

GHOST CLUB THE NEW KID

DEBORAH ABELA

A novel for independent readers (ages 8–11)



TEACHING SUPPORT KIT

by
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GHOST CLUB
Teaching Support Kit

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1. PLOT SUMMARY

Ghost Club is about the oldest paranormal investigation organisation in the world and two of its youngest members are eleven-year-old Angeline and Edgar Usher.

After atomising a pesky ghost doing his best to destroy a luxury mansion, Angeline, Edgar and their family attend a Ghost Club meeting. It's here the Grandmaster introduces a new member, Dylan Fleischmann, also a kid, and announces that Angeline and Edgar are to teach him everything they know about ghost-catching.

During a tour of the Ghost Club headquarters, they visit the Depository, where the archives and museum are kept, and the Spectorium, which houses the ghost-catching equipment. It is during this visit that they are called to a haunted castle.

Castle Koszmar is famous for ghost tours and sightings, but the owner, Mr Griswold, admits they've all been a fake – only now, the castle is haunted by a real ghost.

Armed with their Ghost Club satchels, coats, boots and specially selected ghost-catching equipment, the three young catchers investigate.

Luck is with them and on their first visit they see the ghost . . . a headless horseman! They film the spectre, take the recording back to the Ghost Club for analysis and with the help of Endora Spright, Head of Spectral Research at the Depository, they slowly piece together who this ghost may be.

Now all they have to do is find him again, work out why he is suddenly haunting the castle and figure out a way to make him stop. But this ghost is stubborn, has quite a temper and isn't about to cooperate.

Angeline and Edgar are very proud to be part of the Ghost Club, Dylan, however, seems petrified at even the *mention* of other-worldly activity. The Ushers do all they can to convince Dylan that there is nothing terrible, freakish or even slightly loony about what they do, but that it is simply the investigation of the paranormal that falls outside normal scientific explanation. It's not an entirely secret society but because there is a lot of misunderstanding and general freaking out about ghosts, it is best that the activities of the club are kept low-key.

'People are often scared by the other side, but you're in more danger crossing the street or slipping in the bath than bumping into a ghost,' said Grandma Rose. 'And that's the honest truth or I'll eat my own head.'

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The first reference to a ghost hunt is found in 100 AD by Pliny the Younger, a lawyer, author and magistrate in ancient Rome. The story involved an investigation of a haunted house in ancient Athens.

There are quite a few ghost clubs that exist today, all intrigued by the idea of ghosts. The oldest organisation in the world associated with psychical research is the Ghost Club and 2012 will be the club's 150th year.

It has its beginnings at Trinity College, Cambridge, when in 1855 fellows met to discuss ghosts and psychic phenomena. When it was officially formed in 1862, it attracted some ridicule in *The Times* newspaper, but that didn't stop the club continuing to meet and investigate ghostly claims.

In America in the mid-1880s, the Council of Psychical Research was set up with similar aims, having as its mission the study of the existence of ghosts. One of its most prominent members was Harry Price, who can be seen here talking about what psychical research is and showing some of the early ghost-hunting devices:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jdue2DqxFkw

Some famous members were Arthur Conan Doyle (author of the Sherlock Holmes stories) and Charles Dickens (author of many works, including *A Christmas Carol*). One firm believer was American inventor, Thomas Edison. He took out patents for over 1000 inventions, including the phonograph and electric light bulb, and it is believed he was working on a Ghost Machine to record spirits at the time of his death.

The rise in interest in ghosts coincided with the invention of new technology, such as phonographs and cameras. Now armed with devices to record ghosts and therefore irrefutably prove their existence, ghost club activities surged.

The ghost club in London meets once a month on a Saturday afternoon at the Victory Services Club, near Marble Arch.

3. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah's family is very haunted. Only not in a terrible way. Ghosts appeared in her mother's family at all sorts of times and places, never spookily but always like a relative popping in for a cup of tea. Her nanna would tell her lots of stories about seeing ghosts, which never scared Deb . . . or so she says.

