

Canterville re-visited

In memory of Oscar Wilde

*The famous story retold in a modern setting
plus summary practice
and writing tasks*

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zur Vollversion

Chapter 1 - Hiram buys a ghost

Canterville Chase was a large old house in a village not far from London. Lord Canterville, its owner, had been trying to sell the house for months. But no one wanted to buy it. The reason was simple. Canterville Chase had a ghost. It had been haunted for centuries. One day an American, Hiram B. Otis, came to see Lord Canterville, and said he was interested in the house.

"I must be quite open with you, Mr Otis," said Lord Canterville. "My family home has been on sale since the beginning of this year. But up to now no one has wanted it. And there is a very good reason." Mr Otis, who was the American ambassador in London, asked what the reason was. "The house is haunted," replied Lord Canterville.

"Oh, that's no problem," laughed Mr Otis. "If there are ghosts, my children will be delighted. They like action. I'm sure they'll find the house very exciting. How many ghosts are there?"

Lord Canterville looked very serious. "There is only one ghost," he answered. Mr Otis seemed a little disappointed. "But I must tell you that it is a very dangerous one. When it appears, someone always dies or goes mad. Or at least, that is what people say."

"So you have never seen this ghost yourself?" asked Mr Otis.

Lord Canterville turned a little red. "No, not exactly," he admitted. "You see, my family has always refused to live in the house, ever since ..." He paused. "Well, my aunt lived there, and a terrible thing happened to her on her 70th birthday."

"Did she die?" asked Mr Otis, his eyes lighting up with interest.

"No, no," replied Lord Canterville. "But she had a dreadful shock. She was dressing for her birthday party, when the ghost suddenly appeared behind her and tried to kiss her."

"I would be happy if anybody kissed me on my 70th birthday," Mr Otis laughed. It was a loud American laugh.

"We don't think it was funny, Mr Otis," said Lord Canterville. "My aunt ran out of the house in great fear. She later became insane, and spent the rest of her life in an asylum. That was thirty years ago. Since then no member of my family has ever lived at Canterville Chase."

"Well, you know, my Lord, we Americans are not afraid of ghosts," said Mr Otis, smiling. "You see, we don't have any ghosts in America. Most Americans would pay a lot of money to

see a ghost, if it's genuine." The ambassador pronounced the last word "gen-you-wine" in the typical American way. Lord Canterville winced, as if he had sat on a pin. Americans, he thought, were trivial and vulgar. They were never afraid of anything, they tortured the English language, and most of them had the manners of cowboys.

