

# LESSON PLAN

## 3/4



## GOTHIC SHORT STORIES

### Worksheet

**Part One – Malcolmson finds a kind and cheerful landlady who advises him on what food and drink he should buy. But when he tells her where he is going to live, she turns frightfully pale and says, 'Not the Judge's House!' And he asks her what is wrong with the house he has just rented for three months.**

#### 1. Before you read – Match the word with its meaning.

- |                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. sentence (here)      | a. he found her anxiety for his safety both humorous and moving           |
| 2. was amused...concern | b. moveable objects used to separate parts of a room for privacy          |
| 3. draughty             | c. the punishment given by a judge for a crime that someone has committed |
| 4. screens              | d. strong thick cord, usually for tying things                            |
| 5. ceiling              | e. cold because currents of air were coming through the windows and doors |
| 6. rope                 | f. surface of the top part of a room                                      |
| a. he fou               |   |

#### 2. Read the first part of the extract.

She told him that many years before—perhaps a hundred years or more—the house had belonged to a judge who terrified everyone because of the severe sentences and cruelty of his trials. The landlady couldn't say what exactly was wrong with the house but there was something.

'I wouldn't stay in that house an hour, not even if you paid me,' she said. 'If you'll pardon me for saying it, I don't think it's a good idea for a young man like you to go and live there all alone. If you were my son—you'll excuse me for saying it—you wouldn't sleep there one night, not if I had to go there myself and pull the big alarm bell that's on the roof!'

Malcolmson was amused and touched by her concern. 'Don't worry about me, Mrs Witham. A man who is studying for a mathematics examination has got too much on his mind to be disturbed by mysterious "somethings". Mathematics is mysterious enough for me!'

Malcolmson went to the house with Mrs Witham, who was curious to see inside it, and after looking over the place, he decided to live in the great dining-room, which was big enough to eat and sleep in. Mrs Witham had kindly brought enough food from her kitchen to last a few days. Before leaving she said:

'This room is big and draughty. You should have one of those big screens round you bed at night. But—oh!—I would die myself if I were shut in with all kinds of "things"!' When she had gone the cleaning woman arrived. Mrs Dampster said she wasn't afraid of any 'things'.

'Things is only rats and mice and beetles,' she said, 'and creaking doors. Loot at this place—it's very old. Of course there are "things" here!'



# LESSON PLAN

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### 3. Read the second part of the extract.

**After taking a walk, Malcolmson finally sits down and starts to prepare for the mathematics examination. He makes a cup of tea and notices that the rats are making noise.**

How busy the rats were! They ran up and down behind the wall, over the ceiling and under the floor. Malcolmson smiled to himself and stimulated by the tea, decided to have a good look at the room. Taking his lamp, he went all round and admired its beauty. There were some old pictures on the walls by they were covered with thick dust. Occasionally he saw the face of a rat, its bright eyes looking from a hole or crack in the wall. His attention was caught by the rope of a great alarm bell. The rope hung down in a corner to the right of the fireplace. Sitting in a big oak chair by the fire, Malcolmson drank his last cup of tea, then returned to the table to start his work.

Suddenly he looked up. It was the hour before dawn and all was still and quiet. The rats had stopped their noise, the fire glowed a deep red. And there on the big oak chair sat an enormous rat, staring at him. He made a movement to scare it away but it didn't go. It showed its big white teeth angrily and its eyes shone cruelly in the lamplight.

4. **Do you think the enormous rat is simply a fat rat, or is it a ghostly figure that is part of the house? Is Malcolmson starting to imagine things? Why?**
5. **What do you think will happen next? Will Malcolmson be able to prepare for his exam or will he be distracted by the 'things' in the house? Will Malcolmson decide to leave the house?**