These stories led to the writing of her novel *The Remarkable Secret of Aurelie Bonhoffen*, about a young girl who lives on a seaside pier that she discovers she shares with ghosts! It wasn't until years later, after stumbling upon material about Charles Dickens, that Deborah first became intrigued by the Ghost Club. She thought to herself, what if she created a fictitious branch of the Ghost Club where two of the youngest members were children? What equipment would they use? Where would they be based? What ghosts would they meet and how would they stop their haunting ways?

Deborah loves stories and travelling. She has a teaching degree as well as a communications degree and worked for 7 years as a TV producer before leaving to write novels. She's written the **Max Remy Superspy** series, about a feisty eleven-year-old Superspy (who's thirteen in the final book), **Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend)** series with the advice of soccer champion Johnny Warren, and *The Remarkable Secret of Aurelie Bonhoffen*, which was shortlisted for Best Children's Book in the Aurealis Awards and made a Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book 2010. She's also written *Grimsdon*, a novel about a flooded city, flying machines and sea monsters.

You can find out more about spies, soccer, ghosts and flooded cities at <http://www.deborahabela.com>.

4. PRE-READING DISCUSSION: THE BOOK'S COVER

The cover of any book has the very important job of enticing readers to pick it up. It hints at what might be discovered in the story, what it is about, what genre or type of story it is and maybe some of its main themes or concerns.

1. Look at the colours the illustrator has chosen as well as the background, the characters and how she has chosen to draw them. What kind of book do you think it might be? Action? Adventure? Historical? Explain why you think this?
2. What do you think the story is about?

3. What things can you see? To what age group do you think this book is aimed?
4. From the drawing of the three young characters on the front and back, describe what you think their personalities might be like? Think about the way they are standing, the expression on their faces, what they are doing, etc.
5. The Blurb: What is the purpose of a blurb? Do you think this blurb achieves this purpose? What do you learn about the book from this blurb?
6. From reading the blurb and looking at the cover, write a first paragraph that you think would match the cover.
7. Watch the trailer for the Ghost Club at www.deborahabela.com. How does the addition of moving pictures, the choice of images and music, add to your understanding of what the book will be about?

5. CHARACTERS

Angeline and Edgar Usher

Angeline is older than her twin brother Edgar by 8 minutes. They are the youngest members of the Ghost Club. By day, they attend Gravesend College and ghost-catch at night, something that makes staying awake in school the next day sometimes quite hard.

Angeline is very self-assured when it comes to anything to do with the club. She has seen ghosts from a very young age and, having a grandmother and parents who are also member of the club, it never felt odd being part of a paranormal organisation that tracks down ghosts.

Whenever she is hatching a plan, Angeline gets a cheeky smile on her face, which she inherited from her Grandma Rose.

In her life outside the club, she is less assured. She is often quiet, withdrawn and nervous around other kids, fearing if she says anything she will come across as a blithering fool. It is only on Ghost Club duty and with her family that she feels truly herself.

Edgar is very, very smart and alert. He knows stuff and collects information. He reads a lot. He only has to hear a fact once and it's with him forever. He also doesn't fit in at school as well as some other kids, favouring chess and soccer over rugby and wrestling in the playground, but it doesn't bother him as much. Animals love him.

They've been official Ghost Club members for four years now and have made over 132 catchings.

Dylan Fleischmann

Dylan is the newest member of the Ghost Club. He is a small blond-haired boy and tried for years to hide his ability to see ghosts. But when he was caught by his granddad, Grandmaster Fleischmann, talking to people who weren't there, he was immediately assessed and inducted into the club.

His granddad was one of the best catchers in the club's history and, even though Dylan is petrified by the idea of being a ghost catcher, he is desperate to make his granddad proud.

If there is a dangerous part of a ghost-haunting site, Dylan will find it and often be almost killed by it. He also suffers from hyperventilation. Even though he doesn't like hauntings, he loves a good puzzle and they all soon realise this is his strength.

At the end of the first novel, he also reveals the deep fear behind catching:

'A year ago, my dad left for an expedition to the Amazon, searching for a rare butterfly, and he never came back. My mum and I moved in with Grandpa while we waited to hear news but there was nothing.' He took a deep breath and whispered. *'I'm scared that the next ghost might be him.'*

Professor Grandma Rose Usher

(Prof of Professional Acting from the Gravesend Amateur Acting Society) Mother of Arthur Usher, sometime inventor, controller of ghost-catching devices and head of the local dramatics society. She's also an adrenaline freak. She looks after the club's collection of equipment and also invents herself. She is most proud of her Atomisers – small hand-held devices that are especially good for eliminating pesky poltergeists.

