Worksheet 2 – Black Knight
Ghost Stories

Edith Nesbit (1858-1924) was a famous English writer, who created many famous works for children (*The Railway Children*) as well as being a successful author for adults. She had a considerable interest in horror stories, as shown in this chilling tale.

She was by no means the only one. Also famous for their horror stories in her time were Charles Dickens (*The Signalman*), Edgar Allen Poe (*The Pit and the Pendulum*), Wilkie Collins (*The Woman in White*), Bram Stoker (*Dracula*) and many others. In our own time, we have masters of the genre like Stephen King (*Carrie, Misery, etc*).

Horror stories are normally classified like this:

• Monster fiction (eg *Frankenstein, Dracula*)
• Tales of the supernatural, or 'ghost' stories (eg *The Monkey's Paw, The Woman in White*)
• Psychological horror (Stephen King is the master)
• Gothic horror (Edgar Allen Poe and others)
• Weird fiction – a blend of horror, science fiction and fantasy (eg *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, The Island of Dr Moreau*)
• Science fiction horror – a modern and particularly movie-based variation which takes the action into outer space (eg *Alien*)
• Terror – a modern and particularly movie-based variation which emphasises blood and gore (eg *Nightmare on Elm Street*)

And of course any blend of these.

Task 1: Write a project on either "Ghost Stories" or "Horror". You will need to research the subject, read some stories (at least one or two) and watch one or more horror films. What is the formula (for this particular type of narrative)? Why do people like stories like this, when they should find them repulsive? What do they appeal to? Can they be justified?

Task 2: The discussion above mentions a number of famous writers. Choose one to study in detail. What makes them important in the history of literature?

Task 3: Try writing your own horror story. You can use any one of the formula styles, or create something original. After you have completed a draft, have someone read it and comment. You may be able to present it in staged reading to the class.