



The Canterville Ghost

Oscar Wilde
retold by Virginia Evans - Jenny Dooley



Express Publishing

THE CHARACTERS



THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

is a frightening character. He likes to scare people so much that they become ill. He gets very annoyed when people are not afraid when they see him. When people trick him, he plans revenge. Sometimes, he can be scared himself – of people and other ghosts. He is actually very sad because he can't go to sleep.

VIRGINIA

is a very caring person. She gets upset easily when she sees things that are sad or unfair. She likes to help people when she sees they are unhappy. She is very brave, even when she is going to meet the Angel of Death. When she gets married, she is very happy. She is very good at keeping secrets.



MR OTIS

is a very straightforward man. He has no imagination. At first, he doesn't believe in ghosts. However, when he sees the ghost, he starts to believe in them. When things are broken, he finds an easy way to fix them. He is fair, and he doesn't want to upset the ghost, as he knows the ghost owned the house before the Otis family.

THE TWINS

are young boys. They like to whisper to each other and plan tricks to play on people. When the tricks upset people, they think it's very funny. They laugh a lot when people hurt themselves. They are quite clever and they are good at making funny plans.





MRS OTIS

is a very healthy woman and she is never ill. She is straightforward, like her husband. She hates her house to be dirty and she is very upset when she sees blood on the floor. She loves her family and she gets very worried when her daughter Virginia is missing. She is very relieved and happy when Virginia comes back.

WASHINGTON OTIS

is very sensible. He can solve problems very easily. He doesn't believe in ghosts. He thinks there is a simple explanation for strange things. He loves his sister Virginia a lot. He is very worried when his sister is missing and he spends hours trying to find her.



MRS UMNEY

is a very organised lady. She works very hard at Canterville Chase. She believes in the ghost and she is very frightened of him. She is so scared that she faints with fear. She is upset when the ghost dies and she wants to say goodbye to him.

LORD CANTERVILLE

is a gentleman. He is very honest. He tries to warn Mr Otis about his haunted house, even though he wants to sell it. He even allows Virginia to keep jewels that belonged to his family a long time ago, because the ghost wanted her to have them.



THE DUKE OF CHESHIRE

loves Virginia very much. He is very happy when he marries Virginia and he doesn't mind when he knows she is keeping a secret from him about the ghost. He is happy that she loves him. He knows that he will love her for ever.





● 1. The Warning ●

When the American Minister, Mr Hiram B Otis, bought the large old house called Canterville Chase, everyone told him that he was very foolish. Even Lord Canterville, who wanted to sell the house, tried to tell Mr Otis that it was a mistake to buy it.

"I must be honest with you, Mr Otis," said Lord Canterville. "There is something very strange about this house. My family and I don't stay here very often."

"But what is so strange about the place?" asked Mr Otis.

"There is a ghost here," said Lord Canterville. "It visits anyone who lives or stays here. My poor old aunt, the Dowager Duchess of Bolton, once felt two hands on her shoulders as she dressed for dinner. The hands were cold and hard, like the hands of a skeleton. My poor aunt was very frightened. She became ill, and she never really got better. That is why my family and I do not like to stay here any more."

"Did anyone else see the ghost?" asked Mr Otis.

"The Reverend Augustus Dampier also saw it," said Lord Canterville. "Dampier went to Cambridge University, you know. He's very clever, and not the kind of man who imagines things."

"No, of course not," said Mr Otis.



"After the terrible thing that happened to my dear aunt, most of our servants left the house and didn't want to come back here to work. My poor wife, Lady Canterville, could not sleep at night. She was frightened, and of course, the strange noises that we hear in the halls and in the library make us even more afraid."

"I'm not afraid," said Mr Otis. "I want to take the house, and the ghost. I come from a modern country, where we have everything that money can buy. There is nothing in Europe that we don't have in America. If there were ghosts, we would have some, too, and there are no ghosts in America, you know!"

Lord Canterville smiled.

"I'm afraid that the ghost is real," he said. "It is more than three hundred years old, for members of my family first saw it in 1584. Shortly before any member of my family dies, the ghost appears."

Mr Otis laughed.

"I'm sorry," he said, "but I don't believe in ghosts. There is no such thing!"

"Well," smiled Lord Canterville. "I hope you are happy in the house, but you must remember that I warned you, and you did not listen to me."

Episode 7

Before Reading

- 1 Look at the pictures. What happens to the Canterville ghost in this episode?
- 2 Which of these things can you see in the pictures?
 - shield • candelabra • bucket
 - spider • night cap • spears
 - puddle • pencil • wallpaper
 - portrait • baseball bat

While Reading

- 3 Answer the questions.
 - 1 Why did the ghost have to appear every week?
 - 2 Why did the ghost take oil from Mr Otis' bedroom?
 - 3 What happened when the ghost tried to frighten the twins?
 - 4 Why didn't the ghost get wet all over?
 - 5 Why did the ghost stay in his room?

After Reading

- 4 Discuss in pairs.
 - Do you think the twins' tricks are funny or unkind? Why?
 - Do you think the ghost will leave Canterville Chase? Why (not)?

Episode 8

Before Reading

- 1 Look at the first picture. Where is Virginia now? How do you think the ghost is feeling? Why?
- 2 Look at the second picture. Where do you think Virginia and the ghost are going? How do you think Virginia is feeling?