She was married the Grandpa Huffman, who often comes back to give his opinion, tell a bad joke or try to smooch Grandma Rose. She loves the club, her family, driving fast and has the job of equipping catchers before they go on a call-out.

Endora Spright – Head of Spectral Research at the Depository

Endora has a hive of red wispy hair piled on her head like an overfed cat. She wears three different kinds of glasses: far, close and extremely close.

She is VERY germ phobic, so she has a LOT of pairs of gloves. She is exuberant and very fastidious. Ghosts are her fascination but everything about the real world scares her. Her parents and younger sister went missing while on holiday in Trinidad and Tobago when she just a teenager at boarding school. She got the news hand delivered and has never liked postmen since. She never opens mail – even email – and Endora has to open them for her. She lives at the club mansion, which she hasn't left in years.

As head of the Depository, she researches the history of haunted places and knows the most haunted places in the world. Dracula's castle in Transylvania, the Tower of London, Edinburgh Castle, St Augustine's Lighthouse, Florida, St James' Theatre in New Zealand, Monty Cristo Homestead in Australia. She investigates who lived there, died there and knows whether there has been any previously reported ghostly activity. She has direct links to the police, who tell her if there have been any murders, disappearances or reported disturbances. She also has a ghost cat called Zelda.

Mr Roderick Gloom – Groundsman of the Ghost Club mansion.

Mr Gloom believes himself to be a poet and writes poetry that often has bad and unhappy endings. He has black wavy hair streaked with silver and a moustache that looks like a caterpillar has curled up under his nose and gone to sleep.

He always has an axe on him and has unusual pets, like Gertrude the tarantula which he keeps in his pocket. He drives a black hearse with dark tinted windows and, to Dylan's dislike, often volunteers to read his bad poetry and go with them on catchings.

Activities:

- Choose one of the descriptions above and draw a picture of a character, adding the bits that aren't mentioned to build a representation of what this character is like.
- What do you think the author wants you to think about these characters from the way she has described them?
- Choose one of the characters from ***Ghost Club*** and conduct an interview with them. Make it as interesting and entertaining as you can. Find out how their childhood was, their dreams and hopes, a funny story from their life that helps us know them better. Use what you know from the story but also what you think may be true about them. Write this up as a newspaper report or a transcript of an interview, or create a video, acting out the parts of the character and interviewer.
- **Point of View:** Each character in a book will experience the same event in a different way. Choose one of the following passages in the book and write about the events from one of the above character's point of view.
 - *Chapter Three: Tea Cupcakes and a Moonlit Feast, pg 27–33*
 - *Chapter Eleven: A Close Encounter, pg 123–130*
 - *Chapter Eighteen: Showdown!, Pg 187–196*

You can do this as a blog or a diary entry.

6. ACTIVITIES

Aural storytelling – Ghost stories

Have you or anyone you know ever seen a ghost? Or seen or heard something that couldn't easily be explained? Or do you remember a small event that you can then add to and make up a story about a ghost? (This is often how writers write.)

Remember, it is a ghost story, so it's up to you whether it's real or not. Think about the best way to begin so that you set the tone of your story. What sequence of events will follow, making your listener want to know more? How will your story end? Will it answer all the questions created in your listener's mind or will it leave some tantalising aspects unanswered? When you get to a scary part, is it more effective to use short or long sentences?

Now tell your ghost story to the class in the most suspenseful way you can. Think about your voice – when to be quiet, what part of your story could be louder.

Writing it down

Now write your ghost story. You can add to any facts you included in your aural presentation. Ask yourself: Who is/are my main character(s)? Are they real or ghosts? Are your ghosts happy being ghosts? What are their personalities like? Are they happy? Sad? Grumpy? Do they go spooking live people? Do they cause trouble? Will your story be funny? Suspenseful? Sad?

You may like to do this as a graphic story, with cartoon panels that help you tell your story. Make sure it has a strong beginning, an imaginative and interesting sequence of events in the middle and a satisfying end.

