

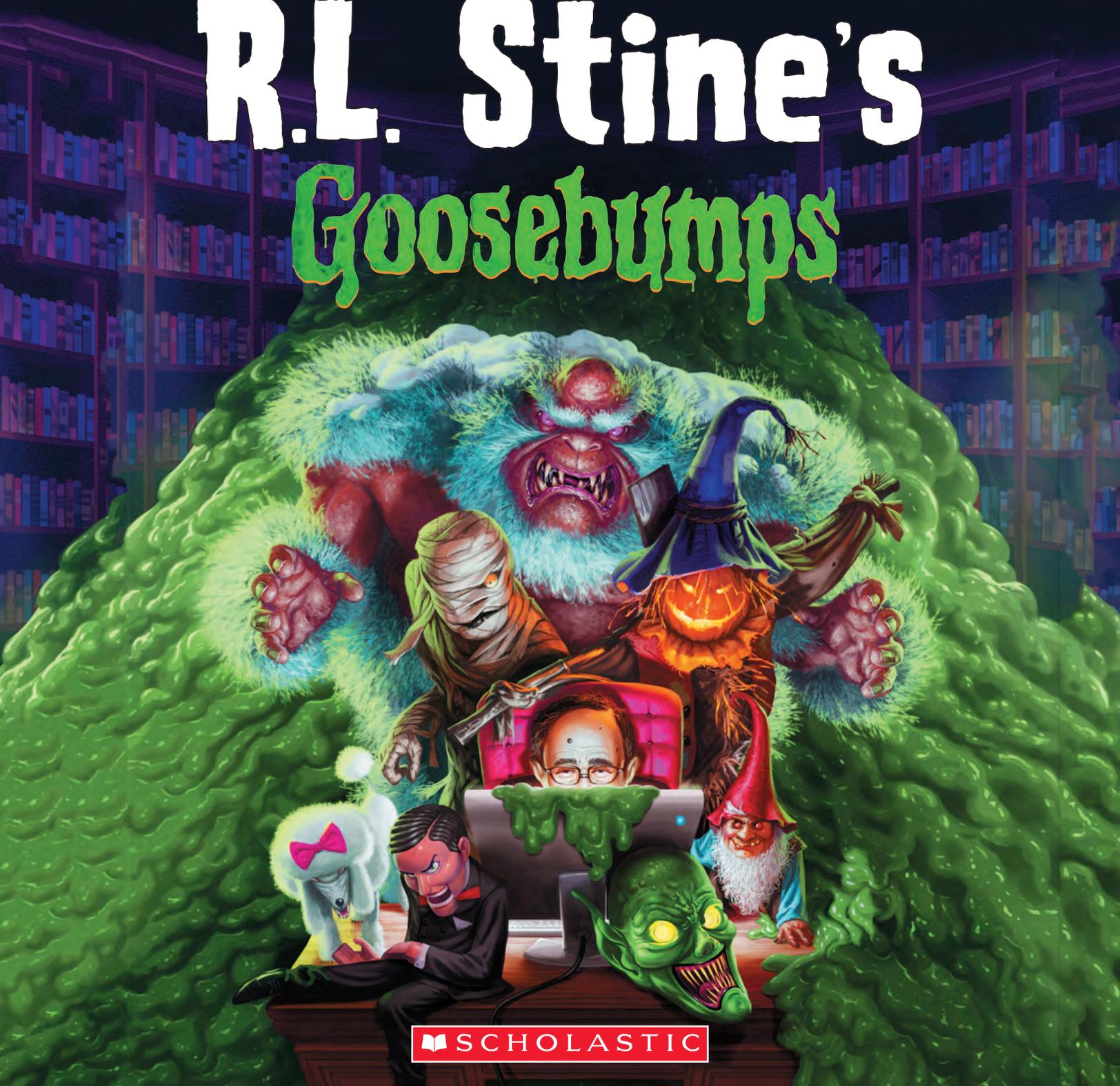
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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

Author Study and Series Guide for

# R.L. Stine's

# Goosebumps



 SCHOLASTIC

Meets Common Core and Other Standards—SEE INSIDE

"When I was nine, I read only comic books. A librarian in our little town library said: 'Bob, if you like comics, I know something else you will like.' She took me to a shelf of Ray Bradbury stories. I devoured them. That librarian changed my life."

## R.L. STINE

is one of the bestselling children's authors in history. In July 1992, Scholastic introduced his Goosebumps book series with *Welcome to Dead House*. Nearly twenty-five years later, Goosebumps is now one of the bestselling children's series of all time—with more than 350 million English language books in print, plus an additional 50+ million international copies in print in 32 languages. The Goosebumps series made R.L. Stine a worldwide publishing celebrity (and Jeopardy answer). His other popular children's book series include Fear Street (recently revived with all new books), Mostly Ghostly, The Nightmare Room, and Rotten School. Other titles include: *It's The First Day of School Forever*, *A Midsummer Night's Scream*, *Young Scrooge*, and his first picture book, with Marc Brown—*The Little Shop of Monsters*. Stine and Brown's second picture book is *Mary McScary* (September 2017).

