R.L. STINE

Teaches Writing for Young Audiences

ABOUT
R.L. STINE

Robert Lawrence Stine, better known as R.L. Stine, is one of the most recognized authors of children's horror novels alive today. He's been called "the Stephen King of children's literature," has penned more than 300 books for kids aged 7 to 15 years old.

Originally from a small suburb of Columbus, Ohio, Bob discovered the art of suspenseful storytelling through old radio programs and classic films like *It Came From Beneath the Sea* and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. After graduating from Ohio State University in 1965, he moved to New York City to be a humorist. It was only through a chance turn of events that he began writing horror.

Since then, he has mastered the craft of simultaneously frightening and entertaining young readers. His prolific catalogue includes the popular *Fear Street* and *Goosebumps* series, and is widely appreciated by kids, parents, and teachers across the globe.

Over 400 million copies of his books have been sold worldwide, and they have been translated into 35 languages—making him one of the best-selling authors of all time. His *Goosebumps* TV show was the most popular children's program in America for three consecutive years, and the *Goosebumps* movie (2015), starring Jack Black, became the #1 movie in the U.S. upon its release. A *Goosebumps* movie sequel is in the works.

Bob lives in New York City with his wife and business partner, Jane Stine, and continues to write the *Fear Street* series and the *Goosebumps* series, now in its 26th year.

ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

The MasterClass team has created this workbook as a supplement to Bob's class. Each lesson is supported with a chapter review, a variety of assignments and exercises, and outside resources to enhance your learning experience. Bob has also included a handful of case studies from his novels and developmental material. These will give you deeper insights into his writing process and better prepare you to write a children's horror novel of your own.

YOUR CLASS PROJECT

The goal of this MasterClass is to provide you with all the tools you need to write a middle grade or young adult (YA) horror novel. Your assignment is to develop an idea for a story, assemble an outline, a character cheat sheet, and a first draft of your own (which will need to be revised at least once). All of the exercises comprising the Class Project will be labeled as such. You will also be asked to complete a variety of other exercises intended to improve your skills as a writer and storyteller.

MASTERCLASS COMMUNITY

Throughout, we'll encourage you to discuss the course and work you've completed with your classmates in The Hub. You can also connect with your peers in the discussion section beneath each lesson video.

SUGGESTED READING

BY R.L. STINE

- *Give Me a K – I – L – L*, St. Martin's Press, 2017
- *I am Slappy's Evil Twin*, Scholastic, 2017
- *It Came from Beneath the Sink!*, Scholastic, 1995
- *Missing*, Pocket Books, 1990
- *One Day at HorrorLand*, Scholastic, 1994
- *The Curse of the Mummy's Tomb*, Scholastic, 1993
- *Revenge of the Lawn Gnomes*, Scholastic, 1995
- *Say Cheese and Die!*, Scholastic, 1992
- *Little Shop of Hamsters*, Scholastic, 2010
- *Welcome to Camp Nightmare*, Scholastic, 1993
- *Attack of the Mutant*, Scholastic, 1993
- *The Haunted Mask*, Scholastic, 1993
- *The Girl Who Cried Monster*, Scholastic, 1993
- *How I Met My Monster*, Scholastic, 2013
- *Frankenstein's Dog*, Scholastic, 2013
- *Deep Trouble*, Scholastic, 1994
- *Young Scrooge*, Square Fish, 2017
- *My Hairiest Adventure*, Scholastic, 1994
- *The Scarecrow Walks at Midnight*, Scholastic, 1994

OTHER WORKS

- Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way*, Penguin Group, 1992
- Aristotle, *Poetics*
- Deborah and James Howe, *Bunnicula*, Atheneum Books, 1979
- Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*, Scholastic, 2008
- Brandilyn Collins, *Getting into Character: Seven Secrets a Novelist Can Learn from Actors*, Wiley, 2002

SUGGESTED READING

- Lynda Barry, *Syllabus: Notes From an Accidental Professor*, Drawn and Quarterly, 2014
- J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, Little, Brown, 1951
- Agatha Christie, *Sparkling Cyanide*, Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1945
- Ray Bradbury, *Something Wicked this Way Comes*, Simon & Schuster, 1962
- Stephen King, *Pet Sematary*, Doubleday, 1983
- Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, Scribner, 2000
- Robert B. Parker, *The Godwulf Manuscript*, Houghton Mifflin, 1973
- Robert Crais, *The Forgotten Man*, Ballantine, 2005
- S.E. Hinton, *The Outsiders*, Viking Press, Dell Publishing, 1967
- Mark Shatz and Mel Hilitzer, *Comedy Writing Secrets: The Bestselling Guide to Writing* (3rd Edition), Writer's Digest Books, 1987
- Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, Pantheon, 1994
- William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1920
- P.G. Wodehouse, *Thank You, Jeeves*, Herbert Jenkins, 1934

1.

INTRODUCTION

"People are natural storytellers. Everyone wants to know what happens next."
—R.L. Stine

CHAPTER REVIEW

Bob wants you to forget the idea that writing is difficult. The intention behind this MasterClass is to show you that writing can be fun and that anyone can do it. There's nothing to be feared about the process. We all love to hear people tell stories, and that the craft of storytelling is a matter of tapping into people's inherent desire to know "what happens next." Bob urges you to let go of the idea that you must write something that comes from deep inside you. Bob has written over 300 books and, as he says, not one of them has been "from his heart."

Welcome to R.L. Stine's MasterClass.

2.

THE IDEA STORE

"There are three different departments in the idea store. There's experience, memory, and imagination."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Stay Alert for Ideas
- Draw From Your Own Experiences
- Source Ideas From Memory
- Use Your Imagination (Not Your Dreams)
- Create a Universe With Your Ideas

CHAPTER REVIEW

Bob says he can't tell you exactly how to get ideas, but that it consists of staying alert and keeping yourself open. He gets great ideas in his morning shower and while he's walking his dog. When pressed about the origin of his story ideas, especially during visits to schools, he has to come up with something; so he tells people he gets his ideas at the "idea store," which has three departments: experience, memory, and imagination.

Pull ideas from experience by paying attention to the world around you. Listen to what kids say to their parents on the street. Think of things you love, and put a creepy spin on them. For example, Bob's love of Disney World led him to imagine an evil theme park and ultimately to come up with the idea for *HorrorLand*.

Reach back to your memories of childhood and recall things that used to scare you. Bob and his brother used to worry his parents would leave the house and never come back. From this fear, he grew the idea for a *Fear Street* book called *Missing*, in which two kids discover that their parents no longer exist.

Use your imagination. Bob remembers a time he was walking in New York City's Riverside Park and out of nowhere, the words "say cheese and die" flash into his head. From there, he imagined a camera that took pictures, but only of bad things that happen in the future. This idea became his novel, *Say Cheese and Die!*

For Bob, becoming an alert observer stemmed from feeling like an outsider when he was young. Coming up with ideas allowed him to create a universe that he could control. Bob believes this is one of the most appealing things about writing, whether you feel like an outsider or not.

2.

THE IDEA STORE

LEARN MORE

- Familiarize (or re-familiarize!) yourself with *Goosebumps*. Approach them from the perspective of a writer, unpacking the elements that make these books so compelling to young readers. With this in mind, read one of the following and examine the plots and characters with a discerning and analytical eye:
    - *HorrorLand*
    - *Missing*
    - *Say Cheese and Die!*

  As you read, think of ways that your own experiences, memories, and imagination play a role in your own storytelling. Note how the premise of the novel, while rooted in fantasy, also feels like a familiar thought or fear a child might have.
- Take a look at this collection of articles about the creative process.
- Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* is a widely popular text on building self-confidence and harnessing one's creative potential. Consider using the Morning Pages exercise to explore different ideas.
- Check out this article on developing a "Beginner's Mind."

EXERCISES

- The first step in the writing process is to brainstorm. Complete the following exercises to help get your creativity going.
    - Write down five times you remember feeling truly scared. Reflect on why you were so frightened, and include sensory details. What did you see, hear, taste, feel, and smell? Tapping into early memories is a powerful way to discover universally frightening things.
    - Spend an hour in a public place full of people. This can be a park, a grocery store—anywhere. It's important to get into the habit of observing people. Watch where your mind wanders as you take in the sights. Write down anything that could be grown into a story.

2.

THE IDEA STORE

EXERCISES CONT.

- Be open to random ideas. Reflect on lessons from *The Artist's Way* and the principles of cultivating a beginner's mind, and write down ideas as they come to you throughout the day.

CLASS PROJECT

- Identify three ideas from your brainstorming exercises that could grow into a long-form story. Expand each idea into a short paragraph—you will ultimately choose one of these for your novel. As you write, picture the different directions the narrative could go. Would this story hold the attention of a young reader?

3.

OTHER RICH SOURCES OF IDEAS

"You don't need five ideas. Or you don't need a whole book of ideas. You only need one idea. You just need one story."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Get Ideas From Movies and Television
- Develop an Idea From a Catchy Title
- Use a Topic as Your Starting Point
- You Only Need One Good Idea

CHAPTER REVIEW

Bob grew up on horror films from the 1950s and 1960s, which is apparent in the *Goosebumps* books. He was also deeply inspired by Rod Serling and *The Twilight Zone*, and used the show as a muse for many of his plots.

Though most writers start with an idea for a story and figure out the title later on, Bob often starts with the title, and goes from there. Titles are great ways to produce a "germ of an idea" that can be grown into an entire story.

A good title grabs the reader's attention, but doesn't give anything away. It should establish some basics about the book and not much more. *Give Me a K-I-L-L* lets you know that the story is about cheerleaders and that someone is going to die. That's it.

It's also OK to start with a topic. For example, Bob has to write lots of books about Halloween and summer camp. To develop the story, he used his own son's "low-rent" camp as inspiration. Bob drew upon the camp's shortcomings to write *Welcome to Camp Nightmare*.

