



The Big Book of Ghost Stories

Otto Penzler (Editor), M. Rickert (Contributor)

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THE BIG BOOK OF GHOST STORIES is a spirited Black Lizard anthology with over a thousand pages of haunted—and haunting—tales.

The ghost story is perhaps the oldest of all the supernatural literary genres and has captured the imagination of almost every writer to put pen to the page. Here, Edgar Award-winning editor Otto Penzler has followed his keen sense of the supernatural to collect the most chilling and uncanny tales in the canon. These spectral stories span more than a hundred years, from modern-day horrors by Joyce Carol Oates, Chet Williamson and Andrew Klavan, to pulp yarns from August Derleth, Greye La Spina, and M. L. Humphreys, to the atmospheric Victorian tales of Rudyard Kipling, Edith Wharton, and H. P. Lovecraft, not to mention modern works by the likes of Donald E. Westlake and Isaac Asimov that are already classics. Some of these stories have haunted the canon for a century, while others are making their first ghoulish appearance in book form. Whether you prefer possessive poltergeists, awful apparitions, or friendly phantoms, these stories are guaranteed to thrill you, tingle the spine, or tickle the funny bone, and keep you turning the pages with fearful delight.

Including such classics as “The Monkey’s Paw” and “The Open Window” and eerie vintage illustrations, and also featuring haunted mansions, midnight frights, lovers from beyond the grave, rapping, tapping, wailing shades, and ghosts, ghouls, and specters galore! Also Featuring haunted mansions, midnight frights, lovers from beyond the grave, rapping, tapping, wailing shades, and ghosts, ghouls, and specters galore!

The Big Book of Ghost Stories Details

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J2e says

Three things to like about this book: one, it has a great cover and two, it is well presented, like an enormous magazine. The third is the number of authors and stories I hadn't encountered. I have about half a dozen ghost anthologies with Fritz Leiber's "Smoke Ghost", and everyone, it seems, must include M. R James. Both are here but there is a lot more as well. Like a lot of Americans, he misses a few British writers - Robert Aickman, R Chetwynd Hayes - that should have been included in "the most complete collection of uncanny, spooky, creepy tales ever published" but the compensation is the number of Americans I hadn't heard of. There are too many authors to give a thorough breakdown.

The cover, as I said, is fantastic. It reminds us that ghost stories are meant to be entertaining.

Noelle says

I read one ghost story every evening in October. With 80 stories, it should last a few Octobers more. My favorite stories this time around were "The Shadowy Third" by Ellen Glasgow, "A Ghost's Story" by Mark Twain, "Pacific 421" by August Derleth, and "Journey Into the Kingdom" by M. Rickert.

Julie Davis says

This was a treat for myself after getting a free lance writing job. I read the entire book over a long period of time by opening it at random to one of these short stories. There are classics (The Monkey's Paw; Oh, Whistle and I'll Come to You My Lad) and stories from much more modern authors like Donald Westlake, Isaac Asimov, Chet Williamson, and Andrew Klavan. There are so many stories in this "big book" that it took me some time to finish, especially at the meandering, leisurely pace I favor for short story collections. I really enjoyed it because I rarely came across a story I didn't like. I also really enjoyed Otto Penzler's introduction to each of the authors. He gave a good idea of what their overall work was like without giving away the story itself.

My only quarrel is with the categories in the table of contents that tend to give away the surprise for too many of the stories simply by playing on the twist. That actually was the reason for just opening the book and reading the story I found there so that I kept the element of surprise as long as the author's skill allowed.

Kudos to the publisher, Black Lizard, for their production values ... the cover is not only atmospheric because of the vintage image, it is also sturdy. The paper for the pages is lower quality, as one would expect, but the binding is such that you can tell it will hold together no matter how many times that book flops open. The binding also allows the book to lie flat on a surface which is a definite advantage considering the size. And the print is a pleasing size, not the gigantic type which too many modern publishers use to either pad out pages or pander to older eyes.

Nihal Vrana says

This one was a joy to read. It might have been better 10-15 stories less; but overall the richness of the styles and ideas take precedence in my rating. It is like looking at priceless gems coming out of years of mining and going through lots of coal before finding diamonds.

I have discovered a lot of writers and some ingenious and some downright bizarre ways of writing about ghosts. They were too many so it is all like a blur but when I think about the whole book Donald Westlake's story stands out; it gave me the strongest feeling of eternity since the Mars/Dr. Manhattan issue of Watchmen. I will definitely read Penzler's other anthologies (Luckily my wife has nearly all of them).

John Bellamy says

Penzler's outstanding selection of ghost stories includes many classic authors in the genre but mostly and thankfully substitutes some of their lesser known gems in lieu of their over-exposed work. Some of the best tales here are by British authors unjustly obscure to American readers and Penzler is to be thanked for producing an instantly indispensable treasury of ghost stories. And don't ask me to name my favorites, 'cause that would be like asking a mother to name her favorite child in the presence of her entire brood. Ghost stories fans, rejoice!

