Task 1: Read about the elements of horror below. As you read, think about where you may have experienced these elements. It could be from a movie, a book, a comic book, or maybe even an experience in real life. Complete the activity after reading.

**TEN ELEMENTS OF HORROR**

Good horror stories may involve some or all of the elements below. Different writers (with different target audiences) may emphasize one element more than others.

1. When the things in which we ground ourselves are absent, we are horrified. When we cannot even put a name to something, that’s even more horrifying. Horror plays on humans’ fear of the UNKNOWN.

2. We expect the world to run a certain way. When it doesn’t do that, when something terrible suddenly happens, we are shocked. Horror plays on humans’ fear of the UNEXPECTED.

3. When nature runs amok, you are in trouble. Good horror plays on the UNNATURAL: monsters destroying cities, zombies rising from the dead, worldwide plagues wiping out most of civilization, killer frogs…whatever.

4. Horror plays on themes of HELPLESSNESS OR ISOLATION: when you’re the only one left or one of only a handful of people coping with whatever the threat is, the odds are against you. You can’t call for help so must face every dark room, every monster lurking around the corner, all by yourself. There may be someone watching your back, but not because it’s protecting you.

5. In contrast with helplessness, horror also creates URGENCY. Characters must not simply react, but act. They most often charge headlong into conflict with the unknown, the unexpected, or the unnatural because everyone else is counting on them. They must knowingly put themselves in peril and risk all.

6. Horror may also deal with the UNCONSCIOUS fears or dark impulses that drive people to do things even against their own wills. This may be what Poe is talking about when he describes the Imp of the Perverse. We fear ourselves and what we are capable of under its influence or the influence of our subconscious or unconscious minds.

7. Another hallmark of horror is INTENSITY. All emotions are stronger and perhaps experienced with less caution. In horror stories people hate beyond reason or fall in love even in the face of death. A good writer manipulates conflict, pacing, characterization, and all the above-mentioned aspects of horror to create intense reactions in the reader as well as the characters. As the reader’s anxiety builds, the intensity with which s/he experiences the shock of the unexpected (for example, a sudden attack when the protagonist finally thinks he is safe) is that much greater.

8. Many horror stories include a certain amount of CLUELESSNESS. Characters do all the things you know they shouldn’t…go down the basement stairs to find the fuse box when the lights go out, reach their hands under the bed in the dark, enter the haunted house alone instead of waiting for help. Sometimes it is because they must, but other times because they don’t know any better (though you do because as the reader, you already know what is waiting for them).
9. OUR PRIMAL FEARS drive a lot of horror. Fear of the dark, fear of death, fear of being alone, fear of pain…if you are afraid of something, you can be sure someone has written a story about it. And if you read that story, it’s going to scare you. That’s because all good writers, but especially good horror writers, tap into our shared experiences to craft a story that will reach us on an emotional level.

10. The setting is usually FORBIDDING. Most horror stories don’t take place on a sunny spring day (though they may start that way). The setting is often dark, sometimes desolate, perhaps even destroyed. The author crafts the setting to heighten the story’s intensity and keep the reader off balance.

After reading task:

Which of the above elements of horror do you find most scary? Explain why.

Task 2: Read the following excerpt from chapter 3 of Stephen King’s It. As you read, identify the elements of horror present in the text.

Now here he was, chasing his boat down the left side of Witcham Street. He was running fast but the water was running faster and his boat was pulling ahead. He heard a deepening roar and saw that 50 yards farther down the hill the water in the gutter was cascading into a storm drain that was still open, there was a long dark semi circle cut into the curbing, and as George watched, a stripped branch, its bark as dark and glistening as sealskin, shot into the storm dragon’s maw. It hung up there for a moment and then slipped down inside. That was where his boat was headed.

“Oh crap!” he yelled, dismayed.

He put on speed, and for a moment he thought he would catch the boat. Then one of his feet slipped and he went sprawling, skinning one knee and crying out in pain. From his new pavement-level perspective he watched his boat swing around twice, momentarily caught in another whirlpool, and then disappear.