You don't you need to have multiple ideas ready to go at moment's notice. All you need is one solid concept. Just focus on writing one story at a time. When an idea comes to you, sit down, flesh it out, plan it, and go for it. It's a great way to keep things fresh.

LEARN MORE

- Read one of the following:
    - *Give Me a K-I-L-L*
    - *Little Shop of Hamsters*
    - *Welcome to Camp Nightmare*
- Can you tell what the "germ of an idea" was? Watch how Bob is able to take a simple and sometimes silly idea and expand it into an entire plotline.
- Titles are more than just attention grabbers—a good title can pave the way for an entire story. Review this collection of *Goosebumps* novels, and take note of their titles.

3.

OTHER RICH SOURCES OF IDEAS

CLASS PROJECT

- Review the three ideas you expanded upon in Chapter 2: The Idea Store. For each, develop two potential titles. Each should give a basic idea of the story and compel a young reader to grab the book off the shelf. Reach back to your childhood and think of something that would have grabbed your attention. If possible, "pitch" these story titles to a child, and gauge his or her interest. Children are some of the most honest (and devastating) critics in the world.

4.

GETTING FROM IDEA TO PLOT OUTLINE

"I don't like outlining either. But now I can't work without one. I have to have it. I have my whole plan. And I sit down and enjoy the writing."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Develop Your Idea First
- Understand the Value of Outlining
- Make Your Story a Page-Turner
- Maximize the Adventure

CHAPTER REVIEW

Once you have an idea you're happy with, start expanding it. Ask questions, and write down your answers. If your story has a superhero, ask, "what kind of powers does he have?" Is there a monster in the story? If so, what is it? What does it look like? If you are writing YA horror, who is the villain? What's the story's major conflict? In what kind of situations will your characters land themselves, and how will they get back to safety?

It's challenging to create a cohesive plot that remains interesting from start to finish. This is why it's necessary to build a detailed outline before you start writing. A strong outline lets you stay in control of the narrative as you establish the world of your story.

If you put enough work into your outline, the most difficult part of writing your book is finished. Doing so allows you to be relaxed as you write and confident of the direction you are headed. It makes the writing process more enjoyable.

For a novel to be a page-turner, you must follow certain rules. Most of all, the story needs to be fun to read. The kids in the book should be funny, as should the conflicts they face. Technically speaking, you want to write short chapters full of easy-to-read words. Give younger audiences fast-paced, plot-driven stories that are full of cliffhangers. They'll feel much more inclined to read your books.

All of Bob's books are plot-driven. Some *Goosebumps* books, such as the *Deep Trouble* series, are more adventure novels than children's horror. Most children's adventure stories have a similar plot structure: A group of kids are placed in danger, and they need to find a way to safety. However, someone (or something) is trying to prevent them from completing their "mission," whatever that may be. The book is about the kids using their wits to complete their mission—this is plot-driven storytelling in its most basic form.

LEARN MORE

- Read *Attack of the Mutant*, which is about an average kid who

4.

GETTING FROM IDEA TO PLOT OUTLINE

finds himself in great danger when he suddenly becomes a character in his favorite comic book. The novel was borne out of Bob's love for comics, especially as a kid. As you read, picture Bob's thought process as he developed his outline.

- Understanding the mechanics of dramatic structure will help you write a more cohesive outline. Read Aristotle's *Poetics*, and pay close attention to the role that conflict plays in drama. Remember, you will need to present your main character with a problem or conflict that he or she must resolve throughout your narrative.
- Read *Deep Trouble*. How does this book differ from other *Goosebumps* books? Bob feels it is more an adventure than a horror novel. What differences do you observe between the two genres? Is the plot structure, central conflict, or character development notably different?
- Watch *The Goonies* (1985). It's a great example of a plot-driven story that has held up for decades. Notice how the antagonists (the Fratelli family) try to prevent the the group of kids from achieving their mission, and the way in which the kids use their imagination to stay safe and reach a happy ending.

CLASS PROJECT

- Gather the three story ideas you've been exploring, and choose the one you feel has the most potential to be a novel. Congratulations! You've just taken your first step toward finishing your book.
- Begin roughing out the foundation of an outline either on a pad of paper or a computer (Bob prefers paper). Start with the basics: Identify your main characters, the central conflict, and the beginning, middle, and end of your story.
- Identifying the central conflict is a crucial step in formulating your idea. A common construct often looks like this: Your main character must achieve some kind of goal (i.e. making it out of a haunted forest alive), but some force (a monster, a murderous lunatic, etc.) is doing everything possible to prevent him or her from succeeding.

4.

GETTING FROM IDEA TO PLOT OUTLINE

CLASS PROJECT CONT.

- Jot down a few notes about each main character and flesh them out a bit more. Start picturing what they look like and what their drives and motivations might be. Character creation will be addressed in greater detail in later chapters but for now, develop a clear idea of who the main players will be in your story.

5.

OUTLINING: SURPRISE ENDINGS AND CLIFFHANGERS

"Everything's fine. Everything's real nice again. The evil is over. You're in good shape. And then something tells you you're not out of it yet. And that's what a surprise ending is."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Start With the Ending
- End Happy, But With a Surprise
- Use Cliffhangers to Keep Readers Turning the Page
- Cliffhanger Case Study: *The Haunted Mask*

CHAPTER REVIEW

If you can, develop the end of your novel first. While this may not always be possible, it's a trick Bob uses to help keep the readers engaged by skillfully directing away from what they *might think* the ending will be. Once you start writing, it makes it easier to start fooling people from the very beginning of the book.

Every *Fear Street* and *Goosebumps* book has a happy ending. That is, except for one. But Bob received so much negative feedback from his readers that he never did it again. That's because children's horror books are supposed to be like roller coasters—frightening, but with an understanding that everything will be OK in the end. "They've been through all these monsters and horrible things, and they've been chased, and they've had all these creepy, terrible adventures. They want relief from it," Bob says.

But while it's important to write a happy ending to your novel, it's also fun to add a small twist at the last moment to leave readers with a playfully spooky feeling—something that says, "wait a minute, kids, you're not out of it yet."

Bob first learned the value of a cliffhanger by tormenting his younger brother with ghost stories, refusing to finish them in a single sitting. A "cliffhanger" is a device that compels readers to find out what happens next in a story. Writing great cliffhangers is key to making your book a page-turner and it's one of the easiest ways to make your writing more suspenseful. Some writers might feel it to be a "cheap trick" or an easy gimmick, but it's a tried and true way to get kids to read—and keep them reading.

Bob spends much time working on original cliffhangers. In fact, it's how he ends most chapters. Bob examines the cliffhangers he used in *The Haunted Mask*, which he feels to be his best Halloween novel. For example, he ends one chapter with a frightening moment in which the main character is grabbed from behind; but at the top of the next chapter, readers discover that this was just the character's friend. He says he's used this trick in hundreds of different chapters, but it's worth it because it keeps kids reading.

5.

OUTLINING: SURPRISE ENDINGS AND CLIFFHANGERS

LEARN MORE

- American author O. Henry was a master of the plot twist. In fact, a surprise ending in a story is also called an "O. Henry ending." Read a bit about him and browse some of his short stories here.
- Folktales like "Hansel and Gretel" and "Little Red" are early examples of what would be considered children's horror today. Familiarize yourself with these types of narratives and note that, despite the monsters and villains, each has a happy ending.
- Read *Stay Out of the Basement*. Note the twist at the end. Can you think of an equally effective surprise ending for your own story?
- Watch *The Usual Suspects* (1995), a film famous for its shocking final reveal.

CLASS PROJECT

- Write out a rough summary of last scene of your novel. Once you know how the story ends, you can write a plot—complete with twists and turns—that gets readers there.
- Practice writing cliffhangers for your novel. Remember, cliffhangers serve to pique readers' interest about events to come. Take a look at the first scene in your rough outline and write five potential cliffhangers that would make it impossible for a kid to *not* go on to chapter two. Good cliffhangers drive people crazy, and if you look at most of the popular shows on TV today (think: *Game of Thrones*), you'll notice that each episode ends with a cliffhanger so well-crafted that it's often painful to watch. In the same way, you want to write chapter endings that make young readers obsessed with moving on to the next scene, over and over again.
- Review how you plan to end your novel, and develop five surprise endings, each one increasingly more outlandish. Push yourself to make them as strange and original as you can—this may be what a reader remembers most about your book.

6.

OUTLINING: PLOT TWISTS AND TRICKS

"Every book has a beginning, a middle, and a twist."
—Jack Black as R.L. Stine in the *Goosebumps* movie

SUBCHAPTERS

- Use Twists and Surprises to Tease Your Readers
- Don't Let the Middle Drag
- Plant False Leads
- Don't Let Technology Ruin Your Plot

CHAPTER REVIEW

Middle grade and YA novels are often too linear and predictable, regardless of whether or not they're well-written. Among other things, Bob thinks *Goosebumps* and *Fear Street* remain popular because the stories have enough twists to keep kids feeling surprised again and again.

Include at least two or three twists in your story. These help keep readers engaged, especially in the middle of your book when your plot might otherwise start to drag. Carrying readers through the middle of a story is challenging, and there needs to be enough excitement to keep them reading to the end. A great twist will surprise the reader and turn their whole understanding of the story on its head.

Trick your readers by planting "false leads." Also known as "red herrings," these are details added to purposefully mislead people and prevent them from predicting an outcome. While adult mysteries are filled with carefully hidden clues, children's horror novels should be packed with tricks to lead kids astray and thereby surprise them even more when something (like the true identity of a monster) is revealed.

Don't let technology such as cell phones ruin your plot. Most kids have communication devices on them at all times, which makes it difficult to imagine a scenario in which they couldn't just call for help—thus ruining any suspense you've built. Be creative, and find ways to separate your characters from their phones.

