

***Scared stiff*** by Judith Clarke

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CLASS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Characterisation** is the technique an author uses to help readers become familiar with the characters in his or her story.

- 1 Copy the table below into your workbook. Find the events listed below in the story and write what Margaret *thought*, *said* or *did*. (Don't forget to note any reactions from other characters.) The first event is completed as an example.

Event	Speech/thoughts	Others
Newspaper landing on the front step	Margaret thinks it's a 'great big enormous footprint' - someone is coming for her.	Tracey Lyons bursts out laughing. 'Must be a one-legged man.' She tells others at school Margaret is mental.
Carrying the cane basket in which to collect some eggs		
Visiting Mr Tilba		

- 2 Imagine you are Margaret's school teacher and you have to write her end-of-year report. In 50-100 words try to sum up your general impression of the type of girl Margaret is. (Does she join in with activities? How does she get along with other kids? Why won't she sit near the classroom barometer?) Use your imagination and the hints to her personality given in the story to write your summary. Feel free to exaggerate and worry her parents half to death.

**For your information**

The **five main methods of characterisation** are:

- Action - what the character *does*.
- Speech - what the characters *says* and how he or she speaks.
- Appearance - what the character *looks* like.
- Others - what other characters *say* and *think*.
- Authorial statement - what the narrator *tells* the reader.

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From short story to a **short radio play**

1 Using one character from the story and inventing three or four of your own, *write* a two-minute radio play based on one of the following school situations.

- A visit to the toilet.
- A spider in your pencil case.
- A bus ride home.
- A day at the museum.

You can keep the original mood of *fear*, or you can have a bit of fun. For example:

*One who flew out of the science window*

by A. Nutter

SFX: FOOTSTEPS WALKING ALONG  
 NARRATOR: Armed with a metal trash can lid, a wooden spoon and a large weather vane in the shape of a giant chook, Wallace and Dino headed off to class.  
 SFX: SCHOOL BELL RINGS  
 TEACHER: Now class. Today we are finishing off our talks on the weather.  
 MARGARET: Ah Ah Ah (SCREAMS)  
 TEACHER: Margaret please. Get down from the window ledge. You know the Principal doesn't like you up there.  
 DINO: (INTERRUPTS AND CALLS OUT) Oh miss... look what fell off the school roof just before the bell rang.  
 MARGARET: Ah Ah Ah (SCREAMS)  
 TEACHER: Dino, put that weather vane...  
 MARGARET: Ah Ah Ah (SCREAMS)  
 TEACHER: Margaret for heaven's sake, hang on to something. I can't have you flapping about there like a drunken pigeon. You might fall.  
 MARGARET: Ah Ah Ah (SCREAMS)  
 TEACHER: Dino! Take that metal chook away from Margaret this instant.  
 DINO: But it's not a chook Miss. See, it's in the shape of a rooster. And see these arrow things with a N and S and an E and W, they tell me which way the wind...  
 MARGARET: Ah Ah Ah (SCREAMS)  
 TEACHER: You did that on purpose didn't you?  
 DINO: Did what Miss?  
 TEACHER: Mention a certain noun naming a certain climactic condition.  
 DINO: What...wind?  
 MARGARET: Ah Ah Ah (SCREAMS)  
 TEACHER: For the last time, no one is to mention any verb, adjective, or noun to do with... 'you know'.  
 SFX: HITTING TRASH CAN LID WITH A WOODEN SPOON  
 TEACHER: Who is making that racket?  
 WALLACE: Me Miss. You know how you said I should plan to do something with my life; well, I've decided to take up panel beating. It sounds like thunder, doesn't it?  
 MARGARET: Ahhhhhhhhhh (VOICE TRAILS OFF AS IF FALLING)  
 TEACHER: Wallace and Dino, I hope you're both satisfied. That's the fifth time this week Margaret has attempted to fly out of the science lab window.  
 DINO: Must be something to do with the weather, Miss.

2 *Form groups* and *voice act* the best plays. Remember to assign someone to make the sound effects. Be imaginative and have fun.

## *Selina's star signs* by Jay Linden

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **CLASS:** \_\_\_\_\_

It is not easy to build and sustain the feeling of fear throughout a short story. In 'Selina's star signs', the **setting** plays an important part in helping the author to maintain the **mood** and **atmosphere** within the story.

