

The ways that each  
story brought the  
readers of their time



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The First story I shall look at is “ The Signalman” by Charles Dickens. Charles Dickens was born in 1812 and died in 1870, so this story was probably written in the 1840’s or 1850’s. People then were very rational and thought that everything should have a good explanation, and if it didn’t it wasn’t real. In his story Dickens tries to tell a ghost story that doesn’t have an explanation for the goings on, so the readers can use their imaginations. In the story Dickens creates a liminal space which is the cutting.

The cutting is where the signalman lives, it is a hole surrounded by two parallel walls which trains run through, “ The cutting was extremely deep”. This creates a supernatural effect for the reader because the signalman is cut off from the whole world and lives on his own. This setting could be very scary for the readers because if a ghost does appear you are trapped and there is no escape. Dickens uses emotive language to create a supernatural atmosphere for the reader. He uses such words as “ Gloomy”, “ Depressing” and “ Barbarous”. This helps the readers create the setting in their mind and imagine the atmosphere in the cutting.

The words he uses are all dark and ghostly words, so it sets a dark and ghostly setting. This would help the reader come into contact with the supernatural. The two main characters are the narrator and the signalman. We do not know anything about them at the start, but as the story continues we learn more about them both. At the start of the story, the narrator finds a cutting and becomes curious, he shouts down to the signalman, “ Halloo below there”. I found this a bit strange that he wants to talk to someone he doesn’t know, this is because when the story was written people were more friendly to each other than nowadays.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-ways-that-each-story-brought-the-readers-of-their-time/>

The signalman is a bit unsure about talking to the narrator at first and it seems a bit scared of him. We find later in the story out that the narrator reminded him of a time when someone screamed “Halloa below there” and warned the signalman to “Clear the way”, this means that there are two trains on the same track about to crash in to each other. He saw a figure in the tunnel waving like the narrator did. When the signalman set the alarm the figure disappeared and everything was fine. This had scared the signalman and made him cautious of anyone waving and shouting at him.

That would bring the readers into contact with the supernatural because it was a figure, not a man, so you do not know what or who it is, and he saw it in a dark tunnel and it disappeared like ghosts do. The second story I shall look at is “An Arrest” By Ambrose Bierce. This story is set in Kentucky in America. In this story the liminal space is the forest. After Orrin Brower escapes from jail he has to go through a forest to escape. Bierce wrote “He knew nothing of the land”, this meant that he did not know his way through the forest.

This cold-blooded killer who murdered someone in his own family was scared in the forest. Bierce describes him as “Not long in losing himself”, this could mean two things, and he could be close to getting lost in the forest or close to losing his mind in the forest and going mad because he is so frightened. This helps the reader come into contact with the supernatural because it gives them the feeling that he is all alone in a cold and dark forest and the tension is very high so something to do with the supernatural is bound to happen soon.

To create a supernatural atmosphere and mood in the forest Bierce finds the semantic fields of the forest. He uses all the words you associate with the word forest. "Dark", "Moon", "Stars", "Natural", "Escape", "Gloom", "Wood" and "Trees". These add to the feeling of being lost in the forest and to the supernatural atmosphere and mood. Bierce uses colloquialism, "Pretty dark", he does this so the story can sound like someone is telling it to the readers. In the time when the story was written not many people could read or write so the only way you could hear a story was when a friend or family member told you.

When Brower came out of the forest he noticed a figure, Bierce writes figure because it gives the reader a sense of uncertainty, if he said Burton Duff it would not have had the same affect. We find out later that it was Burton Duff's ghost. When Brower saw the figure he was "Filled with buckshot", he couldn't move. The figure then lifted up its arm and pointed back in the direction of the jail and without hesitating Brower starts walking back. Bierce describes Brower as a "Courageous criminal", but when he saw the figure he didn't seem very Courageous because he does what the figure wants.

