

# The Kids' STORYTELLING CLUB

## *Featured Project!*

From Our Archives



## Ghosts, Fires, And Real Scary Stories

By Vivian and Barbara Dubrovin

Have you ever been reminded of a scary experience? All of the recent forest fires remind us of being evacuated from Masonville many years ago. Though we are not there now for the new evacuation, we are near enough to see and smell the smoke, and have the ashes fall on our new place. The memories are still vivid, but those earlier experiences inspired one of our most popular storytelling projects, the ghost marionette. We've updated and expanded it here with images of scary fires since then, advice and tips from our many years of telling the story, and also a new variation of the puppet, as an example of how you can adapt a craft, as well as the story, to make the storytelling your own.

What scary experiences do you remember, and can you use a ghost puppet to turn those into your own favorite stories to tell?

You can find a version of this storytelling project, and others in:  
*Storytelling Discoveries: Favorite Activities for Young Tellers*  
By Vivian and Barbara Dubrovin



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## Real Scary Stories

At this time of year it is fun to tell of spooky or scary things, like ghosts, monsters, or aliens from outer space. But some real experiences are even scarier. Have you ever been *really* scared? Have you ever been in a tornado, flood or fire? Have you ever been lost?

To help you create and tell, here are story ideas, a pattern story, a craft, and an activity to tell your scary story. You can read through in order, or skip to what you want to do first.

### The STORY

Learn how to create stories from your own scary experiences.  
Read a pattern story of the Little Ghost.

### The CRAFT

Learn two ways to make an easy ghost marionette.

### The ACTIVITY

Learn how to use the ghost marionette to tell your scary story.

### Extra TIPS

To make your storytelling more fun.



### **Fires Near Masonville**

This “High Park” (2012) fire wasn’t near enough to evacuate, like the earlier “Bobcat Gulch” Fire, but it was bigger and so almost as scary, like the new “Cameron Peak” Fire.

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## Ideas for Real Scary Stories

**At this time of year kids like to think of scary things, like ghosts, monsters, or aliens. But some real experiences are scarier than these things. Can you think of a time when you were *really* scared?**

<i>Have you ever been in a:</i> tornado flood fire blizzard auto accident	<i>Have you ever been:</i> lost alone in a strange place the first person at an accident scene sick in a hospital	<i>Have you ever witnessed a:</i> fight robbery an injury accident
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One scary thing that happened in Masonville, Colorado, years ago, was a wildfire/forest fire that burned 10,500 acres, destroyed 30 homes and came to within a mile of our front door. Hundreds of people were evacuated from their homes, farms, and ranches as the fire skipped rapidly over hills and across valleys. Vivian then chose that scary event for a sample story with a marionette.

To create a story for your little ghost marionette, pretend the puppet wants to come and scare you (or your main character) but get scared himself when he experiences one of the scary things you have lived through.



For an idea of a story to tell, read the sample pattern story on the next page.

## The Little Ghost

By Vivian Dubrovin

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands up)*

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands down)*

The little ghost was practicing his scary voice. He took a deep breath and let the sound come from deep within him. “Boo-o-o-o-o-o-o!” That was pretty good. *(He floated around making his new sound.)* “Boo-o-o-o-o-o-o!”

He was ready to float down to earth and scare kids on Halloween. He landed in a farmyard and tried out his skills on the family dog.

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands up)*

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands down)*

The dog ignored him. The little ghost took a deep breath and let the sound come from deep within him. “Boo-o-o-o-o-o-o!” *(He floated around making his new sound.)* “Boo-o-o-o-o-o-o!”

The dog yelped and ran under the porch.

“Not bad,” said the little ghost to himself. “Let’s see what else I can scare.”

He saw the barn cat.

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands up)*

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands down)*

The cat ignored him. Then the little ghost took a deep breath and let the sound come from deep within him. “Boo-o-o-o-o-o-o!” *(he floated around making his new sound)*

“Boo-o-o-o-o-o-o!”

The cat ran into the barn.

“Not bad,” said the little ghost to himself. “Let’s see what else I can scare.”

He saw Jimmy run out of the house.

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands up)*

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands down)*

“Not now!” said Jimmy as he zipped up his jacket. “We can’t play Halloween games now. The wildfire has just crested the hill.” He pointed to the ridge.

The little ghost looked up. *(the little ghost turns to look and jumps backward)* “O-o-o-o-o! That’s scary,” he said. “The flames are higher than the trees” He started to shake. *(little ghost shakes his whole body)*

“We have to evacuate,” Jimmy continued. “Gotta round up the horses. Get ‘em in the trailer. Get out here, quick!”