While Reading

- 3 Read or listen to the episode and mark the sentences as *T* (true) or *F* (false).
 - 1 Virginia went walking in the woods with the Duke of Cheshire.
 - 2 Mrs Umney told the Otis family that the ghost killed his wife.
 - 3 Virginia offered the ghost a sweet.
 - 4 The ghost used green paint to make the stain.
 - 5 The ghost found it difficult to find real blood.
 - 6 The wall fell down in the ghost's room.

After Reading

- 4 Discuss in pairs.
 - Where do you think Virginia and the ghost went?
 - What do you think is going to happen to Virginia?
 - Do you think Virginia is going to come back?
 - Do you think the ghost is good or evil? Why?

Episode 9

Before Reading

- 1 Look at the pictures and answer the questions.
 - 1 What is Virginia carrying in the first picture?
 - 2 Why do you think Virginia's family looks so shocked in the first picture?
 - 3 Where is the family in the second picture?
 - 4 Who do you think the skeleton is? What is it doing?

While Reading

- 2 Read or listen to the episode and replace the words in bold with the following: *Duke of Cheshire, Virginia, The ghost, Sir Simon, The skeleton*.
 - 1 **She** stepped out of the hole.
 - 2 **He** gave me these jewels.
 - 3 **He** was a bad man.
 - 4 **He** kissed her hand.
 - 5 **He** was reaching out for food and water.

After Reading

- 3 Discuss in pairs.
 - Do you think Sir Simon deserved his punishment?
 - How do you think the family feels now?
 - Why do you think the ghost told Virginia his secret?
 - Who do you tell your secrets to? Why?

Episode 10

Before Reading

- 1 Read the title and look at the pictures. Do you think the story has a happy or a sad ending? Who do you think will get married? Listen or read to find out.

While Reading

- 2 Read or listen to the episode and put the events in the correct order.
 - Virginia says goodbye to Sir Simon.
 - Mr Otis offers the jewels to Lord Canterville.
 - Lord Canterville sits in the first carriage.
 - The Duke and Duchess visit her parents.
 - 1 There is a funeral at Canterville Chase.
 - Virginia marries the Duke.
 - Virginia keeps a secret.
 - Mrs Umney travels in the last carriage.
 - Lord Canterville gives the jewels to Virginia.
 - Virginia becomes the Duchess of Cheshire.

After Reading

- 3 Discuss in pairs.
 - What do you think happened when Virginia was with the ghost?
 - Do you think the story has a happy ending? Why (not)?
 - Which part of the story did you like best? Why?

Script and General Stage Directions

The narrator's part can be divided between two or more students, if the teacher prefers.

The narrator(s) should be dressed in black, so as not to stand out too much during the play.

The narrator(s) should always stand on the left or right of the stage, in such a way that they do not interfere with the action or obstruct the view of the audience.

Characters: Ghost
Mr Otis
Mrs Otis
Washington
Virginia
Twins
Mrs Umney
Lord Canterville
Duke

Narrator(s): At least one student, dressed in black.

Scene 1

Part 1

SONG: A Haunted House



Something's strange at Canterville
Something's not quite right
With shadows moving on the walls
And noises in the night

CHORUS: *Never buy a haunted house
That's the golden rule
If you buy a haunted house
You must be a fool*

People live at Canterville
But not for very long
It only takes one ghostly laugh
To show them something's wrong

REPEAT CHORUS



Narrator: When the American minister, Mr Hiram B Otis, bought Canterville Chase, everyone told him that he was very foolish. Even Lord Canterville, who wanted to sell the house, tried to tell Mr Otis that it was a mistake to buy it.

Lord Canterville: I must be honest with you, Mr Otis. There is something very strange about this house. My family and I don't stay here very often.



Scene 1
Part 2

Mr Otis: But what is so strange about the place?

Lord Canterville: There is a ghost here. It visits anyone who lives or stays here.

Mr Otis: Are you sure?

Lord Canterville: Oh yes. My poor old aunt, the Dowager Duchess of Bolton, once felt two hands on her shoulders as she dressed for dinner.

Mr Otis: Two hands?

Lord Canterville: Yes. The hands were cold and hard, like the hands of a skeleton. My poor aunt was very frightened. She became ill, and she never really got better.

Mr Otis: Did anyone else see the ghost?

Lord Canterville: The Reverend Augustus Dampier also saw it. Dampier went to Cambridge University, you know. He's very clever, and not the kind of man who imagines things.

Mr Otis: No, of course not.

Lord Canterville: We are afraid to stay in this house. We hear strange noises in the halls and in the library at night.

Mr Otis: I'm not afraid. I want to take the house and the ghost.

Lord Canterville: You are a brave man.

Mr Otis: I come from a modern country, where we have everything that money can buy. There is nothing in Europe that we don't have in America, and there are no ghosts in America, you know!

Lord Canterville: I'm afraid that the ghost is real. It is more than three hundred years old.

Mr Otis: I don't believe in ghosts. There is no such thing!

Lord Canterville: I hope you are happy in the house, but you must remember that I warned you, and you did not listen to me.



Narrator: Mr Otis bought Canterville Chase, and a few weeks later, he moved into the house with his family.

Mrs Umney: Welcome to Canterville Chase. I have tea ready for you.



The Canterville Ghost

The Canterville ghost has been haunting Canterville Chase for 300 years, scaring everyone who dares to live or work there. This all changes, though, when a family of bold and brash Americans comes to live in his ancestral home. Instead of being scared by the ghost, they start playing tricks on him!



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