

Halloween Resources & Ideas for Advanced Students



What Poe Would Say to Lovecraft on Halloween Night: Activities for Working with Horror Themes in the Adult Second Language Classroom

On Halloween night, as the shadows lengthen and the doors between worlds crack open, we're invited to explore the mystery and terror of literature in a unique way. Imagine for a moment that the masters of horror, H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe, gathered on this magical evening to share their secrets about writing chilling stories.

In this blog post, we offer unique ideas to inspire your classes to celebrate Halloween in a special way with your adult students.

1. About Halloween: Introductory and Contextualizing Activity

Let's kick off the session with a **brief icebreaker activity** to introduce the theme, encourage our students to speak, and activate their knowledge.

Below are a series of questions that we can display on a projector or, if preferred, ask orally in class while providing some "support" expressions to make it easier for them to answer:

a. What does Halloween mean to you?

- *Halloween means a lot to me because...*
- *To me, Halloween is a time when...*
- *I associate Halloween with...*

b. What are some Halloween traditions in your country or region?

- *In my country/region, it's customary to...*
- *One tradition we have is...*
- *People here often...*

c. Have you celebrated Halloween in a special way in the past? Do you have any fun or spooky memories you'd like to share?

- *One memorable Halloween, I...*
- *I'll never forget the time when...*
- *There was this spooky incident when...*

d. Do you have a favorite horror movie that you like to watch on Halloween?

- *My go-to Halloween movie is...*
- *I enjoy watching [movie title] because...*
- *I find [actor/director's] work in this film to be...*

e. Have you ever worn a memorable costume on Halloween? What was it, and why did you choose it?

- *I once dressed up as [character] because...*
- *My most memorable costume was when I...*
- *I chose to be [character] because I admire...*

f. Have you ever read a horror novel or short story that really scared you? Can you share the title and what about it was so frightening?

- *I was genuinely terrified by [book/story title] because...*
- *[Author] managed to create a sense of dread by...*
- *The scariest part of [title] was when...*

g. Who is your favorite horror author, and why do you enjoy their work?

- *My favorite horror author is [author] because...*
- *I'm drawn to [author's] writing because...*
- *[Author] excels at creating an atmosphere of...*

h. Do you think horror literature serves a greater purpose beyond entertainment? If so, what themes or messages do you think it conveys?

- *I believe horror literature can be a vehicle for...*
- *One common theme in horror literature is...*
- *Horror stories often make us reflect on...*

i. What's the scariest horror movie you've ever seen, and what made it so terrifying for you?

- *The scariest movie I've seen has to be [movie title] because...*
- *The suspense in [title] was heightened by...*
- *I couldn't sleep for days after watching [movie title] due to...*

j. Are there any classic horror films you think everyone should watch? Which ones, and why?

- *I highly recommend [movie titles] because...*
- *These classic films are essential viewing because...*
- *Watching [movie titles] can give you a deeper appreciation of...*

k. If you were to write a horror story, what kind of horror would it focus on, and what elements would you include to make it truly chilling?

- *If I were to write a horror story, it would revolve around...*
- *The key elements I'd include to create suspense are...*
- *To make it truly chilling, I'd add a sense of...*

I. Have you ever had a nightmare that you think could be the basis for a horror story? If so, can you describe it briefly?

- I once had a nightmare where...

- My nightmare was about...

- It felt like the perfect setup for a horror story because...



2. Reading Comprehension Activity

Next, we'll continue with a brief reading activity through which our students will learn some interesting facts about Halloween in different parts of the world. Students will read the following text and answer comprehension questions. They will also do a vocabulary exercise to expand their vocabulary related to the topic.

Halloween Celebrations Across Cultures: A Global Exploration

Halloween, with its roots in Celtic traditions and influences from Christianity, has undergone a fascinating transformation into a worldwide phenomenon. The manner in which this holiday is observed showcases the rich tapestry of cultural nuances, illustrating how a single event can transcend borders while adapting to local traditions and interpretations.