The Goosebumps TV show was the number one children's show in America for three years. The episodes can still be seen on Netflix. More recently, R.L.'s anthology TV series, *R.L. Stine's The Haunting Hour*, won the Emmy Award three years in a row as Best Children's Show. *Goosebumps*, a feature film starring Jack Black, based on the book series by R.L. Stine, was released in theaters on October 16, 2015, and opened at #1 at the box office.

R.L. Stine lives in New York City with his wife, Jane, an editor and publisher.

You can connect with him on Twitter@[RL\\_Stine](#), and on Facebook at [facebook.com/rlstine](#). For more information, visit [rlstine.com](#) and [scholastic.com/goosebumps](#).



# CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

## Fright Is Fun

Why do people like to be scared? Have students write short essays on this topic. They can discuss different ways people seek out being scared, including books like R.L. Stine's, horror movies, Halloween, haunted houses, and more. Have them read their essays to each other in small groups and compare their ideas.



(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4-7.2)

## BRING THE BOOK ALIVE

Working in small groups, have students find a scene to act out for the class. It should have several characters, lots of dialogue, and tension or action. Have students create a script that can include a narrator to give the background and transitions. Decide whether or not to use costumes and props. Students should rehearse before they give their performances.

(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4-7.3; SL.4-7.6)

## COMING TO A BOOKSHELF NEAR YOU!

Have students choose an R.L. Stine book and create a book trailer for it, working in pairs or small groups. Like a movie trailer, the book trailer should reveal a little about the characters and plot but not give away the ending. Use video software or a free online site like [animoto.com](http://animoto.com). Find examples of student-made book trailers here: [www.booktrailersforreaders.com](http://www.booktrailersforreaders.com).

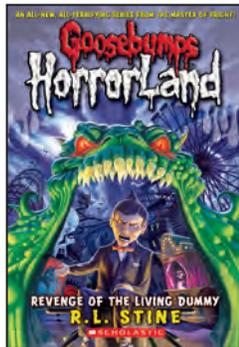


(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4-7.1; SL.4-7.5)

## THE CREEPIEST COVERS

Display an array of R.L. Stine books so that students can study the covers and discuss what makes them effective. Then have each student choose a Stine book that they have read and design a new cover for it. Before posting the covers in the author study center, have students explain their artistic choices and how the cover relates to the story.

(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4-7.1; RL.4-5.7)



## SURVEY OF SCARINESS

Start with a class discussion about what students find frightening. Have students make a collective list of the class's answers. Once the list is complete, put tally marks next to each answer to show people how many identify each thing as scary. Then have students use the list to survey families, friends, and other classes. They can add new topics to the list if need be. Have students put the list in order from most to least "yes" answers. Post the list so students can use it for writing their own scary stories.

(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4-7.1)



## CONVERT IT TO A COMIC

R.L. Stine liked to draw comic strips when he was young, even though he didn't think he was good at it. One is shown in *It Came from Ohio!* (pp. 26-27). Have students choose a favorite scene in one of R.L. Stine's books and convert it to a comic strip with boxed pictures, text, and word bubbles. Display these in the author study center. If possible, find one of the Goosebumps Graphix series of graphic novels to share with the students as inspiration.

(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4-7.1; RL.4-5.7)

# MENTOR TEXT

There is a strong literary tradition of horror stories, from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to Edgar Allan Poe to Stephen King. R.L. Stine's novels, the most popular horror fiction for young people, work well as mentor texts. They also serve as models for creating excitement and suspense by using specific elements such as fully developed villains, foreshadowing, cliffhangers, and surprise endings.

Using a mentor text provides an exercise for students in careful reading as well as serving as a model for writing. Listed below are some elements from R.L. Stine's books that are pertinent to writing horror stories or other suspenseful narratives. Have students gather examples of each element from one or more of R.L. Stine's books and analyze them, taking notes about the examples and ideas in their reading/writing journals.

Students will also find useful insights about writing suspenseful fiction in *It Came from Ohio!* Whether you read it aloud to the class or students read it independently, have them add entries to their reading/writing journals about what they learn from the book.

Finally, have students write a short story that applies a few of the elements, revising the story with the help of their peers. The final version should include a drawing like a book cover. Compile a class book of all the stories to display in the classroom author center.

## CHARACTERS

**Main characters:** How old are R.L. Stine's main characters? Are they boys or girls, or both? Describe their families, too.

**Villains:** Analyze an R.L. Stine villain. For example, what makes Slappy, the ventriloquist's dummy, scary? Think of physical features, actions, or other characteristics.

