



**Title:** The Pied Pipers  
**Author:** John Newman  
**Genre:** Horror/Fantasy

**Locale:** England  
**Pages:** 120  
**Period:** WWII

## Logline:

During the London Blitz, a group of children are relocated to a haunted countryside estate where an evil witch preys upon the young.

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>
<b>Concept:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Story:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Characters:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Recommendation for Adaptation:

- Strongly Consider
- Consider
- Needs Improvement

### Best Medium for Adaptation:

- Motion Picture
- Television Series
- Live Theater

## Brief Summary:

During the London Blitz, Sarah and Durley's mother sends them to the English countryside where they will be safer. They arrive at the Windsor's estate and are immediately engulfed by a feeling of dread. Their fears are realized when the twins who were transported with them disappear and later are found dead. The two make friends with Dorlock, who lives on the estate. Sarah and Durley discover a witch has lived on the grounds of the estate for years. During that time she has terrorized the Windsors and Dorlock. The witch has killed many of the children who visit the estate. Sarah, Durley and Dorlock hatch a plan to kill the witch. The crone takes Durley prisoner but Sarah and Dorlock save him. By their actions, Sarah and Durley make the estate safe for the generations of children who will visit it in the coming years.

## Synopsis:

A night during the London Blitz. MRS. HUDSON tries to calm her children, SARAH and DURLEY. The three huddle in the London Underground where a terrified crowd has gathered for safety from the hail of German bombs. Looking around them, the children



see scattered body parts and tearful, frightened faces. The subterranean tunnel is filled with a wretched stench. Mrs. Hudson looks down at her children. She realizes that, for their safety, she must send them away from London. Mrs. Hudson tells Sarah and Durley how much she loves them. Their mother then sends the children to the countryside, but lets them know she will talk with them soon.

Sarah and Durley sit on the train and contemplate what has happened. Durley thinks about his best friend. They were playing when the air raid sirens blew and the bombs began to fall. Durley witnessed the death of his friend. Sarah pulls Durley's mind away from that tragic event and the terrifying thoughts his memories engender. She tells him to be brave.

They arrive at the Windsor estate. The owner of the estate, MR. WINDSOR, introduces himself. Sarah makes sure that she and Durley remain together. Mr. Windsor takes the children inside and introduces them to MRS. WINDSOR. They tell the children what will be expected of them and where they will be living. The couple issues a stern warning not to venture into the woodlands. Mr. Windsor tells the children that he and his wife will always know where their charges are. The siblings exchange a glance and chills run down their spines.

Sarah and Durley go outside where they see a group of children. Durley is frightened by his surroundings. Sarah tries to calm him to no avail. Twin girls, MILLIE and MOLLY, look apprehensively at Sarah and Durley from afar. A boy, PETER, approaches the newcomers. He introduces himself to Sarah and Durley. The three quickly become friends.

A few days pass. The children help around the house, in the gardens and in the stables. Every morning Mr. Windsor wakes up the children by running drills to help his charges learn to get to the air raid shelter quickly. Some of the boys and girls consider the drills fun; others are terrified. Peter worries about his parents but receives news from London that they are still alive.

One afternoon, Durley and Peter venture out to a church in the woods. The two boys know they are forbidden to go there but break the rule out of boredom. They arrive at the door of the church, press their ears up against it and hear the sound of football being played. Suddenly, DORLOCK grabs Durley and Peter by their collars. He informs them there is nothing to hear. Durlock tells the boys to leave and never return.

That night, Durley and Peter spot Sarah sleepwalking. She goes into the woods and the boys follow her. A mist falls and Sarah disappears. A voice calls Durley's name. The boy recognizes the voice as that of his deceased grandfather who had been a colonel in the Air Force. Durley and Peter return to the house. The boys are confused when they discover Sarah on the staircase.



The next morning, Sarah cares for Mollie and Millie as a mother would for her own children. She tells them about fairies. Mrs. Windsor overhears. She suggests that the girls help Sarah search for the fairies by the stream. Before the three girls depart, Mrs. Windsor tells Sarah not to ask Mollie and Millie about their father.

Outside, the twins search for fairies. Sarah studies the nearby forest. She remembers Mr. Windsor's warning not to go there. Suddenly, Sarah finds herself in a trance. She begins to float above the stream. The twins, preoccupied with their search, don't see Sarah floating above the water. The two girls follow a swan into the stream. A dark figure grabs them and they are whisked away. Molly and Millie scream for their lives, but nobody hears their cries for help.