United States

In the United States, Halloween is a grand spectacle. It's a holiday that transcends age, with people of all generations partaking in an array of activities. From the traditional trick-or-treating to elaborate and immersive haunted house tours, Halloween caters to a wide spectrum of interests. The practice of pumpkin carving has evolved into an art form, with jack-o'-lanterns bearing intricate and mesmerizing designs gracing countless doorsteps.

Cities across the country host grand parades, featuring colossal floats and an assortment of elaborately themed costumes that rival those seen in Hollywood productions.

Ireland

Ireland, the very birthplace of Halloween, continues to embrace its authenticity in celebrating the holiday, known locally as Samhain. The festivities harken back to ancient Celtic practices, encompassing rituals such as communal bonfires, apple-bobbing contests, and divination games. In a practice akin to trick-or-treating, children participate in "guising," where they dress in meticulously crafted costumes, visit neighbors, and perform a small act or recite a poem in exchange for treats.

Mexico

In Mexico, Halloween harmoniously converges with the Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) observance, offering a unique blend of traditions. Families construct elaborate altars adorned with vibrant marigolds, intricately designed sugar skulls, and the favorite foods of their dearly departed. This tradition is a heartfelt gesture of remembrance and reverence. Colorful processions and parades are common sights in various regions of the country, adding to the festive ambiance.

Japan

Japan, while not historically associated with Halloween, has enthusiastically embraced the holiday in recent years. The celebration primarily centers around costume parties and themed events. Shibuya, a bustling district in Tokyo, has garnered international recognition for its colossal Halloween street party, where thousands of revelers dressed in a myriad of creative costumes converge, creating a breathtaking spectacle.

Germany

In Germany, Halloween is often referred to as "All Hallows' Eve" or "Reformation Day." While the day maintains its religious significance, with church services and moments of contemplation, some regions incorporate festive fairs and bustling food markets. The juxtaposition of solemn reflection and light-hearted festivities demonstrates the cultural diversity within the country.

South Korea

Halloween in South Korea predominantly engages the younger demographic. The celebration manifests through lively costume parties and themed club events, showcasing the fashion-forward and avant-garde creativity of Korean youth. Select amusement parks introduce eerie-themed attractions designed to captivate thrill-seekers.

China

In China, Halloween is gaining traction, especially in major urban centers. Referred to as the Western Festival, it is not a public holiday, but young people often embrace the opportunity for revelry. Costume parties and themed gatherings are increasingly common, highlighting China's openness to global cultural influences.

Comprehension Questions:

1. Elaborate on the historical and cultural significance of Halloween's Celtic origins, and how has it evolved over time?
2. Detail the multifaceted array of activities associated with Halloween in the United States and the artistic evolution of pumpkin carving.
3. Explain the nuances and cultural connotations of "guising" as practiced in Ireland during Halloween.

4. Describe the fusion of Halloween and Dia de los Muertos in Mexico, including key elements and symbolism.

5. Analyze the impact of globalization on the adoption and adaptation of Halloween in Japan and China, highlighting key differences in their celebrations.

Vocabulary Matching:

- A. Masquerade
- B. Eerie
- C. Haunting
- D. Macabre
- E. Enigmatic
- F. Supernatural
- G. Phantasmagoria
- H. Cryptic
- I. Apparition
- J. Mysterious

1. _____: A costume party where attendees dress in elaborate disguises or masks.
2. _____: Strange or unsettling in a way that creates a feeling of unease or fear.
3. _____: To visit or occupy a place in the form of a ghost or spirit.
4. _____: Involving or suggesting supernatural or paranormal phenomena.
5. _____: Suggestive of death or the gruesome and often having a grim or ghastly atmosphere.
6. _____: A rapidly changing sequence of images or scenes, often seen in horror shows.
7. _____: Difficult to understand or having a hidden meaning.
8. _____: A ghostly figure or appearance, especially one that is frightening.
9. _____: Characterized by being mysterious, puzzling, or hard to understand.
10. _____: Having an inexplicable or mysterious quality or nature.