**Secondary characters:** Often the books have adults who don't believe that strange or scary events are happening. Find some examples. How does the disbelief add to the tension?

## SUSPENSE

In his autobiography, Stine writes, "I decided I wanted to have a surprise at the end of every book. Then I decided it would be even more fun to have a surprise at the end of every chapter."

**Surprise endings:** Analyze the end of at least one book and find the surprise.

**Cliffhangers:** Define "cliffhanger" in your own words. Find a surprise at the end of a chapter—how does it make you feel?

**Foreshadowing:** What clues that come early in the story suggest something bad will happen?

## PLOT OUTLINE

**Pacing:** Find places where R.L. Stine switches between scary, fast-moving scenes and slower, calmer ones. How do the changes affect the reader?

**Consequences:** Dangerous consequences make a story scarier. For example, if there's a chance that something terrible might happen, actions become more important. Where do you see this in the stories?

## ANALYZE STRUCTURE AND NARRATOR

**Narrator:** Who tells the story? Is it in first person or third person? Does the point of view switch?

**Order:** Is the story told in chronological order? Or are there flashbacks?

## SETTING

**General setting:** Are the settings in R.L. Stine books familiar or exotic? Do the characters travel or stay in one place?

**Specific places:** Is there a place in the story that is unusual and even frightening like William's Mask Emporium in *The Haunted Mask*?

## SCARY DETAILS

**Scary items:** Find an item, such as the pumpkin in *The Haunted Mask*. How does R.L. Stine make it frightening?

**Safe scares:** Find a scary scene in one of his books. How does he keep it from being too scary?

## TIPS FROM R.L. STINE:

How do you make a story scary?

1. Go slow. You are sloooowwwly climbing down creaking stairs to a creepy basement. You are sloooooowwwly making your way through a thick woods at night.
2. Make it dark. We're all afraid of the dark, aren't we? What's in that dark closet? What's in the darkness under your bed?
3. Get personal. Get very close to your main character. What is she thinking? How does she feel? What does she see? What does she hear? If your character is scared, your reader will be, too.

# AUTHOR STUDY ACTIVITIES

For decades, R.L. Stine has captivated the imaginations of children everywhere, even children who thought they didn't like to read. His popularity makes him a strong choice for an author study because students will be eager to read and discuss the books. Because Stine has written hundreds of books, students are certain to find ones that appeal to them. A wide selection of titles also gives students the opportunity to compare and contrast different books, an important analytical skill. Sharing the experience of reading his books will also create a community of readers in the classroom.

Part of R.L. Stine's appeal comes from his mastery of writing horror stories that make kids, as he says, "safe scared." R.L. Stine has said about his Goosebumps series, "I always write with an audience in mind. When I write for kids, I want them to know it's not real—that it's a crazy fantasy." Readers can enjoy the feeling of being scared while knowing they are in no real danger. Students who don't typically pick up horror books will enjoy the humor and the likable characters. Stine's protagonists are both girls and boys, widening their appeal even more. Reading Stine's books provides an excellent foundation to inspire students to do their own writing in the horror genre. His books serve as mentor texts that model the elements of exciting, suspenseful fiction.

Stine's books encourage reading among all students in the classroom. Strong readers are often in search of the next book to read, so series like Goosebumps keep them satisfied. Students who find reading more difficult appreciate series because the format of each is familiar. Stine's books vary enough to offer choices for a range of reading levels, and his

style features fast-paced plots with shorter sentences and chapters. The classic Goosebumps books, about 120 pages each, are chronological with one first-person narrator, making them approachable for all readers. Other Goosebumps series offer more variety in narrative style and are slightly longer.

A host of resources about R.L. Stine provide rich material for an author study, starting with his entertaining autobiography, *It Came from Ohio! My Life as a Writer*. With short chapters and lots of humor, it's an ideal introduction to the author, either as a read-aloud or for independent reading. Students will get writing tips and inspiration from a writer who works nonstop while always thinking about his audience. Have students keep reading/writing journals for the author study to record insights, writing ideas, and other responses.

Create a classroom center for the author study with many of R.L. Stine's books and a photograph of him. Use the center to display student projects and papers from the author study. Have students collect facts about the author and his books to add to the center, drawing from websites about him and published interviews. In many of his books, certain objects play a big role like masks, plants, a crystal ball, and so on. Students can bring in objects to display that relate to the books, adding note cards to explain the connection.

A terrific way to kick off the author study is to watch a Reading Rockets interview with R.L. Stine. Share the first 4 minutes and 25 seconds to give your students a great introduction to the author and how he came to write the Goosebumps books. [youtube.com/watch?v=vyXSymEQ-\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyXSymEQ-_s).



# MORE TITLES BY R. L. STINE

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