Creating pictures with words: using the five senses

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

Draw up three lists. In one column, ask students to name things they may SEE in a haunted house. In the second column, ask them to suggest things they may HEAR and in the third, what they may feel and smell.

SEE

cobwebs
shadows
portraits
spiders

HEAR

footsteps
creaking floorboards
trees scraping
scuttling rats

FEEL & SMELL

the air turns cold
mouldy smell
air against skin
shiver

Ask students to write a story about someone entering a haunted house using some of the ideas from these columns. They can be alone, with a friend or family member, it can be day or night, it can be a dare or a house they have just moved into. They decide the set-up and if it is in 1st or third person, but it needs to be exciting and have an element of suspense.

What happens next?

Below you will find a scene that gets more exciting the more you read but ends at a crucial point. As you read it, think about the choice of words Deborah uses, the length of sentences, the use of dialogue and description, all with the aim of creating an exciting narrative. Think about what could happen next and write your version of the story.

'It's big?' Dylan breathed. 'How big?'

The ground began to vibrate with a thudding rhythm. The reddish glow became brighter and larger on Angeline's Tracker. 'Not sure yet.' She smiled. 'But we're about to find out.'

The thumping became louder and was now accompanied by the rattle of metal and crunching gravel.

'You are so lucky,' Angeline said.

'Lucky?' Dylan cried. 'How is this lucky?'

'Most ghosts make you wait hours or sometimes days to show themselves, but you're about to see one within the first hour.'

The sound of horse hooves pounded the earth, and from the foggy blanket of night the intruder materialised. First, there was the snout of a large stallion, followed by his strong, galloping body. On his back, standing tall in the stirrups, was a horseman, his cloak flying behind him, one arm clutching the reins and the other cracking a whip in the air.

And he had no head.

'A headless horseman.' Angeline's voice filled with awe.

'Who's coming straight for us!'

(From Chapter 11: A Close Encounter, pg 127–128)

Now you continue the story . . .

Make a book trailer

Book trailers are a way to talk about a book and hopefully entice readers to read them.

Have a look at some of Deb's book trailers at the following link:

http://deborahabela.com/site/Video_Clips.html

Think about the music she has used, the images, the pace of the changing images, how they match the music and the book.

Make a trailer for **Ghost Club** that you think captures the story well and makes the reader want to grab the book. Follow these steps:

- Start by writing a script – make it catchy, perhaps use some intriguing questions or maybe write a cliff-hanger that makes your reader want to know more.
- Storyboard your trailer – decide if you will use actors, drawings or photos. (See BLM attached.)
- Choose images and music.
- Edit your trailer together, adding images, music and sound effects. Decide how you will move from one image to another, e.g. dissolve, cut, wipe, etc.
- Decide if you will use actors, drawings or photos
- Write some text to include in your trailer – perhaps include some intriguing questions, or present a cliff-hanger – make sure your opening line is immediately interesting so the reader wants to know more.
- You can find music from free music websites, use your own photos or ones from free sharing websites such as flickr. You may also like to find sound effects from free sound effects websites. Have fun!

Ghost-catching equipment – The Spectorium

Grandma Rose is the head of the Spectorium. In this highly secret and secure part of the Ghost Club, she keeps the club's prized collection of ghost-catching equipment.

A lot of the inventions to catch and control ghosts in **Ghost Club** are based on real inventions from the earliest days of ghost-hunting, such as box brownies, movie cameras and dictaphones.

Deborah has used some of these ideas as well as new ones to create the collection of ghost-catching equipment that Angeline, Edgar and Dylan use. Here is an example of one piece of Ghost Club equipment:

GHOST POWDER: Powder that has been given a specifically measured charge that causes the particles to release a silvery, gaseous substance when they collide with ghosts. It sticks to the ghosts, revealing a silver, ghostly impression of who they really are. You just have to find them first. They are very quick movers, so you have to be fast.