LEARN MORE

- Read *My Hairiest Adventure*, and note how Bob uses twists to keep younger readers guessing. Picture yourself as a 10 year old. Could you have predicted what was "really" happening to the characters in the story?
- Read Bob's novel *Party Games* and note how he swiftly addressed the issue of cellphones in order to make way for greater suspense throughout the novel.

6.

OUTLINING: PLOT TWISTS AND TRICKS

CLASS PROJECT

- The most popular children's horror novels are filled with surprises, so you'll need to practice the art of tricking your readers. Remember, plot twists reveal something new and unexpected. Review your rough outline, and write five potential plot twists for both the middle and the end. Like the surprise ending exercise, make each twist increasingly weird or hard to predict.
- Next, make a note of at least three places in your outline where you could plant a false lead to make your plot twists more surprising. Write a few sentences describing each, and be specific about how you plan to fool people. For example, there might be a seemingly evil doctor, who turns out to be just lonely, while the *nurse* is actually the real monster. Try to get inside your readers' head and lead them astray. They'll thank you for it in the end.
- Develop five tactics you could employ in order to prevent technology from ruining your plot and write them down.

7.

OUTLINING CASE STUDY

"If you have an outline, you like it, you think it's ready to go, you're gonna find out when you're writing the book if it's a good outline or not."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Outline Case Study: *I Am Slappy's Evil Twin*
- Get Feedback on Your Outline

CHAPTER REVIEW

Bob provides two versions of his outline for *I Am Slappy's Evil Twin*—the one that was rejected by his editor and the one that was accepted—and describes how they differ. He then shares the revised outline in detail, noting that the first plot twist comes as early as the prologue. His outline is extremely detailed—it's taken from a 12-page outline—which is indicative of time and energy he puts into this stage of the writing process.

With your outline intact, it's time to start the revision process. Take a look at what you've developed in its entirety and track your characters through the plot, making sure all their actions and reactions make sense. Take note of your chapter endings, cliffhangers, and plot twists; see if you are happy with the beginning, middle, and end. Make changes as necessary. A lot of Bob's outlines get rejected, and sometimes he'll create three or four versions before he can start writing.

After you've gone through your outline and you're feeling comfortable with it, find someone you trust and ask them to take a look. Ask them to make comments and give you feedback on things like pacing, whether it's exciting, and if there's enough substance to keep people engaged.

LEARN MORE

- Download and review the two outlines Bob provided, the one which was accepted, and the one which was not. What differences do you notice? Take the strengths and weakness of each into account as you create your outline.
- Read this article on the formula found in nearly every sitcom plot. Use it to both understand basic narrative structure and as a warning against falling into cliches.

7.

OUTLINING CASE STUDY

CLASS PROJECT

- Expand your rough outline into a 15 to 20 page-long document, consisting of the following elements:
    - A title
    - A plot synopsis giving a high-level summary of your story. This shouldn't be longer than a few paragraphs.
    - The main characters (don't worry about adding too much detail, that will come later)
    - The central conflict
    - A brief description of each scene
    - Clear definition of the beginning, middle, and end
- Insert your work from earlier exercises in the appropriate sections of your outline. This includes:
    - Five potential cliffhangers for Chapter One
    - Five potential surprise endings
    - Five potential twists for the middle and end sections, respectively
    - Three places to plant false leads
- Find someone you trust and whose opinion you respect to review your work. Ask this person to read and provide feedback on your outline. Request they take written notes, and follow up with them on the phone or in person. Take their feedback into account, and revise the outline as many times as you (or your trusted reader) feel is necessary.

8.

KIDS ARE THE BEST AUDIENCE

"I will tell you right away that my audience is the best audience in the world. The seven- to 12-year-old Goosebumps audience, they're amazing. I get them the last time in their lives they will ever be enthusiastic."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Make Your Books Fun for Kids
- Know What Age You Want to Write For
- Get to Know Your Readers' World
- Kids Make Great Fans

CHAPTER REVIEW

People think that everything written for children needs to have some sort of moral lesson. But it's good to remember that some books can have entertainment as their goal. Adults have the freedom to read whatever they like. Why aren't children sometimes afforded the privilege to read for kicks alone?

Be aware of this double standard as you enter into the world of children's literature. Kids want to be entertained, and you are competing with movies and technology in an unprecedented way. You need to write something they'll want to read as much as watching something on their iPad. Approach your novel with this in mind, and you just might get a kid hooked on reading.

In order to entertain, you have to be tuned in to your target age group. Middle grade books are generally aimed at kids aged seven to 12 years old, and young adult or "YA" fiction is geared toward 11 to 15 year olds. Interestingly enough, a huge number of adults now read YA novels—which is also something to keep in mind.

Kids like to read about kids who are just slightly older than them. Most of the characters in Goosebumps novels are 12 year olds, and the characters in *Fear Street* books are usually between 16 and 18.

If you have kids of your own, pay attention to what they and their friends find interesting. If you know teachers, talk to them. Ask your friends and family about their kids, and what they like to do. Volunteer at schools or other appropriate venues. Kids are smart, and they can immediately sense if something they're reading is out of touch. Avoid specific pop culture references when possible. Bob cites the time in 1990 when he wrote about a group of teenagers going to a Rick Astley concert. It's easy to see why this reference would prove problematic for young readers today.

If you can pull it off, kids make the best fans. Children have a deep desire to *live inside* the books they read. Create a world they can't wait to go back to and you've developed a captive audience that's difficult to replicate among adults.

8.

KIDS ARE THE BEST AUDIENCE

LEARN MORE

- Bob points out that reading can be a purely entertaining exercise for young people, and the author of this article agrees. Do you?
- If you choose to write YA fiction, you need to account for the fact that many adults will read your novels. Read "Why So Many Adults Love YA Literature" to learn more about this phenomenon.
- Check out "The Right Way to Bribe Your Kids to Read." What are your feelings on this issue?
- Take a look at this guide to the best Netflix content for kids. Choose one and watch it (or them, if it's a series). Take notes, and answer the following questions:
    - Why is this title so popular with younger audiences?
    - How is suspense built? What are the cliffhangers?
    - Were there plot twists? If so, do you think they'd effectively surprise younger viewers? Why?
- Consider incorporating what you've learned into your outline. Specifically, think about ways you could make your plot more fast-paced and entertaining for younger audiences.

CLASS PROJECT

- Find a young person in your family or community that's about the age of your target audience. Sit down with them and tell your story as if it were a detailed play-by-play of a film or TV episode. Notice where the kid's interest (or your own) begins to wane. Afterward, return to your outline and make the appropriate changes.

9.

WRITING FOR DIFFERENT AGE LEVELS

"One reason kids like Goosebumps *so much is that they identify with the monsters, not the protagonist. I think they identify with these raging creatures, 'cause they all feel out of control at some times."*
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Don't Include Real Life Horror in Middle Grade Fiction
- Make Your Horror Real in YA Fiction
- Consider How to Approach Violence
- Choose the Right Vocabulary for Young Readers
- Determine How Far You Can Go With Adult Content in YA

CHAPTER REVIEW

When writing middle grade fiction, you want to *entertain* young people with creepy, spooky stories—not terrify them entirely.

This is exemplified in Bob's *The Girl Who Cried Monster*, in which a girl discovers that a librarian is actually a monster—but no one believes her. In the original manuscript, the librarian ate a child. However, the editors thought this was going to far. In the next draft, the librarian kept a bowl of live turtles on his desk, and would occasionally eat one whole. It was a successful replacement since it was still creepy, but no children died.

In fact, no one in the *Goosebumps* series ever dies. There are no guns, and if there's a ghost, it's from a death that occurred long before the story took place. For the most part, real life terror should be kept out of middle grade horror. Readers need to be aware of that the monsters are fantasies, not reality. It's possible to build much scarier narratives when kids feel confident that none of the frightening things could happen to them in real life.

The opposite principle applies in YA horror: you want it to feel "real," as you are writing for a much more sophisticated audience. Bob jokes that in *Fear Street* he "kills off a lot of teenagers." In order to scare this age group, they have to believe that everything that's happening is real.

Kids have lots of violent feelings, and reading a somewhat violent horror novel can be cathartic, especially when there's a happy ending. Young readers aspire to conquer their fears, as the protagonists in Bob's books do. But what's unique about children's horror is that young readers don't just identify with the protagonist—they also see themselves in the uncontrollable monster. Seize this opportunity and develop your heroes and monsters in such a way that speaks to children's yearning to both be triumphant and out of control at once.

One secret to the success of the middle grade *Goosebumps* series is that it's not challenging to read. The stories are full of short, descriptive sentences, and the vocabulary is mostly at a fifth-grade reading level. Kids don't have to learn new words, or struggle to get through a passage. There's nothing to keep them from reading on to the next chapter. So be aware of your readers'

9.

WRITING FOR DIFFERENT AGE LEVELS

vocabulary level. The difference between a nine- and 15-year-old's reading ability is often staggering, and you have to write in such a way that kids find your story both interesting and accessible.

If you choose to pursue YA horror, you'll need to make a decision about how far you are willing to go with language, violence, and sex. Bob's YA material doesn't have sex scenes (he jokes that there's lots of "heavy kissing"). However, other authors are taking things further these days, and the standards are constantly changing. See what's out there and determine which end of the spectrum you'd like find yourself.

LEARN MORE

- Read *The Girl Who Cried Monster.* How would this story have been different if the original manuscript was accepted? In your opinion, would it have gone too far?
- Readable.io is an online tool that helps determine the readability of text, with everything from read time in minutes to grade-level appropriateness. Take a moment to explore the site, and investigate all the different metrics it offers. Find an article you've read recently, and copy/paste it's content into readable.io. Did any of the reports surprise you?
- Go to a bookstore or a library, and browse both the middle grade and YA sections. Strike up a conversation with an employee or a librarian and ask about trends they are seeing in either genre.

