

Visual Text 2015

Planning Your Answer

The Question

In your opinion, how effectively do the book covers illustrate what Joanna Briscoe has to say about ghost writing in the written text above? Support your answer by detailed reference to both of the book covers and the written text.



Joanna
Briscoe
touched

'Grippingly pleasurable...
sensuously hypnotic'

Observer

THE
RANDOM HOUSE
BOOK OF
GHOST
STORIES

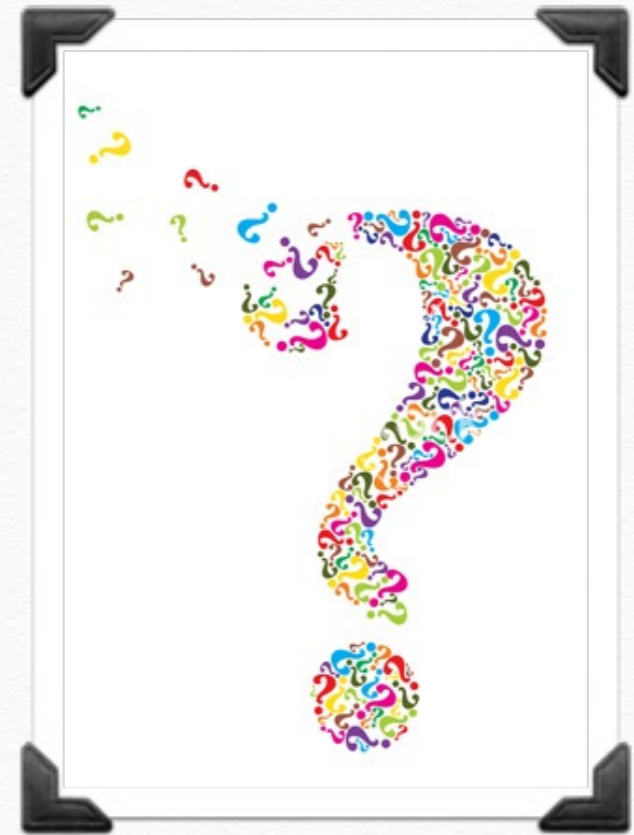
EDITED BY
SUSAN HILL
ILLUSTRATED BY
ANGELA BARRETT

Points to note

- ❖ You must discuss both book covers.
- ❖ Every point you make must contain a link between the visual and the written text.
- ❖ You are free to discuss the font, quotations etc. as well as the visual images.
- ❖ The words 'how effectively' mean you must say to what extent you think the covers do / do not illustrate the points Briscoe makes.
- ❖ You must have a short list of the points Briscoe makes about ghost literature but you do not have to discuss all of them, of course.

How to quickly summarise points made

- ❖ It is a good idea to do this as you read the piece the first time. It keeps you focused and is a quick reference point when answering questions.
- ❖ The first and/or last sentences of paragraphs generally contain the topic sentence
- ❖ You will quickly see that Briscoe's writing is clearly structured so it is easy to pick out the main point in each paragraph. Look for a couple of key words you can jot down to act as a trigger to your memory



Briscoe's points

- ❖ Ghosts should not be visible, at least not in any straightforward way
- ❖ Dahl: best ghost stories don't have ghosts in them / Hill: less is always more
- ❖ Brightness = unease: perfection can be eerie; power lies in terrors glimpsed or imagined

- ❖ Writer can only keep reader in state of tension for so long
- ❖ Ghost writing involves blurring between reality and madness; real chaos lies where no-one is looking
- ❖ Tie up narrative strands at the end to satisfy readers but leave them uneasy
- ❖ Writers can play with conventions of traditional ghost stories