One very famous inventor in the early days of ghost-hunting was Thomas Edison. You can find out more about him here.

http://invention.smithsonian.org/centerpieces/edison/000_story_02.asp

You as inventor:

Imagine you are an inventor at the Ghost Club. Create your own device that you think would come in very handy for catching ghosts. Make sure to describe your invention in detail and include:

- The name of the invention
- Name of the inventor
- A drawing. You may want to use arrows to point out specific parts and their functions
- Specific details about how it can be used
- Add any warnings or instructions for use
- You could also include a brief story about how it was used in the past to catch a ghost
- A catchy poster advertising the invention

Poetry

Mr Roderick Gloom thinks he is a very fine poet and enjoys writing poetry with gloomy and dark endings. Here is an example:

A Moonlit Feast By Mr Roderick Gloom

T'was a moonlit night a' dreary
Where never was a chill so eerie
Trapped within its icy cold
A lurking terror about to unfold.

For there was a boy so innocent
Into a forest alone he went,
Whilst walking through its murky hold
Lay unspeakable dread as yet untold.

Beyond his sight, lying in wait,
A hideous beast did anticipate
How delicious this young boy would taste

With a dash of salt and tomato paste.

Monstrous eyes pierced the night
As he judged the boy's weight and height.
In the oven he would perfectly fit
And down to dinner the beast would sit

For all of you with stomachs queasy
You'd best turn away, for this won't be easy.
Hours later the beast did recline,
His stomach full, his smile sublime.

Think about a scary or ghostly topic you could write about where something goes wrong at the end. Write a poem about this sad and slightly frightening tale. It may rhyme, but not all poetry needs to. Have fun!

The Depository

This is governed by Endora Spright, Head of Spectral Research.

Angeline, Edgar and Dylan have to submit a final report after every ghost catch that will then be kept in the archives of the Ghost Club. There are stories of ghosts and catchings from the very beginning of the club in 1862. Invent your own report about a ghost-catching that has occurred. Be as imaginative and descriptive as you like. In your report you can include:

- The name of the ghost catchers present
- When the event occurred
- Where the haunting occurred
- The name of the ghost
- History of the ghost such as age, cause of death, year they were born and died.
- What were the main signs of the haunting, e.g. rattling windows, floating candles, slamming doors, groaning?
- How did the ghost catchers manage to stop the haunting?

Book report

Use the BLM below to complete a book report about the Ghost Club.

GHOST CLUB: READERS' THEATRE

Use the script attached to act out a scene from the book, or you could create your own play using the dialogue and descriptions from another scene from the book.

Use your knowledge of the story and the characters' personalities to add excitement and drama to your play. Don't forget to add any props and costumes you think will also help bring the story and characters to life.

From *Ghost Club*

Chapter Eighteen, pages 190–195

Characters: Narrator, Angeline, Edgar, Dylan, Bartholomew Carpenter and Mr Gloom

The story so far: Angeline, Edgar, Dylan and Mr Gloom are investigating Castle Koszmar and have just discovered the location of the ghost who has been haunting it.

Location: The scene begins outside an old, barely furnished schoolroom in a castle. There are two single desks, a blackboard and a bookshelf with very few books. A ghost boy sits at a piano.

Narrator: Angeline pushed open the door. She took a few steps towards the boy. He was staring at the piano keys. His long hair fell over his face, he wore an oversized coat and his skin had a white glow. Dylan and Edgar peeked in from outside.

Angeline: Hi, my name's Angeline. What's yours?

Narrator: The boy didn't answer. Angeline moved closer.

Angeline: My friends and I don't want to hurt you. We only want to talk. We're worried you're unhappy. That maybe someone has done something to upset you. We're here to see if we can help.

Narrator: The ghost turned his head towards her.

Angeline: If you'd like us to.

Narrator: The ghost lifted his fingers and played a simple, haunting tune.

Angeline: I know what it's like to have a problem you can't sort out. You feel like you can't share it with anyone and that can make it seem bigger than it really is.

Narrator: The ghost kept playing. Mr Gloom snuck a look into the room from behind Edgar and Dylan.

Gloom: She's inside. Good girl.

Narrator: Angeline took a small step and looked around.

Angeline: I've always wanted to visit this castle. It's very beautiful. You must love living here.

Narrator: The boy stopped playing.

Angeline: I know many people feel the same and that Mr Griswold is keen to –

Narrator: The ghost slammed his hands onto the piano keys. He shot her a vengeful look and rose into the air. A blast of wind burst into the room, sending a pile of papers into a spin. Angeline flew off her feet and was sent flying into the wall. She fell to the ground in a crumpled heap.

