

Henry James, “The Turn of the Screw” (1898)

Technically a novella, but discussed enough as a story that I’ll include it here (same goes for a couple of others on this list, including “The Metamorphosis”). It has, as a work of literature, inspired a seemingly endless amount of speculation, criticism, unpacking, and stance-taking. “In comment after comment, article after article, the evidence has been sifted through and judgments delivered,” Brad Leithauser wrote in *The New Yorker*. Fine, intelligent readers have confirmed the validity of the ghosts (Truman Capote); equally fine and intelligent readers have thunderously established the governess’s madness (Edmund Wilson).” And nothing that inspires so much interpretive interest could escape the many interpretations into other media: films, episodes of television, and much other literature.