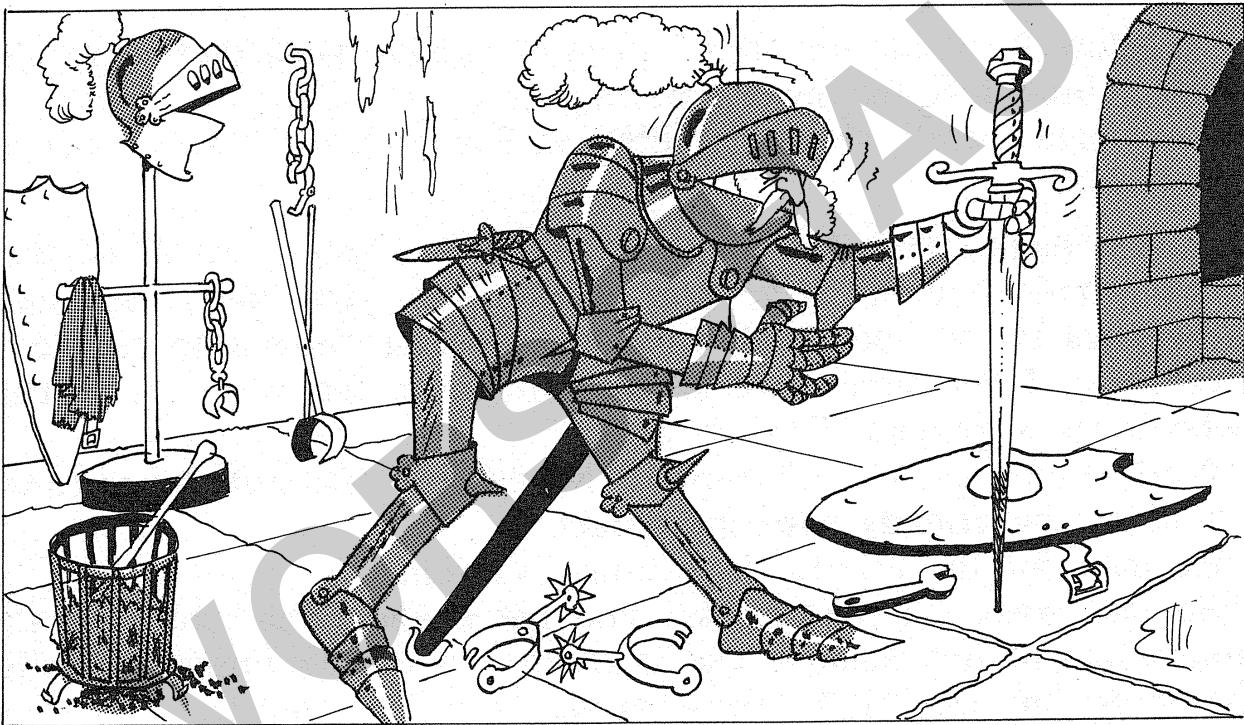
Mr Otis took his cigar out of his mouth and breathed a cloud of smoke over Lord Canterville. Lord Canterville started to cough. "Oh, I'm so sorry," exclaimed the ambassador loudly, "I forgot to offer you a cigar, my dear Lord." And he held a huge black object under the Englishman's nose. "Havanna, you know, gen-you-wine Havanna!" Lord Canterville, still coughing, shook his head. "Don't smoke, eh!" boomed the ambassador, slapping Lord Canterville on the back in a friendly way. "Well, never mind. You British just don't understand good cigars. But look, don't worry about the ghost. We'll take your house - and your ghost. The price is cheap. And I'll give you another hundred thousand for the ghost. That O.K.?"



“Aw, Mom, don’t you know anything about ghosts?” laughed Wilbur. “They just walk right through walls.”

The Canterville Ghost decided to take revenge for what the twins had done to him. “I’ll be quiet for a little while,” he said to himself, “then I’ll scare them to death!”

So, a few nights later, when the family had gone to bed, he left his secret room, and walked through several walls. (He could only do this when he was feeling good. And tonight he had an excellent plan - which made him feel very good.) In a few seconds he was out of the east wing and in the old banqueting hall in the middle wing. He stood there, looking round the hall for a few minutes. There was a long table in the middle. There was a huge old fireplace at one end, with two antique armchairs in front of it.



Swords and other weapons hung on the walls. And in one corner was a suit of armour. This had belonged to Sir Simon Canterville. He had been very proud of it. “Ah,” sighed the ghost, “my own beautiful armour.”

He gave a nasty little laugh. “And now my plan. Just wait till they see me in that armour! Then they can throw all the cakes they have at me. Not even Mrs Umney’s cakes can get through that armour.”

So the ghost started to put the iron suit on. This was difficult. It had not been worn for over 400 years. The joints were stiff. He

Oral Exercises - Summary Practice

Chapter 1 - Hiram buys a ghost

A. Fact finder

1. CANTERVILLE CHASE

- a) What was it?
- b) Where was it?
- c) Who did it belong to?
- d) What was wrong with it?

2. LORD CANTERVILLE

- a) Who was he?
- b) What had he been trying to do?

3. MR OTIS

- a) Who was he?
- b) What did he want to do?
- c) What did Lord Canterville think of him?

4. THE GHOST

- a) What was the ghost like in Lord Canterville's opinion?
- a) What happens when it appears?
- b) In which way did the ghost shock Lord Canterville's aunt on her 70th birthday?

B. Summary

Look at the following notes and try to summarize chapter 1:

CANTERVILLE CHASE: large old house, near London,

LORD CANTERVILLE: had been trying to sell it, not easy, there was a ghost, but now an American ambassador interested in buying it

HIRAM B. OTIS: rich ambassador, not afraid of the ghost, even thinks children will be happy with the ghost, bought Canterville Chase

Summary of Chapter 4

Use the following ideas for the summary of Chapter 5:

Mrs Otis afraid, wanted to leave the house, ambassador sure they could beat the ghost,
American family didn't like English food, thought they could fight the ghost with it

Chapter 5 - The stain again

A. Fact finder

Find out all important facts about:

1. the stain
2. the family's activity at the weekend
3. explosion

These questions will help you:

What happened first?

