

# Suspense Unit (Grades 7-9)

**Time:** 10 weeks

**Goal:** Produce a short story in the suspense genre

Specifically:

- Establish a believable world with compelling detail
- Make the reader afraid that something bad will happen
- Sustain and extend that fear
- Resolve the story by releasing that fear (whether it's realised, prevented, subverted, etc)—or intentionally end on a cliffhanger, with the fear unresolved

## Plan

Week	Goal	In class	Independently
Jul 8	Establish a baseline Layout plan for unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete survey</li><li>• Define suspense as an effect</li><li>• 10 minutes write a short suspense story given a stimulus then put them aside</li><li>• Discuss the unit</li><li>• FS Open game <a href="#">“Monster in the wilderness”</a></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Collect images that represent the world you want to write in</li></ul></li><li>• Reading:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ <b>Make notes about wherever you felt something esp re unease</b></li><li>◦ Read Dark Blue Rising (opening)</li><li>◦ Read The Veldt</li><li>◦ Read Stop Revive Survive</li><li>◦ Read Lamb to the Slaughter</li><li>◦ Read Through the Safety Net</li><li>◦ <b>Choose 2 favourites</b></li></ul></li></ul>
Jul 15	Establish a world Develop the mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discuss stories re level of uneasiness</li><li>• Discuss images</li><li>• Demo Writelike</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Make some notes about your possible story worlds</li></ul></li></ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FS Establish a world: setting and objects, characters, routines, sensory or conceptual details, tilts <a href="#">“Something sinister in the family”</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look at how each of your chosen stories builds a world (2-3 details each)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let’s look at the layers of detail that can build an interesting story world.</li> <li>Complete <a href="#">WL Setting</a></li> <li>Complete <a href="#">WL Characters</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Jul 22	Making things happen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss world details in chosen stories</li> <li>Characters in stable relationships with the world</li> <li>Interrupting routines &amp; tilting platforms</li> <li>Foreboding, foreshadowing, tension</li> <li>“Hooks”</li> <li>FS Action, routines, interruptions, tilt <a href="#">“Covering up a dark crime”</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are some stable relationships in your world? What could upset those relationships? (A little? A lot?)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What hooks you into your chosen stories?</li> <li>Is there an interruption? Is there a tilt? Where are they located in the story?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest and suspense ultimately come from contrast.</li> <li>Complete <a href="#">WL Contrast &amp; Juxtaposition</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Jul 29	Adaptation & resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss story hooks in chosen stories</li> <li>Adapting to the tilt &amp; stabilising the platform</li> <li>FS Adaptation &amp; resolution <a href="#">“Encounter with a creepy group”</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Play with some of your tilts from last week. How might a character react? Follow the chain of cause &amp; effect. Which combination of character &amp; tilt seems most interesting to you?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In your favourite stories, how does the character adapt to an unstable relationship? What are the cycles of</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

			<p>cause &amp; effect? Where do they end up?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We understand how a character relates to their world by following their emotional reactions.</li> <li>Complete WL <a href="#">Emotional Cause &amp; Effect</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Aug 5	Creating emotional effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss mood, atmosphere, emotion</li> <li>FS Emotion <a href="#">“A creepy prophecy”</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think about the world you’ve been developing. What is the mood at the beginning and how does it change?</li> <li>What details would create that mood?</li> <li>How might contrast enhance the effect?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look across the major phases of your favourite stories. How does the mood change?</li> <li>What details convey their mood? How concrete/abstract? How sensory? How poetic?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Practice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete <a href="#">WL Representing Character Emotion</a></li> <li>Complete <a href="#">WL Evoking Emotion in the Reader</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Aug 12	Write first draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What was their concern?</li> <li>FS Brainstorming (groups of 1, 2 or 3, repeat for each player’s hooks)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write</li> </ul>
Aug 19	Check-in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read-throughs &amp; feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give feedback</li> <li>Write</li> </ul>

Aug 26	Write second draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinic for help if you need it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write &amp; submit</li> </ul>
Sep 2	Readthroughs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read everyone's stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rest</li> </ul>
Sep 9	Wrap up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20-minute write to a stimulus</li> <li>• Put them in a box</li> <li>• Do the survey again</li> <li>• Discuss the whole unit</li> <li>• Make some illustrations for stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rest</li> </ul>
Post	Aggregation and publishing?		

#### ALTS

Week	Goal	In class	Homework
Jul 8	Establish a baseline Layout plan for unit	Define suspense as an effect 20 minute write a short suspense story Demonstrate WL 1 FS Encounter with a creepy group	Complete survey Read Dark Blue Rising Complete Thicketty 1 Complete Thicketty 2 Complete Thicketty 3
Jul 15		Discuss Dark Blue Rising FS Something sinister in the family	Read The Veldt Complete Thicketty 1 Complete Thicketty 2 Complete Thicketty 3
Jul 22		Discuss The Veldt FS Covering up a dark crime	Read Lamb to the Slaughter
Jul 29		Discuss Lamb to the Slaughter	Read Through the Safety Net

		FS A creepy prophecy	
Aug 5		Discuss Through the Safety Net	
Aug 12			
Aug 19			
Aug 26			
Sep 2	Submit final drafts		
Sep 9	Wrap up, debrief, have some fun		
Post	Aggregation and publishing?		