“Crap!” he yelled again, and slammed his fist down on the pavement. That hurt too, and he began to cry a little. What a stupid way to lose the boat! He got up and walked over to the storm drain. He dropped to his knees and peered in. The water made a dank hollow sound as it fell into the darkness. It was a spooky sound. It reminded him of-“Huh!” The sound was jerked out of him as if on a string, and he recoiled.
There were yellow eyes in there: the sort of eyes he had always imagined but never actually seen down in the basement. It's an animal, he thought incoherently, that's all it is, some animal, maybe a housecat that got stuck down in there- Still, he was ready to run-would run in a second or two, when his mental switchboard had dealt with the shock those two shiny yellow eyes had given him. He felt the rough surface of the macadam under his fingers, and the thin sheet of cold water flowing around them. He saw himself getting up and backing away, and that was when a voice-a perfectly reasonable and rather pleasant voice-spoke to him from inside the storm drain. **How would seeing yellow eyes make you feel? Do you fear the unknown?**

"Hi, Georgie," it said.

George blinked and looked again. He could barely credit what he saw; it was like something from a made-up story, or a movie where you know the animals will talk and dance. If he had been 10 years older, he would not have believed what he was seeing, but he was not 16. He was 6.

There was a clown in the storm drain. The light in there was far from good, but it was good enough so that George Denbrough was sure of what he was seeing. It was a clown, like in the circus or on TV. In fact he looked like a cross between Bozo and Clarabell, who talked by honking his horn on Howdy Doody Saturday mornings-Buffalo Bob was just about the only one who could understand Clarabell, & that always cracked George up. The face of the clown in the storm drain was white, there were funny tufts of red hair on either side of his bald head, & there was a big clown -smile painted over his mouth. If George had been inhabiting a later year, he would have surely thought of Ronald McDonald before Bozo or Clarabell.

The clown held a bunch of balloons, all colors, like gorgeous ripe fruit in one hand. In the other he held George's newspaper boat.

"Want your boat, Georgie?" The clown smiled.

George smiled back. He couldn't help it; it was the kind of smile you just had to answer. "I sure do," he said.

The clown laughed. "I sure do." That's good! That's very good! and how about a balloon?"

"Well... sure!" He reached forward... and then drew his hand reluctantly back. "I'm not supposed to take stuff from strangers. My dad said so."

"Very wise of your dad," the clown in the storm drain said, smiling. How, George wondered, could I have thought his eyes were yellow? They were a bright, dancing blue, the color of his mom's eyes, and Bill's.

"Very wise indeed. Therefore I will introduce myself. I, Georgie, am Mr Bob Gray, also known as Pennywise the Dancing Clown. Pennywise, meet George Denbrough. George, meet
Pennywise. And now we know each other. I'm not a stranger to you, and you're not a stranger to me. Kee-rect?"

16 George giggled. "I guess so." He reached forward again... and drew his hand back again. "How did you get down there?"

17 "Storm just blew me away," Pennywise the Dancing Clown said. "It blew the whole circus away. Can you smell the circus, Georgie?" **Think about how Pennywise tries to appear; what element of horror is used here? Hint-do you feel sad for Pennywise?**

18 George leaned forward. Suddenly he could smell peanuts! Hot roasted peanuts! and vinegar! The frying doughboys and the faint but thunderous odor of wild-animal poop. He could smell the cheery aroma of midway sawdust and yet...

19 And yet under it all was the smell of flood & decomposing leaves & dark storm drain shadows. That smell was wet & rotten. The cellar-smell.

20 But the other smells were stronger.

21 "You bet I can smell it," he said.

22 "Want your boat, Georgie?" Pennywise asked. "I only repeat myself because you really do not seem that eager." He held it up, smiling. He was wearing a baggy silk suit with great big orange buttons. A bright tie, electric-blue, flopped down his front, and on his hands were big white gloves, like the kind Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck always wore.

23 "Yes, sure," George said, looking into the storm drain.

24 "and a balloon? I've got red & green & yellow & blue..."

25 "Do they float?"

