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Books to Banish the Boggarts

By Nancy Alder
Parent

Ahh!—the halcyon days of childhood! The nights, however, could be another thing entirely. Didn't we all have to fend off the scary things that went *bump* in the night? At age four, my best friend Judy Upright and I did almost every night. J.K. Rowling clearly did. I recognized the wretched critter at once when Rowling described a Boggart in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. “[A] Boggart likes dark, enclosed spaces: wardrobes, the gap beneath beds, the cupboards under sinks . . . It's a shape-shifter. It can take the shape of whatever it thinks will frighten us most.” So exactly right! I know the creepy thing hiding in Judy Upright's closet was very different from the beastly thing that waited beneath my bed, ready to snap up an unwary toe, but both were ghastly creatures. If I'd only known then what I know now. Rowling provided the secret to a Boggart-free bedtime. “The thing that really finishes a Boggart is laughter. You force it to assume a shape you find amusing.” You must also shout, “Riddikulus!” when you see it, and it helps if you have a magic wand.

While this magical method may not always be feasible, the old, tried and true remedies from my childhood still work just as well today. All children have easy access to them. Just the right story succeeded in keeping the Boggarts at bay years ago, and it will do the trick today. Different types of stories work for different types of Boggarts. You're bound to find just the right one if you try some of these bedtime treats. Find the right story and your children will say along with the little badger in *Bedtime for Frances*, “It's just his job to try to scare me. Let him do his job and I'll just go ahead to sleep.”

A nice way to ease into sleep is with a gentle, repetitious, nightly ritual, like reading long-time favorite *Goodnight Moon*. Saying goodnight to each and every thing in turn puts a period to the bustle of the day. Even more appealing than *Goodnight Moon*, but similar, is *Wild Child*, with its great blend of soothing illustrations and alliteration. Add a kiss and it's

off to dreamland. Another nice countdown to sleep is *So Many Bunnies*. Each of Old Mrs. Rabbit's twenty-six babies is lovingly put to sleep (in alphabetical order, no less) in this sweet and soothing tale. *Sleepy Bears* rhymes nicely and has a simple, gentle storyline to soothe the little ones down for sleep; *Time for Bed* also inspires sweet dreams.

What Happens at Night is a novelty board book with a nice story. A gently glowing crescent moon lights up as you turn the pages and read of a cast of woodland creatures as they snuggle down to sleep in their respective homes. It ends sweetly in a child's “natural habitat” with a poem from Psalm 91:

What happens at night
When you turn out the light?
God's angels stay close
By your bed out of sight.

Now, what can spook you with an assurance like that?

Do your kids like a more rollicking send off? Try reading *Mortimer* together; there's a kid that's hard on everybody's bedtime! Sing out together on the “bing bang rattle bing bang.” Choose a book where you and the kids can join in on a refrain or sound effects, as with *Fifty Below Zero*. Another option is to say goodnight in different animal voices and snore along with *Goodnight Gorilla*.

The secret is that regardless of the book you choose, it is the sharing and the snuggling that keep the Boggarts away. Give the kids a story and a kiss, share a yawn (they're infectious, you know), and it will be sweet dreams for one and all.

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- Don't use this one for a bedtime story—it's way too much of a page-turner. You and your kids will be up all night waiting to hit a place where you can stop reading.
- Walton, Rick. *So Many Bunnies: A Bedtime ABC and Counting Book*. Morrow, 1998.



Submitted by Sarah Olson

Cinderella
Folktale Versions

Daly, Jude. *Fair, Brown, & Trembling: An Irish Cinderella Story*. Illustrated by Jude Daly. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000. ISBN 0-374-32247-3. 32 pp. **Grades 3-5.**

Goode, Diane. *Cinderella: The Dog and Her Little Glass Slipper*. Illustrated by Diane Goode. Blue Sky Press, 2000. ISBN 0-439-07166-6. 40 pp. **Grades 2-5.**

Here are two more books to add to the growing canon of delightful versions of the Cinderella story. Both books have impressive illustrations, though significantly different styles. *Fair, Brown, & Trembling* glows with the deep emeralds of Ireland. The characters, though human, are more mythical than realistic.

On the other hand, while *Cinderella: The Dog and Her Little Glass Slipper* pays reasonably close attention to detail, the characters aren't human at all—they're canine. The prince, his court, and Cinderella herself live in a world of clothing, architecture, and landscape that is triumphantly pastel. Pinks, lavenders, light greens, and blues mark the height of fashion and dogged royalty.

These two books are lovely examples of how the same folktale can be adapted and modified to reflect culture, author/illustrator preferences, and even species.