3. Horror Movie Reviews

Here are three reviews of iconic horror movies with some blank spaces. Students will complete each blank space with the appropriate adjective. At the end of each review, multiple adjective options are provided for students to choose from.

Movie 1: "The Shining" (1980)

"The Shining" is a classic _____ (1) directed by Stanley Kubrick that has left an _____ (2) mark on the history of psychological horror cinema. The film is known for its _____ (3) atmosphere and the _____ (4) performance by Jack Nicholson, who plays a character that gradually becomes more _____ (5) and _____ (6) while caretaking an isolated hotel in the winter. The movie delves into the supernatural and creates a sense of _____ (7) that continues to disturb audiences decades after its release.

1. indelible
2. terrifying
3. claustrophobic
4. unsettling
5. deranged
6. psychological
7. unease

Movie 2: "Psycho" (1960)

"Psycho," directed by Alfred Hitchcock, is a supreme example of a _____ (1) thriller. The plot revolves around a _____ (2) motel run by Norman Bates, a _____ (3) and _____ (4) character with an unhealthy relationship with his mother. The movie unfolds with _____ (5) and _____ (6) that keeps the audience on the edge of their seats. The shower scene, in particular, is remarkably _____ (7) and has left an indelible mark on cinematic history.

1. psychological
2. enigmatic
3. twisted
4. shocking
5. intensity
6. suspense
7. remote

Movie 3: "The Exorcist" (1973)

"The Exorcist" is a _____ (1) movie directed by William Friedkin that has been described as one of the most _____ (2) horror films of all time. The plot follows the efforts of a _____ (3) priest to free a girl possessed by a _____ (4) and _____ (5) entity. The film is known for its _____ (6) possession scenes and _____ (7) special effects that still send chills down the audience's spines.

1. supernatural
2. demonic

3. tormented
4. disturbing
5. terrifying
6. impactful
7. astonishing



4. Guess Who

Can your students guess which horror literature authors are behind these statements based on their distinctive writing styles?

Author 1: _____

"In the depths of my mind, I find inspiration amidst the darkest corners of the human psyche. I seek to explore the fragile boundary between sanity and madness, unveiling the macabre and the mysterious. The haunting beauty of decay, the allure of the grotesque, and the pitiable wails of lost souls drive my quill. My tales are imbued with an eerie, melancholic atmosphere, where the heart's relentless beat echoes in the abyss."

Author 2: _____

"I draw inspiration from the cosmic unknown, where incomprehensible entities lurk in the shadowy recesses of the universe. My tales venture into the realms of existential dread, weaving a tapestry of forbidden knowledge and forbidden horrors. The insignificance of humanity, the fragility of sanity, and the ancient, cyclopean architecture of forgotten civilizations fuel my narratives. My prose is intricate, laden with eldritch terminology, and the dread of the unseen."

Author 3: _____

"In the mundane, I uncover the extraordinary. Everyday settings and relatable characters serve as my canvas for terror. My inspiration lies in the heart of small towns, in the twisted psyche of ordinary people, and in the inexorable pull of addiction and obsession. I bring the supernatural into the everyday, making the ordinary unsettling. My storytelling is immersive, character-driven, and deeply grounded in the human experience."

Author 4: _____

"I find inspiration in the domestic, the subtle, and the unspoken horrors of everyday life. My tales explore the oppressive conformity of society, the fragility of identity, and the chilling power of the human mind. Hauntingly understated, my narratives unveil the eerie tension

that resides in the mundane. The sinister undertones in seemingly benign settings give my stories an air of quiet unease."

Author 5: _____

"My inspiration arises from the grotesque, the visceral, and the boundary-shattering. I revel in the exploration of taboo subjects, the merging of pleasure and pain, and the transformative power of the monstrous. My tales venture into the darkest recesses of desire and the consequences of pursuing forbidden passions. My writing is visceral, vivid, and unapologetically transgressive."

Author 6: _____

"In the pursuit of inspiration, I delve into the philosophical and the existential. I explore the implications of scientific progress, the ethical dilemmas of creation, and the essence of humanity. My narratives are born from a fascination with the boundaries of life and death, the consequences of playing God, and the enduring theme of redemption. My prose is contemplative, philosophical, and rich in moral complexity."

