

SIMPLIFIED READERS

A1

LEVEL 1

The Canterville Ghost

OSCAR WILDE



WORKSHEETS

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ABOUT THE NOVEL

The Canterville Ghost is a humorous short story by Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). Oscar Wilde is best known for his plays and his novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but in the 1880's, he wrote in different forms, such as short stories. *The Canterville Ghost* was Wilde's first story to be published. It appeared in two parts in a literary magazine in 1887. The story is about an American family who moves to a castle in England, in which the ghost of a dead nobleman lives. *The Canterville Ghost* is described as a comic-horror story because it is humorous. It does not frighten the readers.

The theme of this story is also different from the theme of traditional ghost stories because the focus is not on horror and mystery. Instead, the story focuses on love, forgiveness and friendship. *The Canterville Ghost* has been adapted to films, radio dramas, animated television specials and three operas in three different languages. The characters of *The Canterville Ghost* are also different because they are not easily frightened by the ghost. In fact, the ghost is annoyed and frightened by them. The story is popular among young readers due to its comic elements, short length and easy writing style.

SUMMARY

In the story, a rich American businessman, Hiram B. Otis, buys a huge old house in the country near London. The owner of the house, Lord Canterville, warns him about a ghost living in it, but he does not worry about it. He moves in the house with his wife, his eldest son, his daughter and his younger twin sons. As they are having tea in the library, they see a blood stain on the floor. The housekeeper tells them that the stain has been there for 300 years and cannot be removed. She explains that it is the blood of the lady who was killed by her husband, Sir Simon de Canterville. As soon as the eldest son of the Otis family cleans the stain with his stain remover, a terrible lightning lightens the room, and there is a loud thunder. The next day, they see the stain in the same spot again. The young man keeps cleaning the stain every day, but it reappears.

One night, Mr Otis is woken up from his sleep by the sound of chains coming from the corridor. He gets out of bed and sees a ghost in chains. Mr Otis does not get afraid. He tells the ghost to oil his chains and leaving a bottle of oil on the floor, he goes back to his room. The twins, who also wake up to the noise, throw their pillows at the ghost and laugh at him. They are not scared of the ghost at all. The ghost is very upset as he could not scare them. He decides to be scarier and do more frightening things. However, the more frightening he tries to be, the more the Otises make fun of or ignore him. The twins play many tricks on the ghost to scare him and laugh. The ghost thinks that he is losing his power, and he becomes depressed. He hides away in his secret room.

He does not appear for a week, but the stain appears on the library floor in different colours although the eldest son removes it every morning. The 15-year-old daughter of the Otis family comes across the secret hiding room of the ghost. The ghost explains his sadness and pain to her. He asks her to help him die and lie in the grave in peace. He thinks she is the only person who can help him because she is a very kind and innocent girl. The girl feels sorry for the poor ghost and agrees to help. Then, the two of them pass through a secret opening in the wall and disappear.

When the young girl does not appear for a whole day, everyone gets very worried. Mr Otis, together with his men, looks for her in the area, but he can't find her. He thinks the gypsies kidnapped her and decides to get help from Scotland Yard the next day. A few hours after the family goes to bed, a loud crash upstairs wakes them up. The young girl appears in the dark at the top of the stairs. Her parents and brothers run to her. She tells them she helped the ghost go to sleep. She shows them the box of precious jewels that the ghost gave her before he died.

Then, she takes the family to a small dark room at the end of a long corridor. It is filled with spider webs and dust and has a small window with iron bars. There is a skeleton hanging from a metal ring on the wall. The girl tells the family that when Sir Simon de Canterville killed his wife, her brothers chained him here. So, the Canterville ghost was the spirit of Sir Simon. She tells them that the spirit is finally dead with her help. Four days later, Mr Otis arranges a funeral for Sir Simon. The lord who sold the house to them also attends the funeral and thanks the daughter for her help. He tells her to keep the jewels in the box, although they belonged to his family.

A few years later, the young girl marries a young duke and becomes a duchess. She never tells anyone what she experienced when she disappeared with the ghost. She always thinks about the ghost with love and feels happy that he is resting in peace in the church yard, just as he wished.

Discuss before you begin reading:

- 1 Do you know anyone who thinks they have seen a ghost? Do you believe them? Why / Why not?
- 2 Imagine there is a ghost in your house. What would you do? What would you do to send it away?

