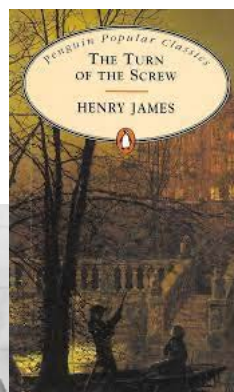
Classic ghost story writers from the 1800s include **Edgar Allan Poe**, **MR James** and **Henry James**, author of the brilliant but tricky **Turn of the Screw**. The 1961 film version, **The Innocents**, remains for some one of the most haunting movies ever. More recently Netflix has released two adaptations, **The Innocents** (2018) and **The Haunting of Bly Manor** (2020).

- **Dan Simmons**: his novel *The Terror* is based on the lost Arctic expedition of John Franklin and was the inspiration for the current BBC series.
- **Shirley Jackson**: the kind of scary that slowly creeps up on you instead of darting out of the shadows. Her **Haunting of Hill House** has also become a Netflix series.
- Other ghost story writers to check out: **Michelle Paver**, **Susan Hill**, **Peter Straub**, **Richard Matheson**, **Joe Hill**

Scariest films ever?

Here's a list to compare with your own favourites:

- Let the Right One In
- Halloween
- Psycho
- The Sixth Sense
- Hereditary
- The Shining
- The Others



Ghost story challenge: How many words does it take to make you shiver?

Here's a tale in under 150:

A Persistent Woman by Marjorie Bowen

Temple, exhausted, resolved to leave his wife; their atrocious quarrels were killing him; he was still shaking with the furies of this morning's disagreement when he returned home with bitter reluctance; difficult to get free of Sarah, but it must be done; Temple was resolved. She met him in the sombre lane that led to their house, and clung to his arm in silence; she was repentant no doubt, but Temple could not relent; he was mute and tried to shake her off, but she clung with great tenacity.

When they reached their home he found it full of commotion; out of a phantasmagoria someone told him that his wife had been discovered in the pond – 'Suicide, poor thing!' and his brother whispered 'You're free.'

But Temple grinned at the spiteful shape hugging his arm and knew he could never be free from Sarah.

Note: your library may not have all of these titles or even any of them, but it's sure to have some of the authors mentioned. So if you like the sound of any of the books mentioned, just include 'or any other books by ...' on your request app.

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