“I can help,” said the little ghost. “I can scare a dog and I can scare a cat. I can scare horses, too!” He floated toward the pasture. *(little ghost floats)*

“The horses are already scared,” Jimmy called after him. “They smell the smoke. They’re not listening to my call or whistle.”

“I’ll get ‘em,” the little ghost called as he floated out across the pasture. “Watch!”

He floated in front of the brown horse.

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands up)*

“Boo!” *(little ghost jumps forward with hands down)*

The horse snorted and continued to graze.

The little ghost took a deep breath and let the sound come from deep within him.

“Boo-o-o-o-o-o!” (*He floated around making his new sound.*) “Boo-o-o-o-o-o!”

The brown horse turned and ran toward the barn. Jimmy was waiting for him. He put a halter on and led him into the trailer.

The little ghost floated in front of the black horse. (*little ghost floats*) The little ghost took a deep breath and let the sound come from deep within him. “Boo-o-o-o-o-o!” The black horse ran toward the barn.

The little ghost floated back to Jimmy (*little ghost floats*).

“Thanks!” Jimmy said as he closed the trailer door. “That’s a neat trick. How do you manage to float like that?”

“I’m a real ghost,” said the little ghost.

“Naw!” said Jimmy as he hopped into the truck. “Real ghosts aren’t afraid of fires.” He leaned his head out the window. “Are they?”

(*little ghost tries to nod his head but shakes all over*)

“I didn’t think ghosts were afraid of anything. Want a ride?”

But the little ghost shook once more and floated away home as fast as he could.



*The “Cameron Peak” Fire  
As seen from Loveland, Colorado,  
October 2020  
Photo by B. Dubrovin*

### **More Information**

To learn to make A ghost marionette,  
go to the [CRAFT](#) Section

To learn how to use the marionette to tell your story,  
go to the [ACTIVITY](#) Section

For extra Telling Tips  
Go to the [TIPS](#) Section

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# How to Make a Ghost Marionette

To make this marionette of a little ghost, you will need:

1 18" square of fabric (cotton, nylon or other filmy material. We used sew-in interfacing for the first one.

1 2" Styrofoam ball

Several yards of kite string (or similar light weight string)

2 3/4" wooden beads

1 paperclip

1 small safety pin

Felt tip marking pen



Place Styrofoam ball in center of fabric.  
(We used a left-over piece of curtain material for this second. marionette.)

Shape fabric around ball and tie with small piece of string.



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Lift two points of fabric to become arms. Slip one bead onto the end of each point for hands.

Cut one piece of string about 45 inches long. (Length of string can be adjusted for height of puppeteer.) Tie one end next to first bead. Tie other end next to second bead.

Bend a paperclip open to form a U shape and push ends into top of ghost's head.



Cut another piece of string the same length as the first.

Tie end of second string to paper clip. Pin small safety pin in middle of ghost's back and tie second end of string to the pin.

With a felt tip pen draw eyes and mouth on face of puppet.



When using the marionette, hold one string in your left hand and the other in your right hand. Which string in which hand? Work with the puppet to see which way works best for you.

## **Alternate Method**

If you don't have white fabric, styrofoam ball, wooden beads, string, or other craft items, you can easily make a home-made variation of this craft:

## **The House Ghost Marionette**

You've heard of House Guests? Here's a House *Ghost*! It is quickly and easily made from everyday items found around your House, and can be used as a puppet or displayed as a Halloween party decoration.

### Needed:

- 1 small white plastic trash bag (4 gallon size)
- Newspaper, or paper towel, or regular white paper
- Kleenex-style tissue, white
- 4 white twist-ties (or yarn, thread, or thin wire)
- 2 pieces of clear plastic packing tape, 1 - 1 ½ inch long
- 2 pieces of dental floss, each 2 ft long
- Black felt tip marker
- Scissors
- Paper clips; one small white, one large silver

### To create the puppet:

- scrunch newspaper into a loose ball, approx. 2 inch big; wrap white tissue around it.
- open the plastic bag, place the wrapped "ball" in the center at the bottom.
- gently wrap the plastic around the "ball" and tie one twist-tie close under it to form a "head" but leaving the bag's corners free.
- approx. 1 inch from each free corner, tie one twist-tie to form "hands."
- Slightly bend open the white paper clip; hook it through the top of the head by poking one end deep in and scooping it back out, then squeeze it back to normal shape. (If the paper is scrunched too tightly to insert, you may need to cut a slit with a scissor; see "tips" below)
- Wrap the 1-inch clear tape flat on the head top around the clip to reinforce it.
- Put the other piece of clear tape 4 – 5 inches down from the base of the "head" to reinforce a spot in the middle of the "back."
- Make two tiny (1/4 inch) sideways cuts all the way through tape/plastic, approx 1 inch apart, one closer to "head," one farther away
- Insert white twist-tie through the cuts and twist it closed on the outside, making a loop at the top of the twist
- Tie the two ends of one piece of dental floss around the twist-tie "wrists" below the corner "hands."