9.

WRITING FOR DIFFERENT AGE LEVELS

CLASS PROJECT

- Review your outline, and make sure that the audience you initially had in mind is still appropriate. If you plan to write a middle grade novel, is your story too real? If you are taking the YA route, is it real enough? In order to be successful, you need to match your story with the appropriate age group. Go back and make any necessary revisions before moving on.
- Earlier, you wrote a summary of the first scene of your novel. Using your typical voice and style, draft a paragraph for this scene, and use readable.io to score it. What grade level is your natural writing? Take note of other metrics. Revise the same piece until it's at the right reading level for your intended audience.

10.

CASE STUDY: COMPARING YOUNG ADULT AND MIDDLE GRADE FICTION

"You can see how Goosebumps *differs from* Fear Street. *You have this incredible monster, this hideous monster rising up from out of nowhere. But we know right away that it's silly. It can't really happen."*
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

CHAPTER REVIEW

To better understand the differences between YA and middle grade literature, Bob breaks down two of his works as case studies: a passage from *A Midsummer Night's Scream* and one from *Here Comes the Shaggedy*. In the YA passage, the pacing is fast and the vocabulary is slightly challenging. Also, multiple characters are introduced at the same time and they are all very believable. Most of all, the danger present as the group speeds into a dark forest is very "real."

The excerpt from *Here Comes the Shaggedy* is entirely different. Notice the much simpler vocabulary and shorter sentences. It's made clear that the scenario is based in fantasy, and the object of fear is a spooky monster, not real-life danger of getting lost in a forest where a murderer might be on the loose. To this end, there are loads of sensory detail about the monster, and while it's written in the third-person, the focus is clearly placed on Kelli's experience watching the creature emerge from the river.

LEARN MORE

- Read "The 8 Habits of Highly Successful Young Adult-Fiction Writers" and explore what YA authors with a proven track record are doing right.
- *Bunnicula* is a middle grade horror series by Deborah and James Howe. Explore some of these titles and see how they compare to *Goosebumps*.
- *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins is a YA phenomenon. Familiarize yourself with this series through the books and/or the movies. While its not horror per se, it contains frightening elements. Compare this series to *Fear Street*. How are more mature topics handled differently between the two?

10.

CASE STUDY: COMPARING YOUNG ADULT AND MIDDLE GRADE FICTION

EXERCISE

- In order to illustrate the difference between the two genres, rewrite the passage from *A Midsummer Night's Scream* for a middle grade audience. Next, rewrite the passage from *Here Comes the Shaggedy* for a YA audience. Place each passage next to its original, and share this exercise with your classmates in The Hub.

11.

THE KEY TO SCARY WRITING: POV

"The closer you get to the character, the better your scares will be, and the better your story will be. That's the whole secret to being scary. That's it in one sentence."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Balance Observations and Feelings
- Challenges of Writing First Person
- First-Person Case Study: The Ghostly Stare

CHAPTER REVIEW

When writing horror, it's best to tell the story from the point of view of the main character because the closeness to the character's experience will make his or her fear all the more real. You want readers to identify with the protagonist, experiencing the horror as their own.

An advantage to writing from your main character's point of view is your ability to express his or her thoughts and feelings in the first person. But don't overdo it. You need to maintain the balance between what your character is observing, feeling, and physically doing. "If there's too much thinking in a book, it slows it down," Bob says.

But writing in first person can be challenging, especially if you want to switch between the experience of more than one character. One way to accomplish this is to maintain a first-person POV with one character, then switch to third person when dealing with another. However, this technique might be a bit confusing for younger readers.

Bob uses his short story "The Ghostly Stare" as a case study for writing horror from a first-person POV It's clear that the passage wouldn't be as spooky if it were written in the third person. The main character refers to "my gloves," as opposed to "her gloves," bringing the reader closer to the frightening encounter with a ghost in a graveyard.

LEARN MORE

- Bob cites crime author Robert Crais's ability to switch from first to third person in his police novels. Read *The Forgotten Man*. Do you find this technique distracting?

EXERCISE

- Writing from a first-person POV is an effective way to scare your reader by placing them in the middle of the action. Rewrite the passage from "The Ghostly Stare" in the third-person. Is it less scary? Now rewrite the passage in the first-person, but use your own descriptive language.

11.

THE KEY TO SCARY WRITING: P.O.V.

EXERCISE CONT.

- Next, practice narrating in first person POV by describing the room you are currently in, but try to be as terrifying as you can. Push your imagination to think about how to turn something normal into something scary. If there is an old lamp in the room, you could make it haunted, and describe how the bulb only lights up on its own. If there is a closet, perhaps you hear the faint sound of a woman crying—but no one else believes you. Perhaps there's something menacing waiting just beyond the door. Describe the sound it's making, and the feeling of the cold sweat dripping down your temples as you turn the knob to see what it is. Be as descriptive as possible, writing with full awareness of all your senses.

CLASS PROJECT

- Identify a scary scene from your outline, and write it from the main character's POV. An illustrative first-person narrative is crucial to writing horror, so take the extra time to describe everything your main character is experiencing in detail. Slow down the pacing, and, like the exercise above, use descriptive language that vividly evokes the setting and speaks to your reader's five senses.
- Ask your trusted reader to take a look at each version and provide feedback. Specifically ask if there are any pieces that could be described more thoroughly, and whether or not the pacing was too fast, too slow, or just right.

12.

HOOK READERS RIGHT AWAY

"Kids know right from the start that it's something they're going to want to read."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Set Up the Action Immediately
- Open Case Study: *I Am Slappy's Evil Twin*

CHAPTER REVIEW

Goosebumps novels begin with a quick, action-packed opener that gets kids immediately interested and familiar with most of the main characters. The first few pages establish more than books written for adults, swiftly setting up the problem the protagonist will face, giving the young reader a clear idea of what the book will be about.

Bob uses the first chapter of *I Am Slappy's Evil Twin* as a case study for an effective hook. By the end of the chapter, the main characters are introduced, set in a place and time, and engaged in an activity. There's also a cliffhanger at the end of the chapter that involves a plot device that will come into play later. Coupled with the prologue example from Chapter 7: Improving Your Outline (which introduces the villain, Slappy), the key elements of the novel are now in play, and the rest of the plot can now unfold.

LEARN MORE

- Read the first chapter of *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton. It's a great example of a good YA novel opener. Notice how all the main characters, basic plot information—including the conflict—are established before the second chapter begins.

CLASS PROJECT

- Sit down and write the first chapter of your book. This will help get you into the mode of writing longer format material, and help place you into the mindset of a novelist. Be sure to introduce the main characters, including the villain or monster (we will develop writing monsters in more detail in Chapter 14: Making Monsters). Your first chapter needs to be filled with action, so don't spend too much time on description. Focus on establishing what your book will be about, and use what you've already written in your outline for reference. Your goal is to make a young reader feel compelled to turn to the next chapter, so be sure to add a cliffhanger at the end of the chapter.
- Ask your trusted reader to review your first chapter and provide you with feedback. Make a single round of revisions, and save the draft for later.

13.

HOW TO SCARE YOUR READERS

"I was a really fearful kid. I was afraid a lot. I think that's why I stayed in my room typing all the time."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Tap Into Your Childhood Fears
- Make Normal Locations Scary
- Building Suspense
- Use Sensory Details to Set the Scene
- Scary Scene Case Study: *It Came From Beneath the Sink!*

CHAPTER REVIEW

In order to scare your readers, you need to tap into your own childhood fears and use them to your advantage. Bob was a very fearful kid, and this later proved advantageous as a children's horror author. Try to remember what spooked you when you were younger—a creepy basement, a dark garage—and access that same feeling of panic when you set up a scene.

It's also effective to take normal, familiar locations and turn them into scary places. Instead of using tired horror backdrops (like a spooky European castle), *Goosebumps* books take place in regular neighborhoods, schools, and backyards. This way, most kids can identify with the setting and picture themselves in the middle of the action, and this makes them feel more helpless and vulnerable.

The secret to suspense is the unknown. You need to write scenes in which the character doesn't know something: what's pounding on the door, what's scraping across the ceiling. Perhaps your protagonist is lost and it's dark out. Whichever route you choose, building suspense is all about getting inside a person's head and describing everything they're seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling—in detail. Avoid first-person phrases like "I was in a total panic." Rather, talk about sensations, and describe them very slowly. You build suspense by slowing the pacing of action down at choice moments, like when something bad is about to happen.

Use tons of sensory details when describing a location. If a group of kids is lost in the woods, make it feel as real as possible. What do they hear? What do they see? Sensory details work well to place your readers in the scene, ultimately making your narratives more frightening.

A great example of taking an average object in a familiar place and making it scary can be found in *It Came from Beneath the Sink!*, in which the monster is an evil sponge. Bob uses a scene from this book to illustrate how effective pacing (slowing things down to produce anticipation), sensory details, and the sheer power of darkness can be used to create a sense of horror.

13.

HOW TO SCARE YOUR READERS

LEARN MORE

- Our five senses shape our perception of the world, and this is why sensory details are so powerful. Take a look at this article on the peculiar science behind our sensory perception.
- Vivid sensory details evoke visceral reactions in your readers, and as a horror writer, you will need to hone your ability to write with your senses. Read *The Scarecrow Walks at Midnight*, and note Bob's descriptions of scarecrows coming to life to wreak havoc on the helpless family.
- Take a look at this collection of middle grade novels to see how other authors build suspense into their storytelling.

