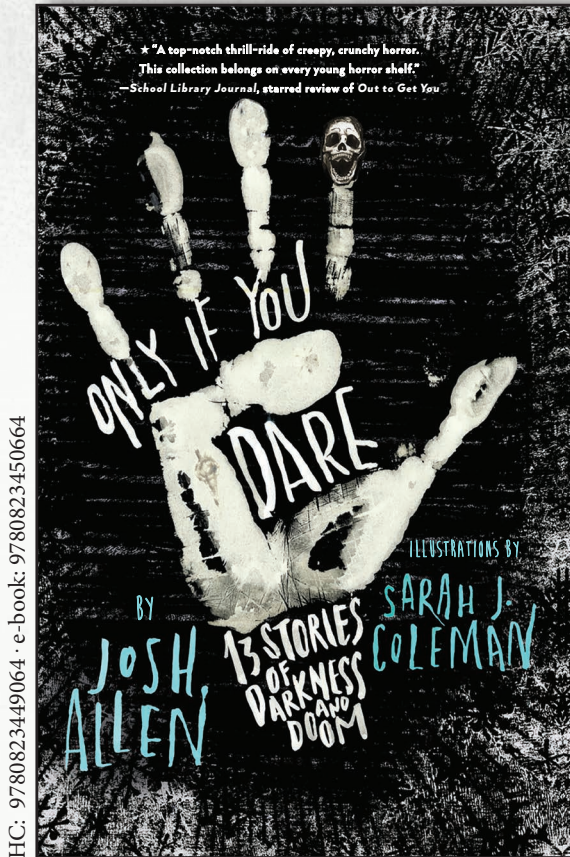


HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Only If You Dare: 13 Stories of Darkness and Doom

by Josh Allen

illustrated by Sarah J. Coleman

★ “A chilling anthology of memorable scares.”

—School Library Journal, Starred Review

ABOUT THE BOOK

Thirteen chilling short stories to keep you up at night—but only if you dare.

You never know what’s out to get you. Though you might think you’re safe from monsters and menaces, everyday objects can turn against you, too. A mysterious microwave. A

threatening board game. A snowman that refuses to melt. Even your own heartbeat has its secrets. *Thu-thump. Thu-thump.* When you stop to listen, each beat sounds more menacing than the last.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do you define horror? In what ways might horror mean different things to different people?
- What do you typically expect from horror fiction? Look at the table of contents and state a possible horror plot for each title.
- Sometimes there isn’t a lot of space to develop character in a short story. Consider each of the protagonists in the thirteen stories and discuss what you know about them. Which of these characters create horror, and which are the victims of horror? Debate whether or not there is an antagonist in each story. For example, is there a clear antagonist in “My Hand, Right There”? How might Finn Lewis be both the protagonist and the antagonist in his story?



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#OnlyIfYouDare

- How does Mr. Fernsby in “The Substitute” present himself as someone to be feared? What are some mistakes he makes that might contribute to this?
- What about the scrabble letters in “Scrabbled”?
- Explain how the cell phone in “Hi, Jenny.” creates fear.
- The doll in “One More Piece” gives Mitchell the creeps, and Jingles the Jester causes Luna nightmares in “Wake Up!” How do they attempt to deal with these eerie creatures?
- Discuss the setting of each story. In which of the stories does the setting contribute to the horror or unexplained events?
- Some of the settings aren’t unique and could take place at any home or school. What is unique about the setting of “Crazy Playz”? How does this setting help define the plot?
- Compare and contrast the role of setting in “The Snowman Who Wouldn’t Melt” and “We All Scream for Ice Cream.”
- Horror fiction startles, shocks, and sometimes repulses the reader. Which of the thirteen stories are the most startling? Discuss the ending of each story. Which is the most shocking? What is the meaning of repulsive? Debate which stories are the most repulsive. How does this add to the horror of the story?
- A cliffhanger is an abrupt ending to the story and is often used to create suspense. How do cliffhangers contribute to the experience of reading each story? In which of the stories is there a secondary character that is left puzzled by what they see?
- Which of the stories has the most gruesome ending?
- Discuss how the illustrations in the book influence the feeling one gets from reading the stories.

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE CREATORS



Josh Allen checks under his bed before switching off the light each night. During the day, he teaches creative writing and literature at Brigham Young University-Idaho. His debut book for young readers, *Out to Get You*, received two starred reviews and was a Junior Library Guild selection. His second book, *Only If You Dare*, was called “a must-buy for middle grade collections” in a starred review from *School Library Journal*. Josh lives in Idaho with his family.



Sarah J. Coleman was an early pioneer of hand lettering and has illustrated covers for many renowned books, including the 50th anniversary edition of *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Newbery Honor winner *Wolf Hollow*. Her design clients range from Coca Cola and Starbucks to *The New York Times*. Sarah is the artist of Josh Allen’s *Out to Get You* and *Only If You Dare*. Sarah lives in the UK.



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