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- Tie one end of the other piece of floss through the top of the white paper clip on the “head” and the other end to the loop in the twist-tie on the “back”
- With scissors, cut a random jagged edging on the plastic bag’s opening edge (the ghost’s bottom edge)
- Use the marker to create two black eyes and a mouth on the head
- Now loop the two floss strings over the large silver paper clip and hang that to display your ghost, or store it while not using for storytelling.
- Your marionette is ready to use or display!

Notes: this inexpensive quick puppet is *very lightweight* and moves easily with slight air currents, or while being carried; it’s very expressive! It is also durable and can be stored hung or folded for re-use as a decoration or retellings. Any storage wrinkles quickly hang out with use.

Troubleshooting tips: To prevent tears, the “head” paper clip must be inserted deep into the ball, not just looped under the plastic. If the ball is made too tight, it may be difficult to insert the clip. If so, remove the ball and poke a deep hole into it with the scissor, then reinsert into the bag and poke through the plastic into that pre-made hole.

*House Ghost design created 2017 by B. Dubrovin, adapted from: Storytelling Discoveries, Chapter 2, The Ghost Marionette, by Vivian Dubrovin, Storycraft Publishing, 2002.*

### **More Information**

To learn how to use the marionette to tell your story,  
go to the [ACTIVITY](#) Section

For ideas for stories to use with the marionette,  
go to the [STORY](#) Section

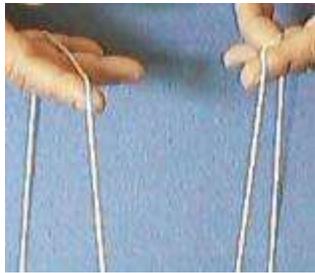
For extra Telling Tips  
Go to the [TIPS](#) Section

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## How to Use the Ghost Marionette

Always hang your marionette up when you are not using it to keep the strings from getting tangled.

You can slip the strings over a doorknob or you can hang them on a thumbtack or straight-pin that you push into a bulletin board.



When you pick up your marionette, hold one string in your left hand and the other in your right hand.

Which string in which hand?

It depends on which works best for you. Try it both ways.

Let string fall over your fingers and move the marionette by wiggling your fingers. You can also pick up a string with two fingers for certain movements.

Lift the puppets arms and raise the puppet.





Let the arms fall down  
and lower the puppet.

Raise and lower arms  
in a flapping motion  
(as if the ghost is trying to scare  
someone) while holding the puppet  
at the same height.

Lift the back end of puppet  
and lower the head.  
Make it float through the air  
in this position.

Shake the strings  
to make the whole puppet body  
shake as if it were scared.



These simple movements are all that are needed  
to tell the story of “The Little Ghost” in  
The [STORY](#) Section

To learn how to make this little ghost marionette,  
go to the [CRAFT](#) Section

For extra Telling Tips  
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## Extra Telling Tips

### **Keep It Simple**

This is a simple, easy-to-make marionette. Similar beginner models have been used with children as young as preschool. This puppet does not need a stage and can be operated on the floor in front of the storyteller/puppeteer. A short, simple story with repeated phrases and actions works best with this marionette.

### **Let Your Audience Help**

Vivian has told this story often in classrooms, and the audience always enjoy helping to make the scary ghost sounds. You can include sounds or movements in your scary story that your audience can help tell, to make the storytelling even more fun for everyone.

### **A Decoration Is an Invitation**

Hang your ghost near your door, to greet visitors and let people know that a creative person lives there, and answer any questions about it by telling your ghost story.

# L king for More

Storytelling Ideas, Activities, Crafts, Sample Stories, and Advice?

We hope you've enjoyed this favorite project from our archives, presented free to all storytellers, by The Kids' Storytelling Club. At the Club you'll find more storytelling fun like this, with new ideas and timeless favorites, all to help you become a better storyteller.

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