At the end of the story the figure of Burton Duff takes Brower to the Jail. When Brower enters, Duff's body is on the table and know-one follows him in to the room. This brings the readers into contact with the supernatural because they think that Duff was alive and it is quite a spooky ending because the readers do not know what happens next. The third story I shall look at is "Shadow" By Edgar Allen Poe. Out of all of the stories I read I found "Shadow", very hard to understand the plot. That is because Poe concentrated more on the mood and atmosphere than the plot.  
<https://assignbuster.com/the-ways-that-each-story-brought-the-readers-of-their-time/>

This would help the readers come into contact with the supernatural because in "Shadow" it is not the plot that makes the reader interested in the story, it is the words that Poe uses to describe what's happening, "Pestilence", "Illumined", "Countenance" and "Enshrouded", are all words that he uses. They help make the story more exiting to the reader as well as helping the reader understand what is happening. The semantic field of "Shadow" is to do with evil, darkness and death. Some examples are "Evil", "Death", "Dead", "Spirit", "Souls", "Suffocation", "Terror" and "Flames".

These words are all related in some way to the main words. Using words like that can make boring sentences very powerful and exiting because the words are linked to a supernatural theme. "Shadow" is very different to the other stories. I think this because it is written like a poem, not like a story. Usually in poems the poet chooses his words very carefully because they want to create the write mood and atmosphere for the reader and I think Poe has done that in "Shadow" and it helps the reader come into contact with the supernatural. At the beginning of the story there is an epigraph. "I walk through the valley of the shadow", is used to set the scene at the start. The fourth story I shall look at is "The Night-Doings At 'Deadman's'".

This is a very strange story. It is the complete opposite of "Shadow"; I think it lacks detail. In this story, Bierce concentrates on what is happening and the plot more than the mood and atmosphere, that is not a good for the readers because you need a scary atmosphere as well as a scary plot to come into contact with the supernatural. This story does have a liminal space; it is a shanty on a mountain, which is covered in snow, "Little pine-log shanty".

<https://assignbuster.com/the-ways-that-each-story-brought-the-readers-of-their-time/>

The liminal space in this story is the same as the one in "The Signalman", the character that lives there has no contact with the world and it is a brilliant place to have a supernatural act happen because you cannot escape and no one can rescue you. A good example of this is the film "The Thing" By John Carpenter. The setting is in the Antarctic, it is very remote and you cannot escape. That is why it is a good place for something supernatural to happen. This story is very vague with the characters. The writer does that so the readers can think it for themselves.

It does not tell you who is who and why they are there. This makes a good supernatural effect because the readers do not know why the characters are there so any of them could be ghosts. The ending of this story is very open. Bierce does this so the readers can think for themselves. The ending is a shock, you are led to believe that one character is death but you do not know for sure. The last story I shall look at is "The Facts In The Case Of M. Valdemar"; this story was written in the 1840s, there was lots of controversy about it.

When people read it, it was so good they thought it was a true story but Poe had to say that it was not true and he wrote it himself. This is because he has written it like a diary, the main character is the narrator, "M. Valdemar, I said". Usually stories are told by a narrator like in "Night Doings At "Deadman's""", "Mr Beeson sat there", doing this can make stories past or present. In this story, nothing supernatural happens, but there is a supernatural theme, that the narrator wants to keep M. Valdemar alive after he has died by mesmerism. He manages to do this but when he undoes the spell M. Valdemar falls to pieces.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-ways-that-each-story-brought-the-readers-of-their-time/>

This story has a good plot and good mood and atmosphere as most of the stories only have one such as "Shadow" which has a lot of mood and atmosphere, but not a good plot. It had a good mood and atmosphere because Poe used lots of emotive language and he does it in "M. Valdemar" he uses such words as "Rotted", "Detestable", and "Hideous". In this story there is not really a liminal space. I have discovered that Poe does not really have liminal spaces in his stories. In "Shadow" there is not a particular place that he has described. Other writers like Bierce and Dickens always have liminal spaces, e. g. the cutting and the shack on the mountain.

This helps the readers come into contact with the supernatural. Even though Poe does not have liminal spaces, his stories still bring the readers of their time into contact with the supernatural because he uses more powerful language, e. g. "Detestable Putridity". The semantic field of this story is to do with medicine, e. g. "Alive", "Dead", "Nurses", "Doctor" and "Health". For a reader to come into contact with the supernatural in a story you need to have a good and interesting plot, lots of powerful emotive language and have a liminal space where the reader can feel trapped and there is no escape.