Answers:

- Author 1: Edgar Allan Poe
- Author 2: H.P. Lovecraft
- Author 3: Stephen King
- Author 4: Shirley Jackson
- Author 5: Clive Barker
- Author 6: Mary Shelley



5. What Poe Would Say to Lovecraft on Halloween Night

For this part of the session, begin by introducing the two famous authors, H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe, and their contributions to the horror genre:

Today, we'll delve into the intriguing world of horror literature by exploring two iconic authors who have made significant contributions to the genre: H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allan Poe. These two writers, though from different eras, have left an indelible mark on the world of horror through their unique styles and exploration of dark and mysterious themes.

H.P. Lovecraft:

H.P. Lovecraft, born in 1890, is renowned for his pioneering work in the subgenre known as "cosmic horror." His writing style is characterized by intricate and immersive descriptions,

which often evoke a sense of dread and otherworldly terror. Lovecraft's stories frequently explore the insignificance of humanity in the face of vast, incomprehensible cosmic forces.

Edgar Allan Poe:

Edgar Allan Poe, on the other hand, was a 19th-century writer known for his mastery of the macabre and gothic tales. His writing style is characterized by its lyrical and melancholic quality, drawing readers into the depths of the human psyche. Poe's works often revolve around themes of madness, death, and the supernatural.

These two authors, Lovecraft and Poe, offer us contrasting yet equally captivating approaches to the horror genre. By examining their distinctive styles and recurring themes, we gain a deeper appreciation of their enduring impact on literature and the enduring fascination with the dark and mysterious.

Once you've introduced the authors, read the following imaginary dialogue between Poe and Lovecraft to the students. Encourage them to listen attentively and take notes if necessary. Present the dialogue between Lovecraft and Poe as a fictional conversation about their sources of inspiration for writing terrifying stories. If you like, before reading the conversation, you can also ask your students where they think authors like Poe and Lovecraft draw inspiration from when writing their works.

Lovecraft: (Sitting in a dimly lit room, surrounded by ancient tomes) *Edgar, my dear friend, do tell me, how do you find inspiration for your tales of terror?*

Poe: (Gazing into a flickering candle's flame) *Ah, Howard, inspiration is a curious and elusive muse, is it not? For me, it often emerges from the shadows of despair and the melancholy of life's tragedies.*

Lovecraft: (Nodding) *Quite right, Edgar. The human condition, with its fragility and capacity for suffering, serves as a wellspring of inspiration for our tales.*

Poe: (Sipping from a glass of absinthe) *The macabre beauty of death, the lurking dread in the mundane, these are the seeds from which my stories germinate.*

Lovecraft: (Stroking his chin) *And what of the cosmic horrors, Edgar? The vast, unknowable cosmos, the fear of the incomprehensible—where do you find such concepts?*

Poe: (Smiling faintly) *The cosmos, Howard, is but a reflection of the abyss within the human soul. It is in the dark recesses of the mind where I discover the cosmic terrors that haunt my tales.*

Lovecraft: (Eyes gleaming with excitement) *For me, the ancient tomes and forgotten lore of humanity serve as my muses. The arcane and the forbidden are my guides to the realms of cosmic dread.*

Poe: (Raising an eyebrow) *You explore the unknown and the eldritch with a fervor that few can match, Howard. Your tales of ancient beings and forbidden knowledge send shivers down the spine.*

Lovecraft: (Leaning in) *But, Edgar, where do you draw your fascination with death? Your stories often delve into the morbid aspects of existence.*

Poe: (Leaning closer) *Death, my friend, is the ultimate mystery, the one certainty in an uncertain*

world. Its presence in our lives and its inevitability have always held a peculiar fascination for me.