Tuxlie says

THE BIG BOOK OF GHOST STORIES is a spirited Black Lizard anthology with over a thousand pages of haunted?and haunting?tales. The ghost story is perhaps the oldest of all the supernatural literary genres and has captured the imagination of almost every writer to put pen to the page. Here, Edgar Award-winning editor Otto Penzler has followed his keen sense of the supernatural to collect the most chilling and uncanny tales in the canon. These spectral stories span more than a hundred years, from modern-day horrors by Joyce Carol Oates, Chet Williamson and Andrew Klavan, to pulp yarns from August Derleth, Greye La Spina, and M. L. Humphreys, to the atmospheric Victorian tales of Rudyard Kipling, Edith Wharton, and H. P. Lovecraft, not to mention modern works by the likes of Donald E. Westlake and Isaac Asimov that are already classics. Some of these stories have haunted the canon for a century, while others are making their first ghoulish appearance in book form. Whether you prefer possessive poltergeists, awful apparitions, or friendly phantoms, these stories are guaranteed to thrill you, tingle the spine, or tickle the funny bone, and keep you turning the pages with fearful delight. Including such classics as ?The Monkey?S Paw? and ?The Open Window? and eerie vintage illustrations, and also featuring haunted mansions, midnight frights, lovers from beyond the grave, rapping, tapping, wailing shades, and ghosts, ghouls, and specters galore! AlsoFeaturing haunted mansions, midnight frights, lovers from beyond the grave, rapping, tapping, wailing shades, and ghosts, ghouls, and specters galore!

Susan says

I enjoyed the variety in this collection and also the organization of the stories. I could just pick up the volume and go to the "haunted houses" section, or whatever, and find something that piqued my interest.

Alix says

The biggest box of Halloween treats, a reader's delight. Congratulations to Otto Penzler for such fine editorship. My favorites: "The Night Wire" (H. F. Arnold), "Mr. Arcularis" (Conrad Aiken), "Consequences" (Willa Cather), "In at the Death" (Donald E. Westlake) and about a few dozens more. This book proves the versatility of one of the oldest forms of fiction: the ghost story.

Carolyn says

A wonderful mix of classic and new terrifying stories...perfect for a cold fall night!

Holly says

This was a pretty fabulous and comprehensive anthology. There was enough in this volume to keep me busy during my October horrorfest. Most of the great writers of the genre have been included. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

Quirkyreader says

If you love creepers, go and get this book. It is chock full of goodness.

What I especially loved was Penzler's introduction to the authors and the mini bibliographies.

But what was super cool was the fact that many of these stories originally appeared in *Weird Tales* magazine.

Mary says

Holey Moley Batman! Approximately 80 ghost stories compiled in one book (over 800 pages written in small text, so you know there is a lot to read in there!). Not one gory alien or zombie story to be found, these are all your basic supernatural "ghost goes BOO in the night" stories. While it contains many classic stories by H. P. Lovecraft, O. Henry, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Saki, there are also several by authors I had either never heard of, or did not know that they wrote ghost stories (Mark Twain, Joyce Carol Oates). Hours of reading pleasure, the perfect book to keep in your library (if you like ghost stories) for browsing the random story here and there.

Michal says

Thanks be to all that is holy that I am finally done with this fucking awful anthology. It defeated me for almost 4 years. This editor should be sued, fired, and given a strong tongue lashing for this collection. It includes some of the most boring stories I've ever had the misfortune to read: the collection is lumped together in the most haphazard way. Almost all of the stories are older than sin, have little to no horror (or literary for that matter!) value, and have only the most trivial connection with ghosts. The only two I found enjoyable were "Journey into the Kingdom" and "Coventry Carol"...which, of course, were at the very end of the book. A big middle finger up to this book. Also to myself for being a masochist and forcing myself to finish.

Nancy Oakes says

There is truly nothing I like better than a good, old-fashioned ghost story, and here in *The Big Book of Ghost Stories*, edited by Otto Penzler, I am completely in my element. Ghosts are everywhere, roaming in the old English abbeys, conjured up in the eerie atmosphere of the Victorian seance room, moaning in old castles, sailing the seas, you name it, and a ghost will be found there. This is an incredible collection, one I couldn't wait to get to every time I had a moment to pick it up.

The stories in this book are divided into thirteen (of course!) sections and cover a broad spectrum of authors, many of whom are known for their supernatural writings as well as others whose work is not as famous. As Penzler notes in his introduction, many of the stories that appear in this volume have not previously been anthologized, nor have they appeared in book form anywhere else. And as he states, the stories that are found between the covers cover the range from the Late Victorian era through the heyday of the pulp mags, and he's also included some of the works of modern tellers of ghostly tales. I found perhaps two out of the entire collection that just didn't do it for me; the rest more than surpassed the creep factor I always hope to feel when reading a good anthology of scary stories.

There's just nothing more to say really, except that if you're a huge fan of ghost stories, if you can move beyond the vampire/zombie/werewolf genres that top the horror charts today, and if you are not bound to the gory, hack/slash horror to get your chills, this book just might do it. It's incredibly rare to find a near-perfect anthology of stories; this one definitely fits that bill. There's an added bonus as well: when introducing each story, there is a short blurb about each author and his or her other works. I've used this feature to full advantage for future ghost-story reading.

Super book, best read at night when everyone's asleep and it's eerily quiet, *The Big Book of Ghost Stories* will likely most please readers of more cerebral weird/horror tales rather than what's popular on the shelves today. I highly recommend it!

David J Corwell says

Penzler has put together an EXCELLENT collection of ghost stories! Definitely a must read!!