A Word Search

Can you find the six words hidden in this puzzle? They are all about dead people. When you find each word, write it next to its description below the puzzle.

G	R	A	V	E	Y	A	R	D	F	A
M	A	H	E	A	D	S	T	O	N	E
J	T	V	E	C	O	F	F	I	N	E
W	T	S	L	R	S	I	L	I	A	M
Z	F	U	N	E	R	A	L	X	C	O
A	Y	P	A	M	G	N	U	B	F	P
N	M	D	V	T	P	V	E	Y	T	B
G	R	A	V	E	R	O	N	Y	W	H
L	E	P	I	T	A	P	H	S	U	H
R	G	B	U	U	K	Q	F	Z	T	V

- 1 It's a hole that we dig in the ground and bury the dead person in. _____
- 2 It's a place where dead people are buried. _____
- 3 It shows where the dead person is buried. We usually write the name and the years of birth and death of the person on it. It is also called a 'gravestone'. _____
- 4 It's a long, big wooden box in which the body of a dead person is placed before burying him/her. _____
- 5 It's a religious ceremony for burying the body of a dead person. _____
- 6 It's a short piece of writing or poem about a dead person. We often write it on the person's gravestone.

B What can you guess about the ghost in this story? Tick the boxes.

Why is he called the Canterville Ghost?	He lived in Canterville.	He owned the Canterville House.	He was a member of the Canterville family.
He is the spirit of someone who ...	died in Canterville House.	was killed in Canterville House.	killed someone in Canterville House.
What is his purpose?	To solve a problem that happened before	To frighten people	To take revenge
What kind of ghost is he?	A friendly and kind one	An evil one	A pitiful, miserable one
Can he be seen?	No. People can only feel his presence.	Sometimes, when he wants to be seen.	Yes, but by only one person.
He probably appears ...	with long white hair and covered in a white sheet.	with chains around his feet and arms.	dressed like a knight, in an iron armour.

A At the end of the story, do we know all the facts or are some of them a mystery? Put (✓) if we know the answer and (X) if we still don't know.

- 1 Why does Lord Canterville sell the house? _____
- 2 Did Lord Canterville and Mrs Umney know about the skeleton? _____
- 3 Whose spirit is the Canterville Ghost? _____
- 4 Who paints the stain on the library floor every day? _____
- 5 Why is the stain a different colour every day? _____
- 6 Why did Sir Simon de Canterville kill Lady Eleanore? _____
- 7 Where in the house was Lady Eleanore killed? _____
- 8 Why is Sir Simon's spirit still in the house? _____
- 9 Why doesn't Sir Simon have a grave? _____
- 10 What happens after Virginia and the ghost enter the darkness? What does she do and see there? _____
- 11 How exactly does the ghost pass into afterlife? _____
- 12 When/How do Virginia and the Duke of Cheshire meet each other? When do they fall in love? _____

B Read the title choices for each chapter. Circle the one(s) which you like best for each chapter. Also, underline the unsuitable one(s). Then, write your own title for each chapter.

Chapter 1

The Otises Meet the Ghost
 The First Day in Canterville Chase
 Why Does Mrs Umney Faint?
 The Blood Stain in the Library

Chapter 2

The Twins' Tricks
 The Stupid Ghost
 The Frightened Twins
 The Ghost in Armour

Chapter 3

Virginia Helps the Ghost
 Virginia Is Missing
 In the Dark Cave
 Virginia Is Kidnapped

Chapter 4

Searching for Virginia
 Virginia Returns Home
 The Ghost's Gift to Virginia
 Mr Otis Gets Angry

Chapter 5

Sir Simon's Funeral
 Virginia's Wedding
 Sir Simon Rests in Peace
 Sir Simon's Skeleton

A Who says these and to whom? Fill in the blanks with the names in the box. (7x4=28 pts)

Virginia / Lord Canterville / the ghost / Mr Otis / Mrs Otis / Mrs Umney / the twins