EXERCISES

- Practice writing sensory detail. Go to a location outside your workspace with your laptop and write a full page description of everything happening around you. Include at least one detail that speaks to each of your senses, and drill down further on those that stand out the most. If you are at a restaurant, push yourself to illustrate everything you smell, what the food looks like, and what the conversations around you sound like.
- Practice using suspenseful pacing. Return to one of the times you felt scared as a child, which you noted in Chapter 2: The Idea Store. Now write this as a scene in a horror novel, slowing down the action as much as possible. Be sure to use the first-person, and carefully lay out each detail that made the experience so terrifying.

CLASS PROJECT

- Take a scene from your outline that's meant to be scary and write it using the case study from *It Came from Beneath the Sink!* as a guide. Be sure to slow the pacing down, and include as many horrifying details as possible. Write with your senses: What's the character seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling?
- Share this scene with your trusted reader, and ask for specific feedback on a) what was most successful and b) which elements could have been made more descriptive/frightening. Again, perform one round of revisions, and save what you wrote for later.

14.

MAKING MONSTERS

"If I can turn a sponge, a little tiny sponge into a monster, you can [do that with] anything. Just take anything and give it power, make it terrible, have it do horrible things."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Understand What Makes a Monster
- Even Inanimate Objects Can Be Monsters
- Dolls Make Great Monsters

CHAPTER REVIEW

A monster can be anything that's beyond control, and perhaps this is why kids so readily identify with monsters. Children constantly grapple with fear and anxiety, but usually suppress these raging feelings. A monster doesn't hold anything back when it's terrorizing a neighborhood, and this drive to destroy be at once scary and familiar to young readers.

Use other monsters to inform the development of your own. *Frankenstein's Dog* features an evil dog that's basically analogous to Mary Shelley's famous villain. Study different horror films and try to visualize what your monster will look like. You will need to describe your monster at great length, so think of something that lends itself to vivid sensory detail.

Any object can become a monster when writing horror. *It Came from Beneath the Sink!* is an entire novel hinged upon a an evil sponge who brings bad luck to anyone who moves into its house, and don't forget about the cursed camera from *Say Cheese and Die!* Bob thinks dolls make great monsters, as the idea of an inanimate object coming to life is a scary thought.

LEARN MORE

- Read one of the following:
    - *Frankenstein's Dog*
    - *Say Cheese and Die!*
    - *It Came from Beneath the Sink!*
- Pay close attention to the monster in the book. How did Bob make it scary to young readers?
- Watch *The Leech Woman* (1960). Again, take note of the qualities that make the monster frightening.
- Watch *Child's Play* (1988). What makes Chucky so horrifying? Do you agree with Bob that dolls make great villains?
- Watch an episode of the *Goosebumps* TV show and an episode of *R.L. Stein's The Haunting Hour: The Series*. How do they compare? Bob thinks *The Haunting Hour* is the scarier of the two. Do you agree?

14.

MAKING MONSTERS

LEARN MORE CONT.

- Lynda Barry is an author, cartoonist, and teacher who runs a popular writers workshop for "non-writers." Explore her book, *Syllabus: Notes From an Accidental Professor*, and keep her approach to the creative process in mind as you conjure up monsters and villains for your novel. *Syllabus* uses a holistic and non-standard approach to fostering creativity, much of which involves drawing. Use her cartooning exercises to develop a clearer picture of who your monster is and what it looks like.

CLASS PROJECT

- Develop your monster. Review your outline and any other material you've written that deals with your novel's monster. First, write a 200-word profile of your monster: what it looks like, how it came to be, how and why it terrorizes children, and what can be done to stop it.
- Then, visualize your monster. Gather images from the internet and copy/paste them into a document in order to create a "mood board" capturing its essence. If you can, draw a picture (although this is not necessary).
- Next, write the scene in which the monster is introduced. Use loads of sensory detail, and write from the perspective of the kid seeing it for the first time.
- Go to The Hub and solicit feedback. Does your idea "work?" If not, why?

15.

DIALOGUE AND PROSE STYLE

"You wanna take out all the parts they're gonna skip. Every conversation that they have has to reveal something about them, something the reader didn't know before."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Use Dialogue to Reveal Story and Character
- Make Your Dialogue Timeless and Realistic
- Try Emulating Other Writers to Find Your Style

CHAPTER REVIEW

Dialogue is the primary storytelling device Bob uses, and he estimates that it comprises about two-thirds of his books. He admits that descriptive writing isn't his strength, but that he's adept at writing believable dialogue that's fun for kids to read. For Bob, it's better to show your characters' personalities (and fears) through what they say to one another, rather than describe how they are feeling.

Each conversation in your book should reveal something about the characters or something about the plot. The last thing you want is for your readers to feel like something isn't necessary and to skip over it. Kids don't always speak in complete sentences, so don't be afraid to have your characters interact with one another in sentence fragments. It will make the conversation more believable.

It's important to make your writing as timeless as possible so that it doesn't become dated too quickly. You need to make your characters talk like real teenagers, but you also want to avoid modern slang. Furthermore, it's good to avoid historical references as much as possible—if you are writing for a middle grade audience, they were born in the 2010s and will have little understanding of nuanced details from the 1990s.

There are two ways to discover your own writing style. One is to just start writing and see what kind of language you naturally use. The other is to identify an author you admire and model your writing after them at first. As a young man, Bob spent a summer writing a novel in the same style as one of his favorite humorists, Max Shulman, who also created the classic television show *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*. Emulating others can help you develop a style of your own.

LEARN MORE

- Watch an episode of *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis*, and familiarize yourself with Max Shulman's sense of humor.
- Read *The Godwulf Manuscript* by Robert B. Parker, and take note of his terse use of dialogue.

15.

DIALOGUE AND PROSE STYLE

LEARN MORE CONT.

- Check out *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* by Stephen King. While you should explore the entire book when you have time, pay attention to what he has to say about dialogue.

EXERCISES

- By now, you've become familiar with Bob's writing style. Describe what you did today in about 300 words and copy the style of a *Fear Street* or *Goosebumps* novel of your choosing.
- Study the way kids talk. Spend some time chatting with kids in your target audience. Notice their speech patterns and the subtle details of how they talk. Which words are often omitted? Which grammatical errors are most common?
- Study the way adults talk. For example, if you write a firefighter into your novel, figure out a way to chat with one and pick up any slang or background knowledge you can use to make that character more authentic.
- Practice writing dialogue. Take two characters from your novel and place them in a real-life situation. It can be mundane (waiting for a bus), exciting (on their way to a concert), or emotional (leaving a funeral in the rain), but just start writing out a conversation between the two of them, and see where it goes. Have an open mind, and allow the character's personalities to speak for themselves. Set a timer, and write as quickly as you can for 30 minutes.

CLASS PROJECT

- Turn to your outline and write an entire scene using only dialogue. Keep things at a quick pace and avoid slowing things down with too much description. This exercise requires a different approach than the freewrite above. Here, you must further your plot in some way by the end of the conversation—perhaps something is revealed about one of the characters, or maybe we learn an important piece of backstory. But remember, every bit of dialogue in your novel needs to "count," and this scene is no exception.

16.

MIXING HORROR AND HUMOR

"It's much harder to write funny stuff than it is to write horror. `Cause we're all afraid of the same things. We all have the same fears."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Strike the Right Balance
- Mixing Horror and Humor Case Study: *Young Scrooge*

CHAPTER REVIEW

Writing horror is easier than writing humor. While we all have similar fears, our senses of humor vary a great deal. As a young child, Bob was drawn to humor writing, making his own joke books and passing them out at school against his teacher's wishes. He was also the editor of Ohio State's humor magazine while he attended college and later penned humor books like *How to Be Funny.*

These comedic roots are apparent in the *Goosebumps* novels, as he uses humor to keep the books from getting too scary. In fact, he believes that the visceral reaction of being frightened is similar to that of laughing at something funny.

Avoid putting too much horror in your novel. If you just pile on one terrible thing after another, it starts to become ridiculous and people won't buy it. Using humor is a great way to achieve the proper balance between fantasy and real life. Remember, if a roller coaster only did twists and turns the whole time, it wouldn't be as fun to ride.

Bob uses a scene from *Young Scrooge: A Very Scary Christmas Story* to illustrate the proper balance between horror and humor. In it, Marley's ghost (the same one from Dickens' original story) appeared before a terrified kid locked in a closet only to find—after some lengthy build up—that he was at the wrong house. This is also a good example of the way to use twists to properly bake humor into your "scares."

LEARN MORE

- Comedy writing is a difficult thing to teach, and there are many books on the subject. Check out *Comedy Writing Secrets: The Best Selling Guide to Writing Funny and Getting Paid for It* by Mark Shatz and Mel Hilitzer, and familiarize yourself with some basic joke writing techniques.
- Watch a stand up comedy special, and take note of the mechanics the comic uses to set up and deliver jokes.

CLASS PROJECT

- Review your outline. Have you mixed in enough humor? Too much? If it feels lopsided in either direction, make the proper changes. Take the scary scene you wrote in Chapter 13: How to Scare Your Readers, and add a humorous twist. If you feel like it fits, keep it.

17.

CREATING MIDDLE GRADE CHARACTERS

"You have to remember that you are not the protagonist's friend. You are actually the enemy of the protagonist. You have to take the protagonist and put them in trouble."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

CHAPTER REVIEW

The kids in *Goosebumps* books are not heavily characterized, and this is by design. The less a character is specifically developed, the more relatable he or she is to a wider audience. This way, readers can readily see themselves as the protagonist and enter the world of the story. In order to frighten your readers, you want to make them feel as much a part of your book as possible. For the most part, Bob's characters are "ordinary kids in extraordinary circumstances" using their wits and imagination to get themselves out of trouble.

And the more trouble they get into, the better. Put your characters in sticky situations from which they must save themselves—it's a great way to keep readers engaged and provides a bigger payoff when everything works out in the end.

