

Introduction

The Canterville Ghost used to be a rich man called Sir Simon of Canterville. He killed his wife, so his wife's brothers punished him by not giving him food. He died in the house and became a ghost. For three hundred years, he has been frightening everybody who stays in his house. But the Otis family, who just moved in, are not scared at all. They even play tricks on him. The Canterville Ghost is very tired. He wants to sleep for ever in the Garden of Death, but he needs someone who has love to open the gate to the garden for him. Who will show him love and forgiveness?

The Canterville Ghost and the six other stories in this book tell us about love, friendship and life.

In *The Happy Prince*, a golden statue of a prince stands high above the city. He sees the poor people in the city. Together with a little bird, he helps the people. But winter is coming. The Prince and the little bird are getting cold, but they have no time to care for their own needs.

In another story, the beautiful Star-child turns ugly because he is proud and cruel. He needs to learn how to love before he can become beautiful again. In the same way, the Selfish Giant will only have winter in his garden unless he learns how to love and give.

The endings of the stories are very different — some are happy and some are sad. Is it always true that a person who has a good heart and loves others will live a happy life?

About Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde was born in Ireland in 1854. As a student, he was good at literature and won a number of prizes and scholarships. He worked as a writer in London after he graduated from university. His first and only novel was *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It tells the story of a young man who prays that as he gets older, his face will never change. You can find out the terrible secret of his youthful looks by reading *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in Level 4 of this series.

Wilde was famous for his clever sayings, and for his plays, including *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest*. He died in France in 1900.

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The Canterville Ghost

A haunted house

Canterville Chase was an old country house in England. When Mr Hiram B. Otis, the rich American businessman, decided to buy it, everyone told him he was doing a very foolish thing. There was no doubt that the place was haunted. Even the owner, Lord Canterville himself, told Mr Otis about the ghost. 5

‘We have not lived in the place ourselves,’ said Lord Canterville, ‘since my great-aunt went mad, which happened when two skeleton hands were placed on her shoulders one evening as she was having dinner. I must tell you, Mr Otis, that the ghost has been seen by several living members of my family. After the accident to my aunt, none of the younger servants would stay with us. And my wife, Lady Canterville, often got very little sleep at night, because of the strange noises that came from the corridor and the library.’ 15

