Specific Teaching Suggestions

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"The Perfect Touch"

by Eli Glass

About the Author

Eli Glass, the pen name for Dennis L. Rhodus, was born October 21, 1946, in Ohio, and received his formal education in the Midwest and deep South. He entered college in 1964 as a liberal arts major and graduated cum laude with degrees in music and literature. While in college, a friend, hoping to win a certain lady's affection, asked Glass to pen a letter to her. Glass did so, sent it to his friend who signed it, and sent it to the lady in question. So inspired was she after reading the letter that she decided to accept the man's courtship, and finally his proposal of marriage. Because of this modest success at writing, and a strong desire to "be his own boss," Glass turned his efforts and his career to writing. Since then he has published short stories, human interest pieces, and science articles for numerous newspapers and magazines. Today, Glass makes his home in California where he has written for radio, stage, and screen.

The Original Story

The script is an adaptation of the short story of the same name. No important changes were made between the original story and the audio version. Story text is not included in these materials..

Suggested Teaching Plan

INTO, THROUGH and BEYOND THE STORY are discussed in the TEACHING STRATEGIES section.

1. Do the INTO THE STORY activities you have selected for your class.
2. Do the THROUGH THE STORY activities you have selected for your class.
3. Do the BEYOND THE STORY activity.

The Adaptation

Synopsis

David is recklessly driving his automobile, and Rob, the passenger, is concerned about his speed on the curving road. On their ride they happen upon a haunted house and decide to go in and look around. Inside, they hear a dripping sound coming from upstairs. They go upstairs and find the dripping, but, before they can investigate, they become frightened and run back to the car.

Later, while driving, Rob reveals that he is thinking of taking Susan, his girlfriend (David's former girlfriend) up to the house. She has been upset about harassing phone calls she has received from an anonymous caller. The caller refers to himself Susan's "Guardian Angel." Rob feels it is her fear that is hurting her rather than the calls. He thinks that if she experiences the haunted house she might realize her fear is laughable. Perhaps then she would no longer fear the phone calls. The boys set up the experiment.

A few nights later, Rob drives Susan up to the house. They go inside. David, who has been hiding in the back seat of the car, dresses up like a ghost. When Rob and Susan come out of the house, David frightens Susan into a trance. Remorseful, David blurts out that he has been the anonymous caller. After David leaves, Susan "comes to," revealing that she was only pretending to be in a trance. We learn that Rob and Susan had suspected David all along, and had plotted the haunted house escapade to see if they could trick David into revealing that he is the "Guardian Angel."

Discussion/Writing Activity

Refer to LITERARY TERMS section for definitions.
{W} = Writing activity ALL CAPS = Structure Item

1. Express your honest feelings about jealousy. (Begin with discussing jealousy as it appears in the story; then ask if they have ever been jealous. Ask the students the following questions.) *[Answers will vary.]*
   a. What things make you jealous?
   b. Toward whom have you been jealous? (Perhaps it might be a brother, a sister, a friend.)
   c. How do you feel when you're jealous?
   d. What do you do when you're jealous?
   e. What would be some good ways to deal constructively with jealousy?
2. Do you agree with David when, in the second scene, he says, "Look, Rob, I wouldn't lie to you; you're my buddy! Now, I might've lied to her once or twice; it's okay to lie to your girlfriend… but you never lie to your buddy. It's like this: girlfriends come and go, right? …but buddies gotta stick together."? Explain your views.
3. {W} Write about a time you were jealous. (After the students have written their stories, a few may want to share their stories aloud.)
4. {W} Write a dialogue scene between Rob and Susan as they might have planned their effort to expose David.
5. {W} Write a scene between David and Susan when Susan jilts him.
6. What is the SETTING of "The Perfect Touch"? *[The setting is the United States in the spring of 1964.]*
7. What is the CONFLICT in "The Perfect Touch"? *[Man against Man. The main conflict is between Susan and Rob on one side and David on the other.]*
8. Describe how CONFLICT develops in "The Perfect Touch." *[Susan and Rob suspect David of making frightening phone calls to Susan, and they devise a plan to get him to confess. The reader, however, is not aware of this until the end of the story. The reader is led to think that Rob and David are setting up Susan, when, in reality, it is David who is being set up. The story contains a hint that the careful reader might interpret as an indication that Rob had something up his sleeve. Almost at the beginning, David says, "And you think I'm weird. Here you are, you keep telling me you don't know where we are or where we're going, but you keep giving me directions how to get there. If I didn't know better, I'd swear that you were…" Then Rob interrupts. If David had continued, he may well have said, "If I didn't know better I'd swear that you were deviously planning all this."]*
9. What is the THEME in "The Perfect Touch"? *[Vengeance can work both ways. If one tries to "get back" at someone, the results can backfire.]* (Tell the students of the ancient Chinese wisdom which warns, "A man who sets out for revenge must first dig two graves: one of them for himself." Ask students to interpret this dictum.)
10. There is an instance of foreshadowing in the first scene. Identify the instance and discuss your reasons for identifying it as foreshadowing. *[When David becomes suspicious about why Rob is giving him directions, David says "Here you are, you keep telling me you don't know where we are or where*

we're going, but you keep giving me directions how to get there. If I didn't know better, I'd swear that you were…" Rob interrupts before David can finish his statement. After we discover that the whole thing was set up by Rob and Susan, we realize that Rob was actually giving directions so that they would find the old house. We assume David was going to say something like, "…planning something and know exactly where we are and where we are going."]