- 1 'We hear mysterious noises at night. They come from the corridor upstairs and from the library.' _____ to _____
- 2 'I don't want any stains on the floors. You must remove it immediately.' _____ to _____
- 3 'You will have some trouble in this house. You must be careful.' _____ to _____
- 4 'It is not polite to throw pillows at him.' _____ to _____
- 5 'You are the killer of your wife. We all know that.' _____ to _____
- 6 'It is a very quiet place. And people sleep peacefully under the trees there.' _____ to _____
- 7 'Virginia will grow up and become a young woman. Then she will enjoy wearing those jewels.' _____ to _____

B Mark the sentences as True (T) or False (F). (10x2=20 pts)

- ___1 Mr Otis comes to Canterville Chase before his wife and the children and checks the house.
- ___2 The only person who is staying in Canterville Chase before the Otis family comes is Mrs Umney.
- ___3 The ghost never frightened anyone in Canterville Chase before the Otises came.
- ___4 Lord Canterville tries very hard to sell his house to Mr Otis.
- ___5 Virginia does not believe that the ghost is a killer.
- ___6 The Canterville Ghost is afraid of death.
- ___7 Mrs Umney tells the family that they will be very comfortable in the house.
- ___8 The Canterville Ghost thinks the house will be peaceful after he dies.
- ___9 Lord Canterville is upset because the ghost gives the family jewels to Virginia.
- ___10 Virginia is miserable after the ghost is gone to the garden of death.

C Mark the correct answers. (10x3=30 pts)

- 1 **Why does Mr Otis want to buy Canterville Chase although there is a ghost in it?**
 - a He is a fearless man.
 - b He thinks the owner is lying about it.
 - c He is an American and Americans don't believe in ghosts.
- 2 **What can we understand about Mrs Umney?**
 - a She is very loyal to the Canterville family.
 - b She is not afraid of ghosts.
 - c She doesn't have a home of her own.
- 3 **Washington thinks there may really be a ghost in the house when - - - .**
 - a someone blows out the candle in his hand
 - b he hears the sound of chains upstairs
 - c the stain appears again after removing it

4 Why does the ghost thinks he is getting smaller?

- a The twins seem bigger than him.
- b He never eats anything.
- c He can't carry the armour; it is too heavy.

5 Virginia is angry at the ghost because - - - .

- a he is a thief and a killer
- b he frightens her several times
- c he is very stupid and acts foolishly

6 When does Virginia return home?

- a at dinner time
- b at midnight
- c the next morning

7 When Virginia comes back, her father - - - .

- a decides to punish her
- b thinks she played a joke on them
- c does not see the jewel box in her hand

8 Why does Virginia kneel down beside Sir Simon's skeleton?

- a to see if it is real
- b to pray for him
- c to say farewell

9 Lord Canterville comes to Canterville Chase - - - .

- a to attend Sir Simon's funeral
- b to talk to Mrs Umney
- c to see Virginia's wedding

10 Lord Canterville is grateful to Virginia - - - .

- a for helping Sir Simon's soul rest in peace
- b for getting rid of the ghost
- c for giving back the family jewels to him

D Match the two halves of the sentences (1-5 with a-e). (5x3=15 pts)

- 1 The Canterville Ghost thinks the Otis family is strange because ... _____
 - 2 The Canterville Ghost goes on trying to frighten the Otises because ... _____
 - 3 The Canterville Ghost stops painting the stain in the library because ... _____
 - 4 The Canterville Ghost finally stops haunting the house because... _____
 - 5 The Canterville Ghost does not enjoy being a ghost because ... _____
- a ... the Otises do not care; it makes them laugh.
 - b ... he is hurt by the Otises and angry at them.
 - c ... they are never scared of him.
 - d ... he can never sleep, and he feels lonely.
 - e ... he thinks it is his job as a ghost.

E Fill in the blanks with the correct words from the box. (7x1=7 pts)

energetic practical foolish creative
honest sensitive strict

Virginia is the most **1** _____ person in the family.
Lord Canterville is a very **2** _____ man.
Mr Otis is not a(n) **3** _____ father at all.
Mr Otis is a(n) **4** _____ man.
The twin boys are very **5** _____ and **6** _____.
The Canterville Ghost appears very **7** _____.

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PALLADIUM TOWER

Barbaros Mah. Kardelen Sk. No: 2 Kat: 22 34746 Ataşehir / İstanbul

Tel: 0850 288 35 00 • Faks: 0850 288 35 09

www.ydspublishing.com • info@ydspublishing.com