In middle grade novels like the *Goosebumps* series, parents are either incredulous (they don't believe the ventriloquist's dummy is real) or absent altogether. This makes it so the kids need to get out of trouble on their own—which is much more appealing to a nine-year-old reader.

You can also help readers easily identify with your characters by giving them relatable names. This can be challenging if you decide to write a series like *Goosebumps*, in which each new title requires a new batch of children's names. When he was first creating these books, Bob's son was still in school, and he used the student directory for inspiration. These days he does online research to find out the current most popular girls and boys names.

LEARN MORE

- Watch *Home Alone* (1990). It's a perfect example of an ordinary kid, left to his own devices, and forced to get himself out of an extraordinary amount of trouble using his imagination. Think about what your protagonist might do if placed in a similar scenario.

17.

CREATING MIDDLE GRADE CHARACTERS

CLASS PROJECT

- Get to know your protagonist. Profile your main character in the same way you explored your monster in Chapter 14: Making Monsters. Who is this person? What does he or she look like? What are this person's drives, values, and needs? What makes them unique? What happened in this person's past? Ask yourself these questions as you create your profile. If you are writing a middle grade novel, be careful not to over characterize, as this risks losing a sense of universality.
- If you are writing a YA novel, do this exercise nevertheless. However, feel free to make them more complex, as you are writing for a more sophisticated audience. Bob touches upon this more in the next lesson. If you are targeting this age group, feel free to complete this assignment after Chapter 18: Creating YA Characters.

18.

CREATING YA CHARACTERS

"To me, a lot of teen fiction is too grim. No one ever cracks a joke. No one's ever laughing about anything. And I put a lot of that in these books. I think it's more true to life."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Make Your YA Characters Feel Like Real Teenagers
- YA Character Cheat Sheet: *Give Me a K-I-L-L*

CHAPTER REVIEW

Teenage readers need to identify with more complex characters. Determine what your protagonist "wants," what they strive to become, and develop their character through this inner drive. When you write for older kids you need to make things feel as real as possible. Remember that teenagers are funny, and they like to crack jokes and mess around a lot. Be careful not to make things too serious or melodramatic, even though you are writing a scary book.

Once Bob has an idea for a story in mind, the first thing he does is "populate it" with characters. He does this by creating a "cheat sheet" for each main character that includes basic information about them, including their physical appearance, their personality, and their motivations. This is meant to develop a general idea of who each person is before fully fleshing them out in a story. It's not necessary to do this for every character, as it's good to leave room for improvisation as you write. However, a character cheat sheet for all the major players is a necessary tool to have moving forward.

LEARN MORE

- *The Catcher in the Rye* is one of the most well-known and acclaimed novels of all time with a teenage protagonist. The story closely follows 16-year-old Holden Caulfield through a period of teenage crisis. Caulfield is a complex character, whose motivation and inner drive is not readily apparent. How might you develop a complex character like him?
- Explore *Getting into Character: Seven Secrets a Novelist Can Learn from Actors* by Brandilyn Collins, which examines the method acting theory and the ways it can be applied when writing a novel. Note characterization strategies that could apply to your YA characters.

CLASS PROJECT

- If you haven't profiled your protagonist, complete that assignment now, taking into account the differences between writing middle grade and YA characters.

18.

CREATING YA CHARACTERS

CLASS PROJECT CONT.

- Download and carefully review Bob's character cheat sheet. Then, using the protagonist profile as well as the character creating exercise from Chapter 4: Getting From Idea to Plot Outline, make a list of the major characters you plan to include in your book and follow Bob's format to create a cheat sheet of your own. Be sure to focus on both their physical appearance as well as their emotional needs and psychological drives. Do not begin writing your first draft until you have completed this assignment.

19.

HAVE FUN WITH YOUR FIRST DRAFT

"Completing your first draft shows you can do it. No matter what trouble you have later on, you know you can do it, no matter what."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- If a Novel Feels Intimidating, Try a Short Story
- Try Writing in Order
- Know There Will Be Changes Along the Way
- Go Fast
- The Satisfaction of Finishing

CHAPTER REVIEW

Enjoy the process of creating your first draft. Focus on getting through it from start to finish, and remember that you can always go back and change things later. If a novel feels too intimidating, try writing a short story instead. But short stories can be deceivingly more difficult to write than novels, since they require a concise and extremely economical narrative containing all the elements of a novel—in a fraction of the space.

Bob writes his books in a linear fashion; he begins with the first chapter. However, with an outline, you can choose to approach your story in any order that feels right for you.

You will inevitably make changes to your original plan along the way, and this is a good thing. But remember that once you add an element to you book, such as a surprising new character or some sort of plot twist, you'll need to go back and establish that character or story element early on in order to prepare your readers for what is coming down the line.

If you feel stuck at certain points in your draft, it's best to push through and just get something onto the paper. Everyone has bad writing days, and so will you. Just keep moving forward, and complete the first draft. Every book you write will go through many revisions before you're finished. At this stage, just sit down and have fun. You can be more serious when you go back and start revising your work.

Once it's complete, Bob suggests printing out your first draft to get a tangible sense of your accomplishment and savor the satisfaction of having tackled such a daunting task.

LEARN MORE

- "Flash Fiction" is a genre consisting of extremely short works of fiction. The most famous is "six-word novel" attributed to Ernest Hemingway (although this has since been disputed):

  "For sale: baby shoes, never worn."

  Take a look at this collection of flash fiction from *The New Yorker*. You'll notice that while short in length, each story contains every element of a 200-word novel.

19.

HAVE FUN WITH YOUR FIRST DRAFT

LEARN MORE CONT.

Consider the strength of a solid piece of flash fiction and its ability to convey both plot and meaning with great brevity. Although you are writing a long-form novel, there is much to be learned from studying the storytelling methods in effective flash fiction.

- Explore Anne Lamott's *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. It's a modern classic on the writing process full of tons of helpful insights to get you through your first draft. Flip to the chapter entitled "Shitty First Draft," and take to heart to what she has to say.
- Get a copy of *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White. It's a definitive text on the craft of writing, and necessary reference material for any aspiring—or accomplished—author.

CLASS PROJECT

- You are now ready to write your first draft. Gather and review your character cheat sheet, outline, and all the Class Project exercises you've completed so far. Take as much time as you need, but don't stop until you've completed your first draft. If this is your first large-scale writing project, you might find it helpful to skip ahead to Chapter 25: Combating Writer's Block and Developing Routines. This will help you create a schedule and establish daily writing goals.

  In fact, as you write your draft you should work through the remainder of the lessons (with the exception of Chapter 20: Revising and Getting Feedback—you'll need a complete first draft for that).

  And have fun! Throughout the course Bob stresses the importance of enjoying the writing process itself, and a this approach will come through in your storytelling. Whether you are writing a middle grade or YA horror story, remember that you are writing to spook, frighten, and to entertain young people—not give them terrifying nightmares every time they go to bed.

20.

REVISING AND GETTING FEEDBACK

"I've never had a book come out worse after revision. They always come out better."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Revise Your Draft
- Get Feedback
- Revise Based on Feedback
- Take Criticism in Stride

CHAPTER REVIEW

Once you've finished your first draft, the first thing to do is go back to the beginning of your manuscript and carefully reread it. Look for a number of different things: scenes that drag, characters whose names change part way through (this happens to Bob), inconsistencies in setting (one moment it's cloudy and the next it's sunny), and of course, typos.

If you think it's necessary, go back and make scenes scarier by building on the foundation you already have. See if you can increase the horror by slowing things down, adding more emotion, or including stronger sensory details.

After you've made your first round of edits, seek out honest feedback. What does a reader think of the characters? Did it feel real? How was the pacing? Did it drag in some places? This is all important criticism you'll need to move forward. If you absolutely can't find someone willing to read your manuscript, look into paying someone to do it. In fact, some seasoned writers still hire their own editor to read through their material before sending it to a publisher.

It's important to take criticism well and use it to improve your writing. Don't be too sensitive. Bob knows some writers who refuse to be edited, and he feels their work has suffered as a result.

LEARN MORE

- Every book goes through many drafts before it's published. Take a look at these six examples of things that were removed from famous novels before they hit the shelf.

CLASS PROJECT

- Ask your trusted reader to read your second draft. Set up a 2+ hour meeting to discuss their revisions and really dig deep into their feedback, taking careful notes. Lead your inquiry with the following questions in mind:
    - Was there enough action? Did the plot drag in some places? If it's a middle grade novel, was it clearly fantasy? For a YA novel, was it realistic enough?

20.

REVISING AND GETTING FEEDBACK

CLASS PROJECT CONT.

- Were the characters relatable?
- Was the title appropriate/intriguing?
- Did the first chapter "hook" your reader?
- Were there enough twists, false leads, and cliffhangers?
- What did your reader think of the ending?

Use this information to write your third draft, and continue to iterate upon this process until you feel your manuscript is refined enough to start shopping it around.

21.

DEVELOPING A BOOK SERIES

"There was no advertising for Goosebumps, *no hype of any kind. It was just kids finding it, liking it, and then telling other kids."*
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Book Series and the Publishing World
- Types of Book Series
- Case Study: The *Goosebumps* World
- Rules of the World
- How *Goosebumps* Started
- How *Fear Street* Began

CHAPTER REVIEW

As you write your book, pay careful attention to the world you are creating for the reader. You want to build a universe people desperately want to get back to. Writing a series is a matter of making people love your characters so much that they can't wait to read your next book.

In today's publishing world, however, pitching an entire series as a new writer is not realistic. Bob says that he could have never sold *Goosebumps* as a series if he was just starting out today. The best thing to do is focus on selling your first book, and if it's successful, write a sequel. And so forth. It takes a moment for books to catch on with kids. It wasn't until the fourth *Goosebumps* that a buzz started happening though a "secret network of kids talking to kids."