- 1 Copy the following table into your workbook. Write down at least four *key words* and *expressions* used to make each of the three senses of touch, smell and sound create a feeling of claustrophobia in each setting. (Some examples are given for 'touch'.)

Sense	Details
<b>Touch</b> Bedroom (the nightmare)	darkness, struggle, tearing layer of cloth, feeling blindly, frantically, hand sweeping the wall, Where is the switch?
<b>Smell</b> Kitchen	
<b>Sound</b> House (before Rob goes to bed)	

- 2 Your eight-year-old brother (or sister) is having a 'sleep over' party. You've been told your job is to tell his/her friends some nice 'campfire' stories just before bedtime. Instead, you plot to scare the living daylights out of them and give them all nightmares. Copy the table below into your workbook. In 100-150 words, briefly *summarise* the scary story you would make up for each setting to scare your little brother's or sister's friends.

Setting	'Scare the pants off them' story ideas
The laundry	Ralphie, the pet poodle, has been on a special diet. For the past two weeks his food has been warmed up in the microwave. But mind-altering microwaves have slowly been infiltrating his food. Now, every night, just before midnight, his eyes start to glow red and his stomach begins to crave the raw, tender flesh of eight-year-old boys (or girls). And on the stroke of midnight he waits, ready to eat any kid who might pass through the laundry on their way to the toilet - the <u>only</u> way to the toilet.
The closet/wardrobe	
The toy box	

### For your information

**Setting** is the *time* and *place*, or when and where events take place in a story.

**Mood/atmosphere** is the overall feeling the reader gets when he or she becomes involved in the character's *emotions* and *actions*.

# Selina's star signs by Jay Linden

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_

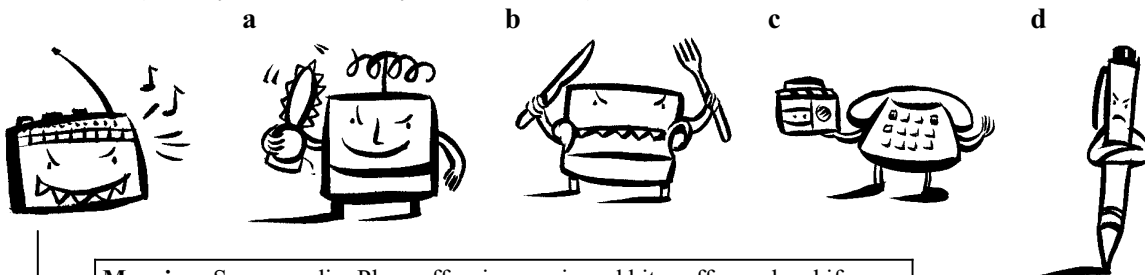
Besides using settings to create an atmosphere of fear, an author can also use **symbols**. A **symbol**, whether it be visual or literary, is anything that stands for something else. For example, the colour red could mean danger or love; a white cross could mean death, a church or a hospital.

- 1 After Rob reads his horoscope 'Beware of a dark stranger who has evil intentions towards you', *objects, events and encounters* become **symbols** for his impending doom.  
Find the symbol to match the given meaning. Then write how, in your opinion, the symbol contributed to the scariness of the story (mood).

Copy the table into your workbook and record your answers.

Symbol	Meaning to Rob	How the symbol contributed to the mood/atmosphere
Fortune Cookie (Hint: Chinese custom; edible)	Confirms his horoscope and adds to his growing fear.	The cookie's message had me beginning to wonder whether the things happening to Rob were just coincidental after all.
_____ (Helps those starting out in the study of psychic phenomena)	Adds to Rob's growing fear of his horoscope coming true. Meeting a tall dark stranger.	
_____ (Everyday beverage)	The pattern they form warns of 'Evil'.	
_____ (Utilises the sense of sound)	Helps drown out the other noises, while Rob checks over the house. But the title itself adds to the fear.	
_____ (Reflects the truth)	Makes Rob realise his deepest fear is right there in the room with him.	

- 2 Invent a meaning for the following symbols. In 20-50 words, describe the symbolic meaning you have created. (Write your answer in your workbook.)



**Meaning:** Savage radio. Plays offensive music and bites off your head if you try to touch its dials.

## For your information

When authors use **symbols**, they're often aware of the double meanings associated with them. Symbols can be used to enhance the *mystery, intrigue* or *suspense* operating within a story.