Sarah wakes from her trance and her body splashes down into the stream. She looks for the twins, but they are nowhere to be found. Durley and Peter run outside. Sarah asks them if they have seen Mollie and Millie. They haven't and no one else knows where the girls have gone. They vow to find them. Sarah is overcome with foreboding.

Durley and Peter begin their search for the twins by going to the church. On their way to the church, the boys see Dorlock heading the same direction; they quickly hide. Dorlock appears to be disturbed about something. He heads into the church. Durley and Peter hear a thunderous noise behind them. They turn and see wild horses stampeding out of a howling wind and heading right for them. The two boys panic, but Durley regains his poise and calms Peter. They wish for the horses to go away and the stampede disappears. While they are catching their breaths, Dorlock emerges from the church. He carries the boys into a bunker. Durley and Peter question Dorlock about where he has taken them and what is going on around them; he has no answers for them.

In the house, Sarah informs the Windsors that Mollie and Millie have disappeared. She is terrified even though Mr. Windsor assures her that the twins will be found.

In the bunker, the boys and Dorlock introduce themselves. Dorlock tells them not to be afraid of him. He tells them the twins are dead. Durley calls Dorlock strange. In response, Dorlock tells the boys about the stigma planted on him by an evil witch. The three talk about the many children who have been murdered while staying on the estate. Durley, Peter and Dorlock agree to keep this incident to themselves for the time being.

The two boys return to the house. They are afraid of the way the Windsors will react to their absence. As they fret about what the Windsors may do, a DARK FIGURE comes upon them and strikes Peter.

Sarah is talking to the Windsors when she is interrupted by a knock on the door. She answers it and Durley carries an unconscious Peter into the house. They put Peter and the



other children to bed. Sarah asks her hosts about the events of the afternoon. Mr. Windsor responds with a story about the war. He tells them a dark witch forced his troops to kill hundreds of innocent people. After the war, Mr. Windsor brought a strange woman back to the estate, not realizing that she was the dark witch. Despite Dorlock's warnings, Mr. Windsor protected the witch; eventually, she took all of the children away. He tells them Dorlock is not a madman, but a fellow soldier who was changed by the witch. Mrs. Windsor implores her husband to stop telling the story, but he rambles on. He walks out of the house with the intention of finding the witch and, perhaps, dying in the process. Mrs. Windsor talks him back inside the house. Sarah asks where the Windsors think the witch lives. Mr. Windsor points toward Sarah which frightens Durley. His sister reminds Durley that their mother told them to be brave.

Sarah and Durley go to the church; Dorlock is there. Sarah tells him that Mr. Windsor told them about Dorlock's involvement with the witch. Dorlock explains the witch's origins to Sarah and Durley. He also tells them why she preys on children living on the estate. Dorlock gives Sarah a magic crucifix; it allows Sarah to see her mother. Sarah's mother is with Sarah's grandmother; the two women are crying. They are mourning someone, but it isn't the children's father. Dorlock tells Sarah that she is the person her mother and grandmother miss. Dorlock hands the crucifix to Durley. The crucifix transports Durley back to the underground, where he sees the destruction caused by the German bombs. Sarah asks Dorlock if the witch will eventually come for her. Dorlock replies that it is only a matter of time. The three of them decide to stop the witch by sending the children into the tunnel. Dorlock promises them that he will be there to save them.

The siblings and Dorlock decide they will summon the witch after night falls. They go to where Dorlock lives and use candlelight to call out the witch and various ghosts. Sarah begins to levitate and the witch appears. She causes Sarah to twist in the air and then tortures her. The witch picks up Durley and threatens to snap his neck. Dorlock begins to pray.

Dorlock's prayers start to work. The door flies open. As the witch nears the open door, her power begins to fade. She drops Sarah to the floor and leaves. Dorlock makes sure that Sarah is okay and then confirms the girl's worst fear; the witch has taken Durley. Dorlock apologizes for assuming the witch would target Sarah. He tells her that the crone must be more powerful than he had imagined. Dorlock tells Sarah not to lose faith. The witch has taken Durley into her tunnel; but as long as Sarah keeps faith, they will be able to save him.

Meanwhile, down in the witch's tunnel, Durley sits in room that is secured by bars. In the distance, there is a door. He sees a body which he believes to be Peter. Durley shakes the body but it doesn't respond. He knows that if he can just reach the door, Dorlock will



come to save him. A ghost flies through the room; it lands on Peter's body. Immediately, Peter comes to life.

