

R. L. Stine

American novelist

Date of birth: October 8, 1943

Place of birth: Columbus, Ohio

Also known as: Robert Lawrence Stine

Education: Ohio State University

Significance: R. L. Stine is a writer of children and adult novels. His Goosebumps and Fear Street series made him the bestselling author in the United States during the 1990s.

Background

Robert Lawrence Stine was born on October 8, 1943, in Columbus, Ohio. The oldest of three children of Lewis Stine, a shipping clerk, and Anne Stine, a homemaker, Stine grew up in Bexley, Ohio, where he attended Cassingham Elementary School and Bexley High School. An avid reader from childhood on, his reading tastes included comic books, humor, horror and suspense, and science fiction, especially by his favorite author, Ray Bradbury. At nine, he found an old typewriter in his attic and started typing joke books and humor magazines with titles such as *From Here to Insanity* and *HAH, for Maniacs Only!* He also played the clarinet and was in the school chorus, but writing was his passion. For his bat mitzvah at thirteen, he received a new typewriter. During high school, he continued to write stories, wrote the screen play for his senior class skit, and wrote for the school's newspaper. After his family purchased a television, he became a fan of science-fiction horror shows such as *The Twilight Zone*.

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Stine graduated from high school in 1961. He studied English at Ohio State University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1965. During his first year of college, he was a contributor to the university's literary magazine, *Sundial*. The next year he became its editor, a position he held for three years. After graduating from college, Stine briefly worked as a substitute teacher at a middle school before moving to New York City.

Writing Career

In New York, Stine worked a series of writing jobs—including writing classified ads and fictitious interviews of celebrities for entertainment magazines—before being hired by Scholastic Books for an editorial position in 1968. Three years later, he was made the editor and chief writer of *Bananas*, a humorous magazine for teens. Writing under the pseudonym Jovial Bob Stine, he wrote jokes, articles about celebrities, and special interest features such as “Teenage Hall of Shame” and “Weird Unsolved Mysteries.” In the late 1970s, he began writing humorous books for the same audience. Titles included *How to Be Funny: An Extra-Silly Guidebook* (1978) and *101 Silly Monster Jokes* (1986).

After *Bananas* ceased publication in 1984, Stine left Scholastic. Two years later, he published a scary novel for teens, *Blind Date* (1986). It became a bestseller, and Stine followed it with the first in the Fear Street series for young teens, *The New Girl* (1989). Set in the fictional city of Shadyside, the horror novels tell stories of ordinary teens and the frightening encounters in their lives: from scary phone calls to strangers lurking in the woods to a deadly game of Truth or Dare. Between 1989 and 1997, Stine wrote fifty-one novels in this series. The series was hugely popular and many of its novels topped the bestseller lists in the 1990s. He revived the series in 2014, with the title *Party Games* (2014).

In 1992, Stine began the Goosebumps series for younger readers, between the ages of eight and eleven. Over the next five years, he published sixty-two books in the series, with titles such as *Welcome to Dead House* (1992), *It Came from Beneath the Sink* (1996), and *One Day at Horrorland* (1996). They were even more popular than the Fear Street novels and made Stine the best-selling US author for several years in the 1990s and the highest-selling children's author of all time. His books sold around the world and earned him international acclaim. He added several spinoffs. The Give Yourself Goosebumps series (1995) was a scary create-your-own-adventure series. The Nightmare Room series (2000) was inspired by *The Twilight Zone*. In 2016, he started the Goosebumps SlappyWorld series. Other series include Mostly Ghostly (2004), Rotten School (2005), Goosebumps Horrorland (2008), and Goosebumps Most Wanted (2012).

The Goosebumps series inspired a children's television show, *Goosebumps*, which ran from 1995 to 1998, and two Goosebumps movies: *The Goosebumps Movie* (2015) and *Goosebumps 2: Haunted Halloween* (2018). The Nightmare Room series inspired a television series with the same name that ran from 2001 to 2002. Several short stories were used as the basis for the television series *The Haunting Hour*, which ran from 2010 to 2014, while both novels and short stories were adapted for videos and television movies.

Stine also wrote short stories, a few adult horror novels, an autobiography for children, and a book for infants. Adult novels include *Superstitious* (1995), *The Sitter* (2003), *Eye Candy* (2004), and *Red Rain* (2012). His picture books include *Little Shop of Monsters* (2015) and *Mary McScary* (2018). His autobiography, *It Came from Ohio!: My Life as a Writer* (1997), was cowritten with Joe Arthur.

Impact

Stine's children's novels were staples to children growing up in the 1990s and early 2000s. They remain popular with a new generation of readers, with over 400 million copies of his novels—translated into thirty-five languages—sold by the end of the 2010s. Episodes of his *Goosebumps* show are available on Netflix. Stine also endowed a scholarship for aspiring fiction writers at his alma mater, Ohio State University, between 2016 and 2019.

Personal Life

Stine and Jane Waldhorn, a writer and editor who later became Stine's publisher, married in 1969. They have one child, Matthew, and live in New York City. Stine's personal interests include radio, mysteries and thrillers, football, and Sunday-night television series.

Principal Works

Fear Street series, 1989–97, 2014–

Goosebumps series, 1992–97

Give Yourself Goosebumps series, 1995–2000

Goosebumps SlappyWorld series, 2016–

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