There are two different types of series. One has a continuous cast of characters throughout, like *Harry Potter* or *The Hunger Games*. The other is an anthology, such as *The Twilight Zone*, *Black Mirror*, and of course, *Goosebumps*. It's more difficult to write the latter, as you need need to create new characters and settings everytime you write a new book.

While the *Goosebumps* series features new characters in most stories, the general world in which they inhabit remains the same: an average suburb in an average town full of regular people. This creates a familiar place for readers to return with the understanding that things will soon begin to spin out of control.

Fear Street has sold 80 million copies to date, and each takes place in a town where one street is cursed: Fear Street. This way, Bob could introduce and "kill off" a new group of teenagers in each novel. This series is different from *Goosebumps* because it all occurs in the same cursed town, for which he created a backstory he could reference each time.

LEARN MORE

- One of Bob's favorite authors is British humorist P.G. Wodehouse, who wrote 92 novels which all took place in the same fictional world. Take a look at *Thank You, Jeeves*. Why do you think Bob was so drawn to this series?

21.

DEVELOPING A BOOK SERIES

EXERCISE

- Write a one-page history of your story's world. Make it as descriptive as possible, and include as many elements as you can that will provide fodder for future novels.
- Think of four more books that could comprise the beginning of your series. If you are pursuing an anthology, they can consist of different casts of characters but must remain in the same world. If you are writing a continuous series, think of how each subsequent book might comprise a larger story arc.
- Develop a title and a brief synopsis for each book, including a short description of your characters. Does your current draft lay the groundwork for a series? Do you need to go back and plant the seeds for future plots? If so, go back into your draft and think about where this might be appropriate.

22.

BORROW FROM YOUR INFLUENCES

"I'm Stephen King for kids."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

CHAPTER REVIEW

Most writers like to read, and reading is one of the best ways to improve the quality of your writing. For Bob, ideas are sometimes generated through a process of "osmosis" as he absorbs story concepts from other authors he enjoys reading.

Bob considers himself "a big borrower." When an editor at Macmillan Publishers asked him to write a Christmas book, he decided to rework Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (after all, it is a ghost story). Bob more or less sticks to the original plot, but casts Scrooge as a 12-year-old bully.

Ray Bradbury is one of Bob's biggest influences as a horror writer. He was particularly struck by *Something Wicked this Way Comes*, as he found it easy to identify with the young midwestern boy sneaking out of his house to check out an evil circus.

Agatha Christie was a master of writing clever plots in her mystery novels, and Bob has used a number of variations of them in his own books. He's particularly impressed by her ability fool readers and lead them astray as they work to identify the killer.

Stephen King is considered to be the master of adult horror, and Bob cites *Pet Sematary* as the "creepiest book" he's ever read.

For Bob, borrowing from and building upon his influences isn't stealing—which touches upon an ongoing discussion among all artists. While everyone strives to be original, nothing is created in a vacuum. It's OK to draw inspiration and ideas from the past and create new and exciting iterations of work that's come before you.

LEARN MORE

- Bob mentioned a number of his greatest influences. Choose a few of the titles listed below and familiarize yourself with these classic authors' writing style.
    - *Sparkling Cyanide*, Agatha Christie
    - *Something Wicked this Way Comes*, Ray Bradbury
    - *Pet Sematary*, Stephen King
- Watch an episode of both *The Twilight Zone* and the modern series *Black Mirror*. Which did you find more unsettling?

22.

BORROW FROM YOUR INFLUENCES

LEARN MORE CONT.

- Watch *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*. What elements of this film resonate the most in the *Goosebumps* series?

EXERCISE

- Reflect on two or three writers you feel to be your greatest influences. Why do you feel so drawn to their work? Stylistically, what stands out most? For each writer, list three things you admire and may want to "borrow" from your influences and include in your novel. Keep these in mind as you revise your draft, incorporating any of these elements that feel appropriate.

23.

WRITING AS A CAREER

"...Always say yes. Say yes to everything. I wouldn't have this career if I didn't have that policy."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Understand Your Ambitions
- Choose Your Genre and Audience
- Know the Market
- Find the Right Day Job
- Say "Yes"

CHAPTER REVIEW

If you want to be a writer, it's very helpful if you actually enjoy the process of writing. As you begin your writing career, it's important to understand both your ambitions and your audience. Even though Bob started out as a comedy writer and came around to horror later, it was always his goal to entertain and write commercially. Think about why you want to get into writing and then determine what genre you'd like to pursue. This will probably be what you like to read most or what you're most familiar with. Also consider your audience. Do you want to write for kids or adults? A mainstream crowd, or more literary types? With this in mind, conduct market research by going online and to bookstores to see what's already out there. Picture where your book will go in a store. Writing books that fit into existing categories will help you in the long run. Ask yourself where your book(s) will go in the store. Remember Bob's advice: "Don't try to do something that won't fit in somewhere. Don't try to write something that'll be its own category, because that almost never works."

Make sure you find a day job that will allow you the time and energy to write for yourself when you are off the clock and, lastly, be sure to remain open to unexpected professional opportunities as they present themselves.

After years of establishing himself as a humorist in New York, Bob was having lunch with the editorial director of Scholastic. She told him she had been fighting with a writer who was supposed to write her a YA horror novel, and offered Bob the gig instead, complete with the title: *Blind Date*. Even though he'd only written comic material in the past, he followed his own advice to say "yes" to everything and agreed. The book became a #1 bestseller and marked the beginning of his career as an author of children's horror.

23.

WRITING AS A CAREER

LEARN MORE

- Go to a bookstore and browse the middle grade and YA section. Think about where your book might belong.
- Identify three authors who write the type of novels you are interested in. Find their websites and browse their titles, biographies, and take note of their brand as an author. What can you learn from them? If you feel inclined, reach out with an email—authors can be surprisingly responsive to aspiring writers who admire their work.
- In order to get your book published you will likely need an agent. You can explore a find a large database of literary agents here. Also, take a look at this article, which provides a few simple tips on how to formally reach out with a "query letter."

EXERCISE

- Create a personal profile in which you determine the following. Use either a word processor or a pen and paper, whichever you prefer.
    - Your goal as a writer
    - Your target audience
    - Your genre—where do you belong in the bookstore?
    - Develop a clear idea of who you aspire to be as a writer. Understanding who you are and the audience for whom you are writing is key to the writing process.
- Develop a clear idea of who you aspire to be as a writer. Understanding who you are and the audience for whom you are writing is key to the writing process.
- Once you feel that your manuscript is ready, draft a personalized query letter to an agent.

24.

PROMOTING YOURSELF

"I'm on Twitter all the time. And I'm always thinking, 'Am I selling too much? Am I using it too much for marketing?' So I do a lot of other stuff. I make sure that I don't just say, 'Hey, this book is still available.'"
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Get Out There
- Use Social Media

CHAPTER REVIEW

Once your book gets published, you'll need to cultivate and maintain a fan base. One way to do that is through school visits. This is a very efficient way to talk to big groups of kids all at once and get them so excited about your book that they start talking about it to their friends. Ask your publisher to find schools to do in-person readings and appearances. Bookstore events are also effective, but much less personal. Most children's books are bought by parents and librarians. Find out ways to let them know about your book.

Become familiar with the nationwide book fair circuit, including The Miami Book Fair, The Tucson Book Fair, and The *LA Times* Book Festival. There are also tons of smaller, local fairs throughout the country. Attend these sorts of events and meet other authors as well as new groups of potential fans.

Social media is an important, almost necessary, tool for writers today. Plan to be active on it in order to spread the word about yourself and your books. Bob is on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, but points out that he balances his promotional content with news, humor, live Q&A discussions, and even 140 character short stories.

LEARN MORE

- Class visits can have a profound effect on young readers. Watch this clip from *Late Night With Seth Meyers* in which Girls actress Allison Williams reads aloud a letter she wrote to Bob after he visited her classroom in 1996. Here's the kicker: he finally responded in 2014, also congratulating her for her success in show business.
- Check out Bob's Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts. Notice the personal feel and get a sense of how you might use these platforms as an author.
- Go to a bookstore appearance by a children's author. Do you think it was successful? Why or why not?

24.

PROMOTING YOURSELF

EXERCISE

- Attend a book fair. You either can plan a trip to a large event or just find a local one in your area, using this directory. When you go, develop a contact list of at least five authors writing children's horror. Email at least two of them and ask them some questions about how they approach the business of being a writer.
- Create a professional website. Once you've done this, use your account to create a professional email address that looks something like "yourname@yourwebsite.com." Details like these go a long way in terms of how you appear to the outside world.
- Open a Twitter account or modify your existing one, and keep your personal brand in mind as you choose your background and profile picture. Then, try your hand at writing a 140-character story. What was the response? Engage with your friends and family and see what works and what doesn't.

25.

COMBATING WRITER'S BLOCK AND DEVELOPING ROUTINES

"The more complete your preparation is, the easier it is to finish the book, and the harder it is to get writer's block."
—R.L. Stine

SUBCHAPTERS

- Avoid Writer's Block by Preparing
- Discipline Yourself
- Find Your Tools
- Figure Out Your Rituals
- Every Writer Is Different

CHAPTER REVIEW

One great thing about writing is that you can always go back and fix things later. Remember this if you feel you are stuck. Sometimes you will feel like what you are doing isn't right, that you're "writing uphill," but it's important to just keep going with the notion that you'll fix it later.

But the best way to combat writer's block is to be well-prepared when you start writing. Fully develop your character cheat sheet and your outline, which give a solid road map of the beginning, middle, and end of your story. If you get stuck at a certain point, move on to another scene and come back to it. Writing is easier when you divide things up in this way, and it makes writing the actual manuscript more fun.