What happened next?

Why did it happen?

Who did it?

When did it happen?

B. Summary

1. The story so far

Begin by summarizing the story so far (i.e. before Chapter 5 begins). Use the following ideas:

Canterville Chase, haunted,

Mr Otis, American,

Family moved in

bloodstain

Quickie-Clean

Chapter 12 - The ghost comes to tea

A. Fact finder

Find details about the following points:

- 1. INVITATION TO TEA**
- 2. MRS UMNEY'S REACTION**
- 3. THE CONVERSATION**
- 4. MR OTIS' DIFFERENT PLANS**

B. Summary

1. Introduction

Talk about the house, the ghost, the tricks, how the ghost finally gave up and was invited to tea

2. Summary of Chapter 12

family had tea with the ghost - Mrs Umney didn't know about it, she was shocked - conversation - Mr Otis' plans: to write a book about the true story, - Ghostland with a disco, live bands, the ghost as DJ No 1, Chinese restaurant, motel, souvenir shop, safari park - the whole place a big amusement park

Chapter 13 - Sir Simon thinks it over

A. Fact finder

Find out about

1. THE GHOST AND MR OTIS' IDEAS

What did he think about

- a) the history book
- b) the amusement park

2. THE GHOST'S PROBLEM

Why didn't he just say "No, I don't like the idea of the park"?

3. THE BIG SMILE ON THE GHOST'S FACE

3. Find the words in the list below which mean:

1. hundreds of years
2. a diplomat representing a foreign country
3. having a ghost there
4. to change colour or condition quite suddenly
5. to answer
6. happy about something
7. to become insane
8. to say something that you don't really want to say
9. a home or hospital for insane people
10. to make a loud noise

haunted - ambassador - to reply - to turn - boom - delighted -
centuries - to admit - asylum - to go mad

4. Find expressions which mean the opposite of:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. false | a) to take out |
| 2. to put in | b) cheap |
| 3. softly, quietly | c) to appear |
| 4. expensive | d) genuine |
| 5. to accept | e) to refuse |
| 6. boring | f) exciting |
| 7. happy, delighted | g) loudly |
| 8. to disappear | h) disappointed |

5. Letter-writing

In the evening Lord Canterville writes a letter to his brother, telling him about the meeting with Hiram B. Otis. He describes Hiram and talks about their conversation. The letter begins:

2. Asking Questions

A reporter

Read the first paragraph again.

Now imagine you are a newspaper reporter interviewing the Canterville Ghost, just before he goes to the twins' bedroom. You ask the ghost about his secret plan.

The ghost gives you the following answers. What are your questions?

1. You: ?
Ghost: My plan is called the "headless man".
2. You: ?
Ghost: Yes, it is. A very nasty trick!
3. You: ?
Ghost: Well, I don't know how many times exactly, but I've used it many times!
4. You: ?
Ghost: I use it to scare people in their bedrooms.
5. You: ?
Ghost: No, I don't. I change my clothes. I wear boots and a large old-fashioned coat.
6. You: ?
Ghost: Yes, I do. I carry a sword and a pistol.
7. You: ?
Ghost: Well, the nasty part of the trick is that I take my own head off.
8. You: ?
Ghost: Well, not all ghosts, but the good ones can.
9. You: ?
Ghost: I always leave it (my head) in my room.
10. You: ?
Ghost: I'm going to the twins' bedroom.

Chapter 11

1. Questions

A. General questions

1. Why did the ghost return?
2. What did the ghost tell Virginia about the murder?
3. What did Virginia feel after she had heard the ghost's story?

B. Detailed questions

1. Why did Virginia suggest making one of the rooms into a disco?
2. Where in the castle was this room?
3. Who put in a new bar?
4. What did Virginia feel on the day when she was decorating the room?
5. Where did she see the ghost?

2. Find the words in the text for

1. the opposite of "to arrive"
2. the opposite of "happily"
3. nobody else, just you
4. the opposite of "west"
5. Nobody knows about it. It is a ...
6. a synonym for "mistake"
7. hundreds of years

3. Definitions

Read the paragraph on page 22 from "Then who killed ..." to "... so long ago." again. Then explain the following words in complete sentences.

1. wife
2. family
3. library
4. forever