26 "Float?" The clown's grin widened. "Oh yes, indeed they do. They float! and there's cotton candy..."

27 George reached.

28 The clown seized his arm.

29 and George saw the clown's face change.

30 What he saw then was terrible enough to make his worst imaginings of the thing in the cellar loot like sweet dreams; what he saw destroyed his sanity in one clawing stroke. **Think about how Georgie describes the clown's face in paragraph 14 having “dancing blue eyes, like his mom” Hint-is it natural for someone to change so quickly??**
31 "They float," the thing in the drain crooned in a clotted, chuckling voice. It held George's arm in its thick and wormy grip, it pulled George toward that terrible darkness where the water rushed and roared and bellowed as it bore its cargo of storm debris toward the sea. George craned his neck away from that final blackness and began to scream into the rain, to scream mindlessly into the white autumn sky which curved above Derry on that day in the fall of 1957. His screams were shrill and piercing, and all up and down Witcham Street people came to their windows or boiled out onto their porches. **Think about which element of horror fits here?** **Hint—would you be scared? Would you fear what is going to happen next?**

32 "They float," it growled, "they float, Georgie, and when you're down here with me, you'll float, too-" **Think about which element of horror is used here.** **Hint—does it seem dark or evil?**

33 George's shoulder socked against the cement of the curb and Dave Gardener, who had stayed home from his job at The Showboat that day because of the flood, saw only a small boy in a yellow rain-slicker, a small boy who was screaming and writhing in the gutter with muddy water surfing over his face and making his screams sound bubbly. **Think about which element of horror is being used here? Hint: Are you on the edge of your seat?**

34 "Everything down here floats," that chuckling, rotten voice whispered, and suddenly there was a ripping noise and a flaring sheet of agony, and George Denbrough was dead.

35 Dave Gardener was the first to get there, and although he arrived only 45 seconds after the first slicker, pulled him into the street... and began to scream himself as George's body turned over in his hands. The left side of George's slicker was now bright red. Blood flowed into the storm drain from the tattered hole where the left arm had been. A knob of bone, horribly bright, peeked through the torn cloth. **Think about which element of horror is used here? Hint: Has Georgie ventured to the other side?**

36 The boy's eyes stared up into the white sky, and as Dave staggered away toward the others already running pell-mell down the street, they began to fill up with rain.

Task 2a: Use the excerpt to identify important character traits.

*Remember that characteristics are traits of a character's personality. An author uses what a character says, does, looks like, and thinks to reveal aspects of their personality.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Key characteristics of the character</th>
<th>Text support for those characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In paragraph 13 what character trait shows what kind of child Georgie is?</td>
<td>What evidence from the paragraph states this?</td>
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</table>
In paragraphs 28-31 what character trait is shown here about Pennywise the clown?  
What evidence supports this trait?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgie</th>
<th>Clown</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In paragraphs 28-31 what character trait is shown here about Pennywise the clown?</td>
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</table>

**Task 2b:** How does Stephen King use the setting to add to the horror? Reference the 10 elements of horror on pages 1 and 2 in your explanation. The first two have clues to guide you but you must complete 3 on your own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example from the setting</th>
<th>How does it add to the horror? How does it relate to the 10 elements of horror?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) “The clown seized his arm and George saw the clowns face change”</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>The author describes Georgies gut wrenching sounds when he is in the drain. This adds the element of Intensity to the story by giving us a vivid image in our minds of what Georgie is experiencing.</td>
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<td>(3)</td>
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**Task 2c:** Identify examples of Horror Story Elements present in the excerpt using the chart below. When doing so consider the characters, tone, imagery, and any other story elements you come across.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suspense</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dark Subject Matter (Evil, scary)</td>
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<td>----------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helplessness and Isolation (feeling alone)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elements of the Supernatural (ghosts and spirits)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surprising Events</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td></td>
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Task 3: Write a 20 word GIST summary: GIST is a short summary that just gives the main information of the text. No Fluff/extra unnecessary details). Each word of your summary must go on one line. You cannot go over 20 words.

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