You also need to develop a routine, and stick to it. An average *Goosebumps* book is 23,000 words, and Bob writes 2,000 words a day. Of course, this might be ambitious when you are starting out out—but push yourself to set a daily writing goal and stick to it. Once you've completed what you set out to do, stop—even if you're in the middle of a chapter. This makes it that much easier to get right back into it the next day. "You can't have writer's block if you're already in the middle of a scene," Bob says.

It's important to find out what what rituals and equipment work for you as a writer. Bob recalls a teen horror writer he knew who needed to write in a very spooky environment, complete with moody music and flickering candles. By contrast, he says he can write anywhere, as long as it's quiet.

Also, though he's depicted using a typewriter in the *Goosebumps Movie*, he uses a laptop in real life—except for when he writes his outlines, which he can only do by hand on a yellow pad of paper. He feels that writing it out by hand slows down the process and brings him closer to the story.

But every writer is different, and you'll need to figure out what works for you. Bob points out that everything we've discussed is what works for him. Soon you'll need to find out what works best for you.

25.

COMBATING WRITER'S BLOCK AND DEVELOPING ROUTINES

LEARN MORE

- For an additional perspective on writer's block, read the chapter on the topic in *Bird by Bird*. For Lamott, writer's block is a matter of being "empty," not blocked. "If your wife locks you out of the house, you don't have a problem with your door," she says. Sometimes the best thing to do when experience this long-dreaded phenomenon is to stop toiling, and go out and experience some new ideas.
- Take a look at the daily word count of 39 famous authors. Note how widely their output varies. Remember, developing a process is all about what works best for you.
- Do some writing in a variety of places. A park, a coffee shop, at home, the library—anywhere you can think of. Also try writing with and without music. Explore how different settings and scenarios affect your ability to concentrate and develop ideas.

EXERCISES

- If you wrote your outline on a computer, try replicating a few pages using a pad and paper. If you've been writing it by hand, do the opposite. Do you notice anything different?
- Map out your average day and create a schedule. Develop your daily writing goal based on what you can realistically accomplish each day given your other responsibilities. It's important to create a plan that works best for you, so don't feel beholden to writing only in the morning, or pressured to reach a daily word count that's beyond your present ability.

26.

TWENTY STORY IDEAS FOR YOU

"I can tell you how to go about finding ideas. But I can't really tell you how to get an idea."
—R.L. Stine

CHAPTER REVIEW

In order to help get you started on future projects, Bob provides 20 different ideas for a children's horror novels. He makes it clear that while he's used many of them in the past, student's should feel free to take any premise he offers and run with it.

Here they are:

1. A creepy doll comes to life.
2. A scene from a nightmare comes true the next day.
3. Days go by, and your parents don't come home.
4. You feel yourself slowly becoming a monster.
5. Your friends start to disappear, and no one else notices.
6. You're lost in the woods, and you don't know how you got there.
7. You're inhabited by a ghost that controls you and makes you do crazy things.
8. You have no reflection in the mirror.
9. The teacher is a monster, but no one will believe you.
10. You hypnotize your brother, and you can't snap him out of it.
11. A fortune teller reveals that you are evil.
12. Someone follows you home, and it's your exact double.
13. You find a diary that tells the future.
14. Every time you wake up, you're a different person.
15. Your parents explain that you are actually an alien from another planet.
16. You know someone is watching you day and night from the house across the street.
17. You realize you are shrinking.
18. While reading a scary book, you realize that you're a character in it.
19. Someone is living in your mirror.
20. Everyone knows the new neighbors are vampires, and the kids invite you over for a sleepover.

26.

TWENTY STORY IDEAS FOR YOU

EXERCISE

- Writing is a lot like physical exercise—it's important to stay nimble. Challenge yourself to complete this exercise in under 30 minutes, then share your idea with your trusted reader. Does he or she think it has the potential to be expanded into a book?
- Identify the ideas that interests you most. Develop the following elements, applying what you have learned from this course:
    - A title
    - A mini-synopsis (one paragraph). Your idea should have your own spin on the suggested premise, making it your own.
    - A protagonist
    - A monster/villain
    - A major plot twist

27.

EXERCISES TO GET YOU GOING

"Write down three times you remember feeling truly, truly scared. Just make a list. Think back."
—R.L. Stine

CHAPTER REVIEW

Sometimes an extra push is needed to get the creative gears turning, and Bob offers a handful of helpful exercises to complete if you're feeling stuck. We've assigned them to you throughout this workbook, and compiled them below for your reference.

- Write down three times you remember feeling truly scared.
- Make a list of funny horror titles you'd be interested in reading yourself.
- Spend an hour in an average place with lots of people, watch them, and write down any imaginative ideas that come to mind.
- Try developing a horror plot that comes to mind, either from Bob's list of premises or expand upon an idea of your own. Try to come up with a few scenes, and if it feels like it's working, take it further.
- Write something in third-person, then write the same scene in from a first-person POV.
- Identify an author you enjoy reading, and write a scene mimicking that author's style.
- Take a scene you've already written, then rewrite it using only dialogue.
- Write a scene from one of Bob's potential stories, and make it as scary as you can. Remember to do the following:
    - Slow down the pace to build suspense
    - Don't skip over any detail
    - Write descriptions that speak to all five senses
- Make a character cheat sheet modeled after Bob's example from *Give Me a K-I-L-L.*
- Take any inanimate object and turn it into a scary monster. Write a short description of your creature.

28.

CONCLUSION

"Enjoy it. Have a good time writing."
—R.L. Stine

CHAPTER REVIEW

Congratulations! You've completed your MasterClass with R.L. Stine. We hope you'll continue to revise your manuscript and eventually pitch it to an agent or a publisher. In the meantime, continue your learning by staying active in The Hub, contributing to the lesson discussions after each video, and submitting Office Hours questions to Bob.

Bob hopes that you've enjoyed his class, and he was happy to have shared the secrets, tips, and tricks he's pick up from 40 years of writing for kids. You now have all you need to produce your first children's horror novel, so get out there, and have fun writing. Bob wouldn't have it any other way.

APPENDIX

R.L. STINE'S 50 FAVORITE BOOKS

(Not in any particular order)

1. P.G. Wodehouse, *Right Ho, Jeeves*, Herbert Jenkins, 1934
2. P.G. Wodehouse, *Uncle Fred in the Springtime*, Doubleday, 1939
3. P.G. Wodehouse, *Summer Lightning*, Herbert Jenkins, 1929
4. Ray Bradbury, *Dandelion Wine*, Doubleday, 1957
5. Ray Bradbury, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, Simon & Schuster, 1962
6. Garrison Keillor, *Liberty: A Lake Wobegon Novel*, Viking, 2008
7. Robert Sheckley, *Mindswap*, Orb Books, 2006
8. Robert Klane, *Where's Poppa?*, Random House, 1970
9. Joseph Heller, *Catch-22*, Simon & Schuster, 1961
10. Georges Simenon, *Maigret and the Mad Woman*, Presses de la Cité, 1970
11. Georges Simenon, *Maigret and the Headless Corpse*, Presses de la Cité, 1955
12. Agatha Christie, *Sparkling Cyanide*, Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1945
13. Agatha Christie, *The ABC Murders*, Collins Crime Hub, 1936
14. Ruth Rendell, *Master of the Moor*, Pantheon Books, 1982
15. Ira Levin, *A Kiss Before Dying*, Simon & Schuster, 1953
16. Robert B. Parker, *Paper Doll*, Putnam, 1993
17. Robert B. Parker, *Cold Service*, Putnam, 2005
18. Harlan Coben, *Drop Shot*, Dell, 1996
19. Harlan Coben, *Tell No One*, Dell, 2009
20. Lee Child, *Killing Floor*, Putnam, 1997
21. Michael Connelly, *The Lincoln Lawyer*, Little, Brown, and Company, 2005
22. Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Charles L. Webster And Company, 1885
23. Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Harper & Row, 1967
24. Max Shulman, *Barefoot Boy With Cheek*, Bantam, 1959
25. Woody Allen, *Without Feathers*, Random House, 1975

APPENDIX

R.L. STINE'S 50 FAVORITE BOOKS CONT.

26. Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, Ann Ward (vol. 1–2), Dodsley (vol. 3–4), Becket & DeHondt (vol. 5–9), 1759–1767
27. Amy Tan, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Putnam, 1991
28. Edith Wharton, *The House of Mirth*, Scribner, 1905
29. Anthony Trollope, *The Way We Live Now*, Champan and Hall, 1875
30. Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, Champan and Hall, 1844
31. Frank Capra, *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography*, Vintage, 1971
32. Harpo Marx, *Harpo Speaks!*, Bernard Geis Associates, 1961
33. Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City*, Crown, 2003
34. Art Spiegelman, *Maus*, Pantheon Books, 1991
35. John Updike, The Rabbit novels, Alfred A. Knopf, 1960–2001
36. Sebastian Barry, *A Long Long Way*, Viking, 2005
37. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita*, Olympia Press, 1955
38. Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*, Putnam, 1962
39. John le Carré, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, Random House, 1974
40. Brian Selznick, *The Marvels*, Scholastic, 2015
41. Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*, Faber and Faber, 2005
42. Keigo Higashino, *The Devotion of Suspect X*, Minotaur Books, 2012
43. James Clavell, *Shōgun*, Delacorte, 1975
44. Stephen King, *Misery*, Viking, 1987
45. Stephen King, *The Shining*, Doubleday, 1977
46. Carter Dickson, *The Judas Window*, Morrow, 1938
47. John Dickson Carr, *The Three Coffins*, Harper, 1935
48. Raymond Chandler, *The High Window*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1942
49. Joe Keenan, *Blue Heaven*, Penguin Books, 1988
50. Peter Lovesey, *The False Inspector Dew*, Macmillan, 1982

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MASTERCLASS