



Quick Study Guide: **The Woman in Black**

Based on the book by Susan Hill
Adapted by Stephen Mallatratt

October 10-20, 2024 at the Sagebrush Theatre



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Introduction:

This spooky season, Western Canada Theatre presents *The Woman in Black*. Based on the 1983 gothic horror novel by Susan Hill, the play follows a lawyer and a young actor as they work together to uncover a twisted story that blurs reality and fiction. Take a step inside the haunted manor and look out for mysterious sounds, blinding fog, and the woman in black.

In this quick study guide you'll find useful background information, fun classroom activities, and discussion questions.

Have questions about booking your class to see a Western Canada Theatre production? Email us at terri@wctlive.ca

How Many Versions Are There?

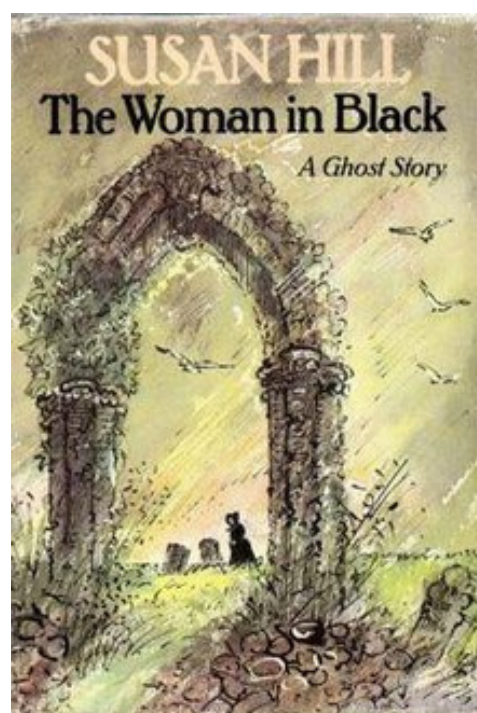
The Woman in Black is a 1983 gothic horror novel by English writer Susan Hill. This story has expanded to multiple versions, both on screen and on stage.

A television film based on the story, also called *The Woman in Black*, was produced in 1989, with a screenplay by Nigel Kneale.

In 2012, another film adaptation was released starring Daniel Radcliffe.

The book has also been adapted into a stage play by Stephen Mallatratt, which is the version Western Canada Theatre is performing! The original London production ran 13,232 performances and is the second longest-running play in the history of the West End, after *The Mousetrap*.

Fun Fact: Western Canada Theatre has already done a staged version of this story back in 1990!



About the Playwright

Stephen Mallatratt (15 June 1947, Mill Hill, London – 22 November 2004) was an English playwright, television screenwriter and actor. He is best known for his television work on the ITV series *Coronation Street*, *The Forsyte Saga* (2002) and *Island at War* (2004), and for his stage adaptation of the novel *The Woman in Black* which has run in the West End since 1989.

He was also an actor, appearing in minor roles in *Chariots of Fire* and *Brideshead Revisited*. He died of leukemia in 2004.



There's a ghost in the House: Robert Goodale as lawyer Arthur Kipps and Antony Eden as The Actor in *The Woman in Black*, on tour at the Grand Opera House, York, next month. Picture: Tristram Kenton

Cast and Crew Information

Cast:

CHARLIE GALLANT - Actor

JAMES MacDONALD - Actor

Creative Team:

KIM COLLIER - Director

KEN MacKENZIE - Set Designer

JOHN WEBBER - Lighting Designer

SABRINA STACE - Costume Designer

THOMAS RYDER PAYNE - Sound Designer

ALISON MATTHEWS - Dialect Consultant

JAN HODGSON - Stage Manager

PETER JOTKUS - Assistant Stage Manager

JONATHON YOUNG - Voice of the Priest

Synopsis

In the shadowy corridors of an old Victorian theatre, a young actor meets a haunted lawyer compelled to unravel the sinister secrets that plague his nightmares. Together, they recount the tale of a young solicitor who ventures to the eerie marshlands of the English countryside to settle the affairs of a recently deceased woman. As mysterious occurrences unfold, the line between reality and the supernatural blurs. Are these dark corridors and creaking floorboards playing tricks on their minds, or are there more sinister truths lurking in the shadows?



Julian Forsyth and Matthew Spencer in *The Woman In Black Tristram Kenton*

Classroom Activities

Haunted House:

Designate an area in the classroom to be the creepy mansion. If wanted, the students can spend time making it “creepy” (drawing pictures, moving props around, etc.). Then, you can either say prompts to the students, or write up queue cards with the prompts (such as “happy”, “scared”, “confident”). Each student will receive a prompt and enter the haunted house with that prompt as the driver. Experiment with different prompts, interacting with the set in a certain way, etc.

If the Prop Fits (Play After You’ve Seen the Show!)

The Woman in Black is filled with mysterious sounds, and sounds that become increasingly recognizable. Pick one sound that stood out to you from the show, then look around your classroom and see if anything around you can emulate that sound. Perhaps the leg of your desk makes a particular sound, or swooshing sound of your hand on the carpet. Get creative with how you use the items around you. After some time of exploring, ask if some students would like to demonstrate the sound, and have others guess what sound it is in the show.

Curriculum Connections:

Applied Design, Skills, and Technology, Arts Education, Career Education & English Language Arts.

Discussion Questions

1. What surprised you the most during the show?
2. What stage effects did the play use to bring the supernatural elements to life? What worked well/convincing you?
3. Which character did you resonate with more?
4. What makes this story so impactful? Why do you think this story has been popular for so long?
5. If you were to see this production again at WCT, what would you pay more attention to? Would seeing it a second time change your overall opinion on the show?



<https://thewomaninblack.com/about/gallery>

Works Cited

<https://thewomaninblack.com/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The Woman in Black \(play\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Woman_in_Black_(play))

<https://www.wctlive.ca/womaninblack/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The Woman in Black](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Woman_in_Black)