Lovecraft: (Nodding in understanding) *It is a fascination we share, Edgar, the exploration of that which lies beyond the veil of mortal comprehension.*

Poe: (Raising his glass) *To the shadows that inspire us, Howard, and to the endless abyss of our creativity.*

Lovecraft: (Raising his glass as well) *To the depths of the unknown, Edgar, where our tales of terror find their roots.*

Next, divide the class into small groups and ask each group to discuss the following questions based on the dialogue:

- **What are some common themes and sources of inspiration for Lovecraft and Poe?**

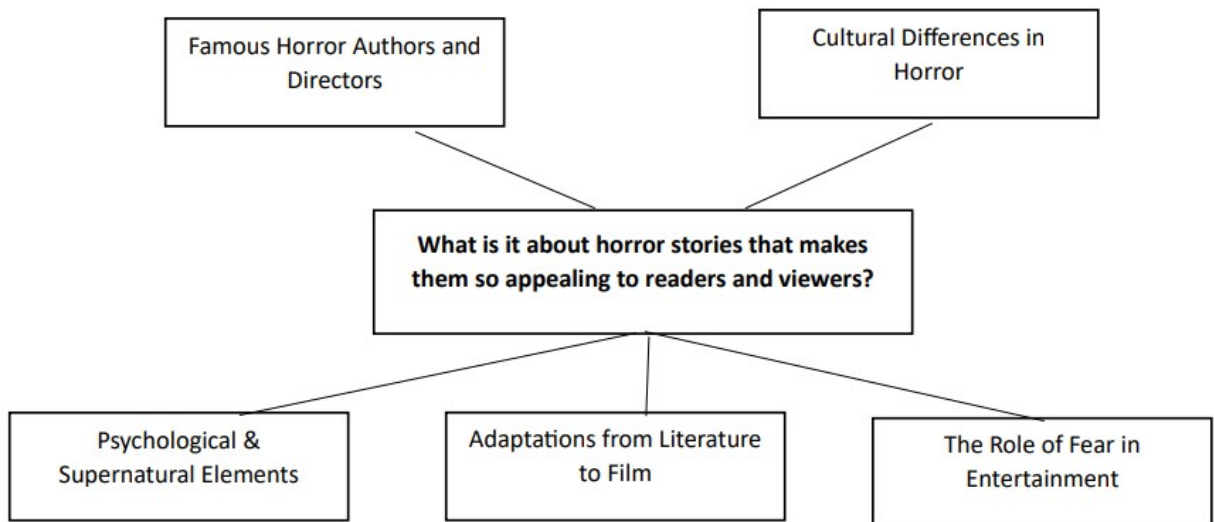
- **How do their writing styles differ?**

- **Which aspects of their conversation did you find particularly interesting or revealing?**

Encourage students to brainstorm in their teams and create a list that includes possible sources of inspiration for horror stories, as well as possible themes. Then, invite them to share their answers and lists with the other groups.

Wrap up the activity by asking students what they have learned about the sources of inspiration for writing horror stories and how they can apply these ideas to their own creative writing projects. For advanced-level students, you can challenge them to write horror stories inspired by the class discussion and their own creativity.

To conclude the session or Halloween week, you can assign the following speaking task based on the format of Part 3 of the FCE and CAE exams:



- Talk about a well-known horror author or director and their impact on the genre. What is their signature style, and how have they contributed to the world of horror?
- How do horror themes and elements vary across different cultures? Can you think of any examples of culturally-specific horror stories or films?

- Discuss the differences between psychological horror (focusing on the mind and emotions) and supernatural horror (involving elements like ghosts or monsters). Which do you find more terrifying, and why?
- Share your thoughts on how successful horror books are adapted into movies. Do you think the film adaptations usually capture the essence of the original stories?
- Explore the idea of fear as a form of entertainment. Why do people enjoy being scared while reading or watching horror? Are there any limits to what is acceptable in horror entertainment?



Halloween Vocabulary C1



MALEFICENT

The maleficent sorcerer cast a spell upon the house



MACABRE

The horror movie had a truly macabre atmosphere



APPARITION

An apparition appeared at the stroke of midnight



MALEVOLENT

The malevolent spirit haunted the mansion for centuries



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