The witch lifts Durley off the ground and hurls him backward into the room. She crawls toward him and tries to enter his mind. Durley realizes what the witch is doing and fights against her. To the dismay of the witch, Durley blocks her from taking control of his mind. .

Dorlock prepares to enter the tunnel. First, he speaks with the ghost of his wife, MARY. She sends him on his way with God as his companion. As Dorlock descends into the witch's lair, he hears noises from the days when he and Mr. Windsor were in the military together. They are terrifying sounds from the war, but Dorlock continues on his mission. He calls out for Durley, and Durley responds. Dorlock reaches Durley and the unconscious Peter. He tries to wake Peter but before he can the witch returns. She takes Peter's spirit. Durley screams. Mary's ghost enters and steals Peter from the witch. She releases Peter's spirit but warns Dorlock that the witch will return quickly.

Dorlock picks up Peter's body. Durley leads Dorlock up a wooden ladder that takes them out of the tunnel. Still, the witch's power won't let them escape. Dorlock sets Peter down. He tells Durley to wait until they can move again. Dorlock runs back toward the witch. Mary hovers over the boys to protect them.

Sarah tells the Windsors what she has learned and the actions she, Durley and Dorlock took against the witch. Mr. Windsor confesses that the witch's powers overrode his judgment. He says that the children were handpicked to be sent to the Windsor estate. Their deaths were to be blamed on the Blitz. He apologizes profusely. Dorlock's ghost appears. He tells Mr. Windsor that he has killed the witch. Sarah and the Windsors rush to the tunnel.

They find Durley and Peter caught in the witch's powerful maelstrom. The boys fight the witch's power but are unable to release themselves. Sarah summons the power of the crucifix. She throws it down the chute; miraculously, the boys are freed.

Fifty years later, Sarah and Durley meet at the Windsor's estate. They walk into the woods. The siblings see the ghosts of Dorlock and Mary who are watching children at play. Sarah and Durley know that as long as the specters of Dorlock and Mary watch over them, the children will be safe.



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## Comments/Suggestions:

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THE PIED PIPERS is a thrilling horror story told against the backdrop of England during World War II. Powerful opening scenes in the London Underground during a German air raid immediately draw the reader into the story. The horrific events of the London Blitz also introduce the book's protagonists, Sarah and Durley.

The plot is reminiscent of Sam Raimi's horror film DRAG ME TO HELL. Two children fear they will be dragged into a witch's lair for all eternity. They team up with Dorlock to fight this fate. Dorlock is familiar with their nemesis since he fought her long ago. Now he thirsts for an opportunity to defeat her.

Without a doubt, THE PIED PIPERS could conceivably be transformed into a feature film. In its present form, however, it is somewhat shorter than a standard screenplay. Additional length would allow the plot to be drawn more fully. Still, the core elements for a screenplay are present. A talented screenwriter should be able to take advantage of an intriguing cast of characters and a memorable set piece. A successful adaptation would give an audience a film into which it could really sink its teeth.

Sarah is an intriguing protagonist but her character needs more detailed exposition. It is with her that Dorlock develops the strongest bond. It is this strength which allows the two of them to eventually defeat the witch. Sarah's relationship with her mother also needs additional development. We see the two of them in the first scene of the novel but they share only one more scene; and that scene is accomplished through the use of magic. The character of the mother does not necessarily need more time. Indeed, it seems that the author has made a wise decision in limiting her exposure. Still, it would be possible to further explore Sarah's relationship with her mother through other means. Revealing more about this pivotal relationship would also more clearly delineate Sarah's connection to Durley. She appears to be both a big sister and a surrogate mother to her brother. A deeper understanding of the bond between Sarah and her mother would also add depth to Sarah's relationships with the Windsors and Dorlock; both of whom become her de facto parents when her mother is no longer a part of the picture.

As presently written, Dorlock is the strongest character in the story. He fills the role of "sage" admirably. The author has given him a solid back story that would make this character pop off the screen.

Occasionally, the author rushes the story; this undermines the power of some scenes. Lengthening certain scenes, such as the train ride the siblings take from London to the Windsor estate, would strengthen this intriguing tale. More time should also be given to



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## Hollywood Coverage

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the preparations which Sarah, Durley and Dorlock make in anticipation of doing battle with the witch.

THE PIED PIPERS is an intriguing horror story. It should attract fans of low budget horror movies as well as people who like similar films by Sam Raimi.

SAMPLE