



Rainford High School English Department – Year 8 The Woman in Black Knowledge Organiser

Susan Hill	Context	The Narrative
<p>Novelist, children's writer and playwright Susan Hill was born in Scarborough, England, on 5 February 1942. She was educated at Scarborough Convent School and at grammar school in Coventry, before studying English at King's College, London and graduating in 1963.</p> <p>Her first novel, <i>The Enclosure</i>, was published in 1961 when she was still a student. She worked as a freelance journalist between 1963 and 1968. In 1996 she started her own publishing company, Long Barn Books. <i>The Woman in Black</i> (1983), a Victorian ghost story, was successfully adapted for stage and television and is one of Susan Hill's most commercial successes. Susan Hill is married to the Shakespeare scholar Professor Stanley Wells. She moved back to the sea, but this time to North Norfolk, in 2013.</p>	<p>Victorian Gothic - tropes included psychological and physical terror; mystery and the supernatural; madness, doubling, and heredity curses. The Victorian Gothic moves away from the familiar themes of Gothic fiction - ruined castles, helpless heroines, and evil villains - to situate the tropes of the supernatural and the uncanny within a recognisable environment.</p> <p>Motherhood – Many women in the Victorian era who had babies out of wedlock were deemed to be 'fallen women'. A 'fallen woman' was a woman who was no longer considered to be worthy of polite society. Unmarried women who became pregnant had extremely limited choices and, for many, the only possible route was to give up their child.</p>	<p><i>The Woman in Black</i> is a ghost story by Susan Hill, in which Arthur Kipps relates his haunting experiences at Eel Marsh House. The tale begins on Christmas Eve, when Arthur's step-children invite him to tell a ghost story. Arthur is too disturbed by his memories to share his story aloud, so he writes it down.</p> <p>In his story, a young Arthur Kipps, a junior solicitor, is sent to settle the affairs of Alice Drablow. He sees a woman dressed in black at her funeral, though apparently no one else does. At Eel Marsh House, a house beyond a causeway, Arthur is haunted by noises and sightings of the woman. Eventually a local man, Sam Daily, reveals the full story of the haunted house. He explains that a child dies each time the woman in black is seen: an explanation which proves to have terrible consequences.</p>
Characters	Key Vocabulary	Key Terminology
<p>Arthur Kipps – the protagonist of the novel. A successful lawyer</p> <p>The Woman in Black – a ghostly figure</p> <p>Samuel Daily – a local man who befriends Arthur</p> <p>Mr Bentley – Arthur's boss at his London law firm</p> <p>Mr Jerome – an local estate agent appointed as Arthur's guide</p> <p>Keckwick – Arthur's driver</p> <p>Stella – Arthur's fiancée</p>	<p>Pallor – an unhealthy, pale appearance</p> <p>Countenance - the appearance of emotions on a person's face</p> <p>Gothic - relating to a style of writing that describes strange or frightening events that take place in mysterious places</p> <p>Reclusive - avoiding the company of other people; solitary</p> <p>Foreboding – a feeling that something bad will happen</p> <p>Sinister – something harmful</p> <p>Morbid – an unhealthy interest in disturbing subjects</p> <p>Bleak – Miserable, hopeless</p> <p>Clangour – a continuous long banging or ringing sound</p> <p>Surreptitious – kept secret</p>	<p>Simile – Comparing two things using 'like' or 'as'. Eg. to turn cold as stone</p> <p>Metaphor: is a figure of speech that describes an object or action in a way that isn't literally true</p> <p>Pathetic fallacy: The weather reflects the mood of a character</p> <p>Imagery: visually descriptive or figurative language</p> <p>Personification: giving human feelings or actions to an inanimate object</p> <p>Foreshadowing: giving hints to what may come later in the story</p>