

Oscar Wilde

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# The Canterville Ghost

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audio CD



# *The Characters*



From top to bottom (left to right):  
Lucretia Otis, Mr Hiram B. Otis, The Ghost, Lord Canterville, The Twins,  
Virginia, Mrs Humney, Cecil, Washington.

# BEFORE YOU READ

**1 Vocabulary** • Match each word from the box with one of the definitions 1-10. There is an example.

~~a ghost~~ a legend a skeleton a stain a chain  
to haunt to murder guilty invisible superstitious visible

0. the spirit of a dead person which returns to the places where he or she lived ..... *a ghost*
1. feeling bad because of something wrong which you have done .....
2. not able to be seen .....
3. this word is used for ghosts when they often appear in a place .....
4. to kill someone .....
5. a dirty mark which is difficult to clean .....
6. able to be seen .....
7. the complete set of bones of a body .....
8. believing easily in ghosts, good and bad luck etc. ....
9. a story about the past which may be untrue or only partly true .....
10. a lot of metal rings make this .....

**2 Horror** • If you wanted to make a horror film, which of these things would you include? Choose the five most horrific things, then add one more. Compare ideas with another student. You will meet some of these things in *The Canterville Ghost*. But don't worry, the story is also very funny.

- |  |                          |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| 1. black birds                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. lightning (= a light that comes out of the sky) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. trees with no leaves                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. a ghost with no head                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. a skeleton                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. a blood-stained knife                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. strange noises                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. an Egyptian mummy                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. spiders                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. a secret room                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. thunder (= a loud sound from the sky) | <input type="checkbox"/> |  |                          |

**3 Using the vocabulary** • Use one word from exercise 1 to replace the underlined words below. You can change the form of the words if necessary, e.g. *skeleton+s* or *murder+ed*.

There are many (1) old stories about the (2) spirits of dead people which come back to (3) appear in old houses. People who are (4) ready to believe in mysterious things may find it easy to believe in these stories. If they see a red (5) mark on a floor, they will think that it is blood. ‘Someone (6) killed someone here hundreds of years ago,’ they say. ‘Perhaps the killer feels (7) bad about the crime and will return. He may be (8) impossible to see or he may be (9) easy to see.’

1. .... 2. .... 3. ....  
 4. .... 5. .... 6. ....  
 7. .... 8. .... 9. ....

**4 The Ghost and you** • Look at the reasons to feel sorry for ghosts and to dislike ghosts (a-h). Write the letters in the appropriate part of the table. There is an example. As you read, ask yourself if you feel sorry for the **Canterville Ghost** or not.

- a Ghosts are lonely
- b Ghosts make people feel afraid
- c Some ghosts did bad things during their life
- d People who die and become ghosts have no peace
- e Ghosts enjoy it when people see them and scream
- f Ghosts probably prefer not to be ghosts!
- g People who have horrible sad lives often come back as ghosts
- h Ghosts may come into your room at night

Reasons to feel sorry for ghosts	Reasons to dislike ghosts
a	



## CHAPTER 1

# *The Haunted House*

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**L**ord Canterville lived in a fine old English house called Canterville Chase. When Mr Hiram B. Otis saw it, he immediately decided to buy it. He was a rich and very important American with a large family and he wanted to live in England. Everyone told him that he was very foolish. ‘There is a ghost,’ they said. ‘Canterville Chase is haunted!’



Lord Canterville himself told Mr Otis why he preferred not to live in the house.

‘Many members of my family have seen the Ghost. My grandaunt, the Duchess, was dressing for dinner one night when, suddenly, the hands of a skeleton touched her on the shoulders. She has never recovered from the shock. My wife, Lady Canterville, cannot sleep at night because of the mysterious noises in the house.’





## CHAPTER 1

‘My Lord,’ said Mr Otis, ‘I’ll take the house with the furniture and the Ghost. I come from a modern country where we have everything that money can buy. If ghosts really existed in Europe, I’m sure that an American would take one back home. He would put it in a museum or a show for everyone to see.’

Lord Canterville smiled. ‘The Ghost really exists. People have seen it many times in the last three hundred years, since 1584 in fact. It always appears before the death of any member of my family.’

‘Well, sir, in *my* home the doctor appears before the death of any member of my family,’ laughed Mr Otis.

‘But I’m an American,’ he continued, ‘and Americans don’t believe in ghosts. They’re an old-fashioned European idea.’

‘If you don’t mind a ghost in the house, that’s all right. But please remember that I have told you.’

A few weeks later Lord Canterville sold Canterville Chase to the Americans.

There were six people in the Otis family. Mr Otis himself was a minister of the United States government. His wife, Mrs Lucretia Otis, was a beautiful lady. As a young woman in New York, she had been famous for her beauty. She was full of energy and very healthy.

They had called their oldest son Washington<sup>1</sup> in a moment of patriotism. He was tall, blond and good-looking. He liked dancing very much and his only fault was that he enjoyed the company of the British aristocracy. His sister, Virginia, was fifteen years old with large blue eyes; she was lovely. She loved riding her pony in the country. A young English lord, Cecil, Duke of Cheshire, was in love with her. The youngest children were twins.<sup>2</sup> They were often naughty but everybody liked them.