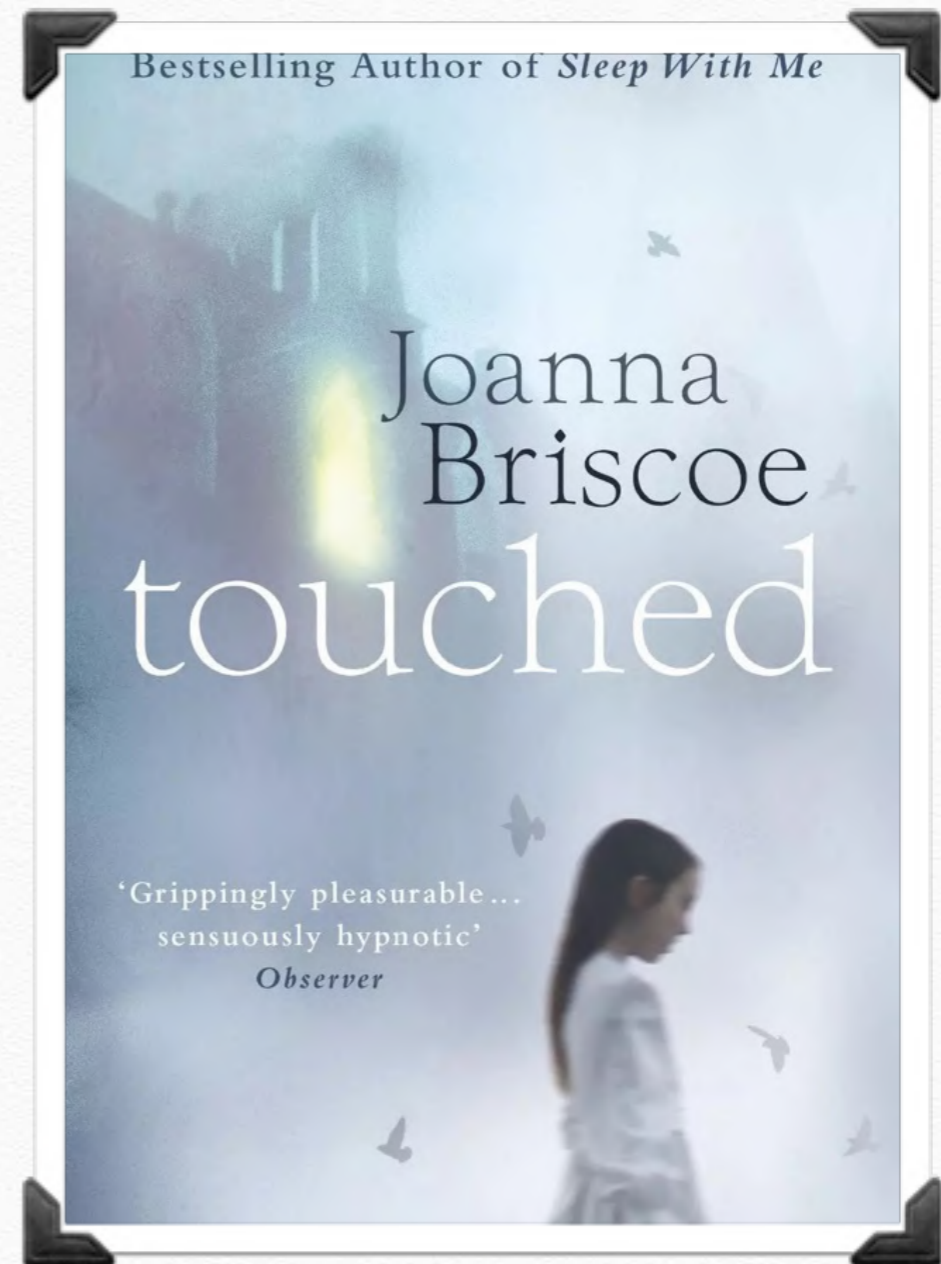
- ❖ We are used to extreme horror yet desire less definable hauntings: gothic, vampires, ghosts
- ❖ Atmosphere is key: a place where anything could happen

Analysing the Visual Text

- ❖ Refer back to my slides on analysing visual texts before you begin
- ❖ Look at each cover in turn under the following headings (you do not need to use all of them but bear them in mind):
composition, lighting, colour, posture/
body language, clothing/props, font,
quotations

Cover 1

- ❖ Blues/whites/bright - unusual choices but link to what Briscoe says about the less obvious and using brightness to evoke unease
- ❖ Figure of girl is old fashioned; head bowed in sorrow? Blend of innocence and sadness; seems ethereal - links to Briscoe's 'blurring between reality and madness'



- ❖ Font is simple and elegant rather than gothic and creepy - links to Briscoe's preference for 'less obvious' and claim that 'perfection can be eerie'
- ❖ Comment from reviewer: gripping, hypnotic and sensuous - links to Briscoe's emphasis on atmosphere

Cover 2

- ❖ Different view
- ❖ Harks back to earlier examples of genre: colours are predictably gothic and spooky
- ❖ Figures are stereotypical: don't fit in with claim that 'best ghost stories don't have ghosts in them'
- ❖ No hint of 'terrors glimpsed in the cracks'