Visualization

1. Draw the "haunted house."
2. Draw David with the flashlight shining up across his face.
3. Draw Susan, when she sees David with his face lit by a flashlight.
4. Draw something from your favorite scene.

BEYOND THE STORY

{W} As stated in the narrator's first sentence, "The Perfect Touch" was based upon a true incident which happened in the author's life. The author was David in the story, and the author learned an important lesson from this firsthand experience. Some of the most important values by which a person lives are learned from firsthand experiences. Think of an incident in your life that taught you a valuable lesson and write the story. You might consider changing the names of the characters and writing the story in third person; this way only *you* will know *your* identity in the story. (This activity could be used either as a writing assignment or as a classroom discussion activity.)

ANSWER KEYS

"The Perfect Touch"

Key To Cloze Activity

(1) *recklessly*	(6) *investigate*	(11) *weird*	(16) *frightens*
(2) *passenger*	(7) *driving*	(12) *phone calls*	(17) *phone caller*
(3) *curving*	(8) *upset*	(13) *house*	(18) *leaves*
(4) *haunted*	(9) *Angel*	(14) *hiding*	(19) *trance*
(5) *dripping*	(10) *fear*	(15) *ghost*	(20) *trick*

Key To Sequence Activity

13, 10, 17, 7, 6, 1, 5, 15, 4, 3, 14, 12, 16, 8, 2, 9, 11

Key To Listening Skills Activity

1. *[April]*	5. *[Fearless Leader]*	8. *[Echo Canyon]*
2. *[huge]*	6. *[nervous rash]*	9. *[carquake]*
3. *[puddle]*	7. *[over a month ago]*	10. *[20 miles]*
4. *[picture of courage]*		

Key To Comprehension Activity

1. Why is Rob frightened of David's driving? *[He is driving too fast.]*
2. Where is the haunted house located? *[It is in the trees on a hill.]*
3. What do the boys hear when they enter the house? *[They heard a dripping sound.]*
4. Why have Susan's grades been falling? *[She has been frightened by an anonymous caller.]*
5. Why do the boys decide to bring Susan to the house? *[Perhaps she will discover that she can just laugh at her fear.]*
6. When Rob drives Susan to the house, where is David? *[He is hiding in the back seat.]*
7. What does David do at the haunted house that finally frightens Susan into a trance? *[He shines a flashlight up across his face.]*
8. Why did Susan and Rob trick David? *[They suspected, and wanted to prove that David had been making the phone calls.]*
9. Why had David been calling Susan? *[He was jealous because she had jilted him.]*
10. How does Rob get David to come to the haunted house? *[Rob makes David believe that he is taking Susan up to the house to cure her of her fears.]*

Key To Vocabulary Activity Sheet 1

12, 9, 6, 17, 7, 14, 2, 16, 4, 11, 13, 3, 8, 5, 10, 15, 1

Key To Vocabulary Activity Sheet 2

6, 10, 8, 11, 7, 12, 1, 3, 4, 2, 9, 5

Key To Vocabulary Activity Sheet 3

13, 8, 11, 2, 6, 14, 7, 5, 12, 1, 9, 3, 10, 4

Key To Vocabulary Activity Sheet 4

16, 10, 11, 4, 8, 6, 13, 1, 2, 17, 7, 12, 19, 3, 18, 9, 20, 14, 15, 5

Discussion/Writing Activity

[Answers are with the questions in the Specific Teaching Suggestions.]

Key to Crossword Puzzle

ACROSS

1. VENTURE
5. FIDELITY
7. SH
8. CAR
10. KO
12. MYSTERY
13. SUE
15. US
16. FICTION
18. GHOSTS
19. WALK
21. AY
22. ED
24. NA
26. DAVID
27. PREDICTABLE
30. DRIPPING
31. CLOSET

DOWN

2. ECHO
3. TRAP
4. ROB
6. DICTATED
7. SKELETON
9. ANGEL
11. MUSTY
13. SUSAN
14. CHICKEN
17. NW
20. ATTIC
22. EVIL
23. STAIRS
25. APRIL
28. KID
29. MAP