Edgar: Angeline!

Narrator: Dylan kicked open the door and ran toward the ghost while Edgar hurried over to his sister. Dylan pulled the Spectrovac from his satchel, flung the strap over his neck, grabbed hold of the funnel and switched it on.

Dylan: Whoah!

Narrator: The force of the suction jolted him backwards. He held the funnel with both hands and aimed it at the ghost, who was being dragged toward the machine. The ghost tried to pull away.

Gloom: That's the way, Master Dylan! Now you're having fun!

Narrator: Dylan gritted his teeth. The ghost arched his back but was being dragged closer to Dylan. He let out a loud, angry cry. Dylan's arms were aching and his boots began to slide across the floorboards. Then he felt two arms around his waist.

Gloom: Let's finish this, shall we?

Narrator: The two pulled back hard. Dylan's legs cramped and his arms felt as if they were being stretched.

Gloom: We're nearly there, Master Dylan! Hold on! Yee haa!

Narrator: With his ears ringing from Gloom's cry, Dylan watched as the ghost edged closer. He wasn't sure how long he could hold on, but then he saw Angeline slumped in Edgar's arms, eyes closed.

Dylan: Yee haa!

Narrator: Dylan took a deep breath and in one resounding slurp, the ghost was sucked into the Spectrovac. He and Gloom were thrown backward to the ground.

Edgar: You got him!

Narrator: With the Spectrovac clutched in his arms, Dylan struggled to his feet. Gloom

hobbled upright soon after and slapped him on the back, almost sending the ghost-catching device flying from his grasp.

Gloom: I knew you could do it.

Dylan: Yeah, we . . . Ooph!

Narrator: A kick from the bag struck him in the face.

Gloom: Sorry, I should have warned you to be careful of that. The feisty ones never like being captured.

Narrator: Dylan struggled to hold the Spectrovac as it bulged and kicked. Then he remembered.

Dylan: Angeline!

Narrator: He turned to see her standing beside him.

Dylan: Are you okay?

Angeline: I was knocked out for a few seconds there, but it was just a small bump. And you?

Narrator: Dylan continued to wrestle with the bag.

Dylan: I think my heart may have stopped, but apart from that I'm fine.

Angeline: You did it – you caught your first ghost. And you're not hyperventilating!

Dylan (Surprised): No. I'm not.

Edgar: And it was a great catch. This case will be read about for a long time.

BLACK LINE MASTER

GHOST CLUB QUIZ

1. Name the two young ghost-catchers on the cover of this book.
2. What is it that Arthur Usher does that instills fear in his children?
3. What is the special announcement that is made at the Ghost Club meeting?
4. Who is the Grandmaster of the Ghost Club?
5. What special talent does Mr Gloom display at the meeting?
6. What does Mr Gloom carry with him that makes Dylan nervous?
7. What is the name of the place where the ghost archives and museum are held?
8. What event nearly ends Dylan's membership on his first day as a ghost catcher?
9. Who is in charge of the Spectorium?
10. Name two pieces of ghost-catching equipment from the Spectorium and describe how they work.
11. How does Ghost Powder work?
12. What does *poltergeist* mean?
13. What is it that makes Endora Spright deathly afraid? Why?
14. Who makes an official complaint to the police about the Usher family?
15. What does the owner of Castle Koszmar admit he has been doing that hasn't quite been honest?
16. What is the name of the ghost that is haunting Castle Koszmar?
17. Why is he haunting the castle?
18. What do the ghost catchers do to make him stop his haunting?
19. Which animal does Gloom say can be an ominous sign of death?
20. What is that that Dylan tells Angeline has made him so afraid of ghosts?

BLACKLINE MASTER

STORYBOARD FOR A GHOST CLUB BOOK TRAILER

Filmmakers and advertisers use storyboards to plot out scenes. Create a storyboard to show what would happen in your book trailer or advertisement for **Ghost Club**.

BLACKLINE MASTER
BOOK REPORT

Title:

Author:

Setting:

Characters:

Use 3 words to describe each character

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Storyline: describe briefly what happens in the book

Did you enjoy the novel? Why/Why not?
