

# The Canterville Ghost

*The Canterville Ghost* is a short story by Oscar Wilde, published in 1887. It is about Mr Otis and his family, who move from America to live in a castle in England, despite warnings that it is haunted. In this extract, Mr Otis and two of his children come into contact with the ghost...

Mr Otis was awakened by a curious noise in the corridor, outside his room. It sounded like the clank of metal, and seemed to be coming nearer every moment. He got up at once, struck a match, and looked at the time. It was exactly one o'clock. He was quite calm, and felt his pulse, which was not at all feverish. The strange noise still continued, and with it he heard distinctly the sound of footsteps. He put on his slippers, took a small glass bottle out of a drawer, and opened the door. Right in front of him he saw, in the pale moonlight, an old man with a terrible appearance. His eyes were like red burning coals; long grey hair fell over his shoulders in tangled coils; his old-fashioned garments were soiled and ragged, and from his wrists and ankles hung heavy chains.

"My dear sir," said Mr Otis, "I really must insist that you do something about those chains, so I have brought you a small bottle of oil. It is said to be highly effective after just one application, and there are several reviews confirming this on the label. I shall leave it here for you by the bedroom candles, and will be happy to supply you with more, should you require it." With these words Mr Otis laid the bottle down on a marble table, and, closing his door, went back to bed.

For a moment the Canterville ghost stood motionless in indignation; then, dashing the bottle violently upon the polished floor, he fled down the corridor, uttering hollow groans, and emitting a ghastly green light. Just, however, as he reached the top of the great oak staircase, a door was flung open, two little white-robed figures appeared, and a large pillow whizzed past his head! Unable to believe this appalling treatment, he hastily made his escape by vanishing through the wall, and the house became quite quiet.

On reaching a small secret chamber, he leaned up against a moonbeam to recover his breath, and began to consider his position. Never, in a brilliant and uninterrupted career of three hundred years, had he been so horrendously insulted. It was quite unbearable. No ghost in history had ever been treated in this way. He decided he must act, and remained till daylight in deep thought.

An adapted extract from *The Canterville Ghost* by Oscar Wilde.

1 Find and copy one simile from lines 8-11. What effect does this simile have on the reader?

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2 marks

2 Do you think Mr Otis is afraid of the Canterville ghost? Explain your answer.

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2 marks

3 How might the ghost be feeling in the third paragraph and why? Explain your answer.

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2 marks

4 What do you think might happen next? Explain your answer.

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2 marks

5 How is this extract similar to typical ghost stories? How is it different?

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.....

2 marks

Total   
out of 10

**Extra Activities**

- Look at your answer to question 4. Continue the story by writing about what you think happens next.
- Imagine Mr Otis and his children are eating breakfast together the morning after they have seen the Canterville ghost. Write a playscript that shows them discussing the ghost and how they feel about him. Use a suitable layout for your playscript and include clear stage directions.
- Rewrite this extract so that Mr Otis reacts differently when the Canterville ghost appears. Describe Mr Otis's new reaction to the ghost and how this makes the ghost feel.