

# Ghosts

In traditional belief and fiction, a ghost (spectre, phantom, apparition, spook) is the soul or spirit of a dead person or animal that can appear, in visible form or other manifestation, to the living. Descriptions of ghosts vary widely from an invisible presence to translucent or barely visible wispy shapes, to realistic, lifelike visions. The deliberate attempt to contact the spirit of a deceased person is known as necromancy, or in spiritism as a séance.

The belief in ghosts is widespread, dating back to animism or ancestor worship in prehistoric cultures. Certain religious practices—funeral rites, exorcisms, and some practices of spiritualism and ritual magic—are specifically designed to rest the spirits of the dead. Ghosts are generally believed to be souls that have been unable/unwilling to go to their final resting place.

In our own culture, that has led to an entire genre of media presentations, much to the delight of many. Popularized in such films as the 1984 comedy *Ghostbusters*, ghost hunting became a hobby for many who formed ghost hunting societies to explore reportedly haunted places. The ghost hunting theme has been featured in reality television series, such as *Ghost Adventures*, *Ghost Hunters*, *Ghost Hunters International*, *Ghost Lab*, *Most Haunted* and *A Haunting*. It is also represented in children's television by such programs as *The Ghost Hunter* and *Ghost Trackers*. Ghost hunting also gave rise to multiple guidebooks to haunted locations, and ghost hunting "how-to" manuals. The 1990s saw a return to classic "gothic" ghosts, whose dangers were more psychological than physical. Examples of films from this period include 1999's *The Sixth Sense* and *The Others*.

And then along comes Science and ruins everything. According to research in anomalistic psychology visions of ghosts may arise from hypnagogic hallucinations ("waking dreams" which are experienced in the transitional states to and from sleep). In a study of two experiments into alleged hauntings (Wiseman et al. 2003) came to the conclusion "that people consistently report unusual experiences in 'haunted' areas because of environmental factors, which may differ across locations." Some of these factors included "the variance of local magnetic fields, size of location and lighting level stimuli of which witnesses may not be consciously aware".

Some researchers, such as Michael Persinger of Laurentian University, Canada, have speculated that changes in geomagnetic fields (created, e.g., by tectonic stresses in the Earth's crust or solar activity) could stimulate the brain's temporal lobes and produce many of the experiences associated with hauntings.

Sound is thought to be another cause of supposed sightings. Richard Lord and Richard Wiseman have concluded that infrasound can cause humans to experience bizarre feelings in a room, such as anxiety, extreme sorrow, a feeling of being watched, or even the chills. Carbon monoxide poisoning, which can cause changes in perception of the visual and auditory systems, was speculated upon as a possible explanation for haunted houses as early as 1921. ...How's that for killing romanticism! [<http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost>]

Cheryl Crill, CA, had 32 different Ghost covers as of October 2013.