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**1. Washington :** George Washington became the first president of the United States in 1789.

**2. twins :** two babies born at the same time.



When the family came to live at the house, they drove from the station in a carriage. It was a lovely July evening. The sun was low in the sky and the birds were singing. But as they came near Canterville Chase, the weather changed. Dark clouds appeared. Some large black birds flew over their heads. It began to rain. In the garden near the house, they saw an old black tree with no leaves or flowers on it.

An old woman dressed in black with a white apron was waiting for them on the steps of the house. This was Mrs Umney, the housekeeper.<sup>3</sup>

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**3. housekeeper** : person who looks after the house.



## CHAPTER 1

‘Welcome to Canterville Chase,’ she said. They followed her through the dark wooden hall into the library. Tea<sup>4</sup> was ready for them.

Suddenly Mrs Otis saw a dark red stain on the floor by the fireplace.

‘What’s that mark?’ she asked.

‘It’s blood,’ replied the old housekeeper.

‘How horrible!’ said Mrs Otis. ‘I don’t like bloodstains in the sitting room. Please remove it.’

Mrs Umney smiled.

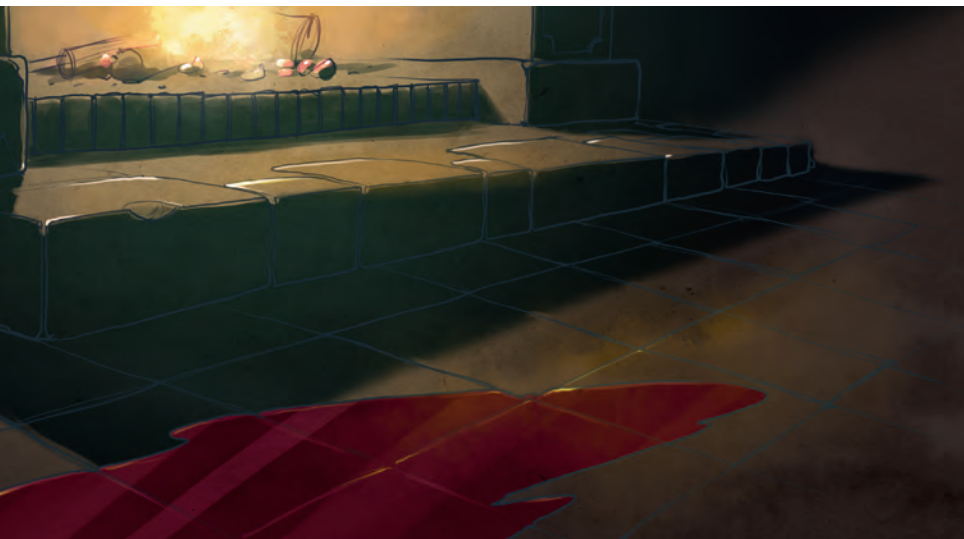
‘It’s the blood of Lady Eleanore de Canterville. Her husband, Sir Simon de Canterville, murdered her in that exact place in 1575. Sir Simon disappeared nine years later and nobody has ever found his body. But his guilty spirit still haunts Canterville Chase. And nobody can remove the stain.’

‘Nonsense!’ cried Washington in a loud voice. “‘Pinkerton’s Champion Cleaner” will clean it away. It’s the latest American stain remover.’<sup>5</sup>

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**4. tea :** (here) small afternoon meal: cold meat, salad, cakes and cups of tea.

**5. stain remover :** liquid which takes away marks.



## The Haunted House

He knelt down and rubbed<sup>6</sup> the floor with the ‘Champion Cleaner’. In a few moments, the blood had disappeared.

‘I knew “Pinkerton’s” would do it,’ he said triumphantly.

At that moment, there was a great flash of lightning and a boom of thunder. They jumped to their feet, and Mrs Umney fainted.<sup>7</sup>

‘What a terrible climate,’ said Mr Otis calmly, lighting a cigar. ‘I’m not surprised that people want to emigrate.’

‘My dear husband, look at Mrs Umney,’ said his wife. ‘What can we do with a housekeeper who faints?’

‘We’ll reduce her wages,’ said Mr Otis. As soon as he said that, Mrs Umney recovered, but she was still very upset.

‘Don’t laugh at the Ghost, sir. I have seen terrible things in this house.’

However, Mr Otis and his wife told her that they were not afraid of ghosts, and the old housekeeper went to bed.

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**6. rub** : clean by moving the cleaner back and forward

**7. faint** : lose consciousness.

### THINK!

**How does Mr Otis feel about the story of the Canterville Ghost?**

**Choose four from a-g. He is:**

- a** calm   **b** afraid   **c** joking   **d** unbelieving   **e** bored  
**f** unafraid   **g** excited

**Which one of a-g describes best the feelings of Mrs Umney, the English housekeeper?**

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▶ **The text and beyond** • page 52

▶ **Values & Feelings** • page 78