

 OSWAAL

# The C C G Ghost

Prescribed for Class XI  
As per latest CBSE Syllabus  
Unabridged Edition  
Long Reading Text

OSCAR WILDE

*Oscar Wilde*

**Long Reading Text**

The Canterville  
GHOST

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**(Unabridged Edition)  
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Class **11**

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- Chapter Summary
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## The Canterville GHOST

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## PREFACE

Going by the old adage by renowned thinker Francis Bacon, “Reading maketh a full man....,” and to inculcate good reading habits among the children, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) introduced novels for classes IX to XII from the 2012-13 academic session.

In a recent circular issued by the Board, emphasis has been laid on reading novels as this could help children in acquiring important skills of imagination, expression and appreciation of literature. It further states that though all the skills of gaining proficiency in a language are equally important, nevertheless, reading tremendously helps in improving comprehension, accuracy, fluency and diction.

For class XI, the recommended books are **The Canterville Ghost by Oscar Wilde** or **Up From Slavery by Booker Taliaferro Washington**

This book on **The Canterville Ghost** has been designed with utmost care considering the student’s need to comprehend the text better. It contains the Original Text from the Novel as well as a Question Bank at the end of every chapter. About the Author, About the Novel and Chapter review for every Chapter is given to facilitate better understanding of the novel. At the end of every chapter, important questions and answers are incorporated in order to assist the student in systematic revision of the chapter.

### **A few Highlights of this book are:**

- ▶▶ Original & Unabridged Text along with Chapter Summary.
- ▶▶ Chapterwise Questions based on understanding.
- ▶▶ Questions based on Character, Plot, Theme, Incidents and Episodes are given in the end.
- ▶▶ The language used in the book is simple and accurate in order to enhance comprehension of the novel
- ▶▶ The book will enable the amalgamation of reading & writing skills of the students

We sincerely hope this book will assist every student in better comprehension of the prescribed novel thereby facilitating examination oriented learning.

We are always open to suggestions for improvement from teachers and students alike!

Wishing you luck for the forthcoming Academic Year.

*Publisher*

# The Canterville GHOST

- *Oscar Wilde*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

OSCAR Wilde, an Irish writer and poet, was born on 16<sup>th</sup> October, 1854. Having tried his hands at different literary genres, he attained popularity and was regarded as one of the most successful and eminent playwrights of London in the early 1890's. He was widely known for his witty remarks, his epigrams and his brilliant plays.

Oscar Wilde was among the most successful Dublin intellectuals. He gained fluency in French and German at the beginning of his literary career. During his stay at the Dublin and Oxford Universities, Wilde studied Greek and was considered to be a distinguished 'Classicist'. He took great interest in the rising philosophy of 'Aestheticism'. For this, he was indebted to two of his tutors, Walter Pater and John Ruskin. After university, Wilde moved to London and into the fashionable cultural and social circles. As an apostle of Aestheticism, he took an active part—in various literary activities. He brought out a book of poems and toured through America and Canada lecturing on the new 'English Renaissance in Art'. He then returned to London and started his career as a journalist. He is known for his wit, dandyism and sparkling dialogue.

By the 1890's he had attained maturity and expressed his ideas on the supremacy of art, in a series of dialogues and essays. In his novel, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray', he dealt with the themes of decadence, duplicity and beauty. He penned a play titled 'Salome' (1891) in French, but it was not

allowed to be staged in Paris. Unfazed, he brought out four social comedies in the early 1890s. These established him as the most successful playwright in London during the late Victorian period.

When he was at the climax of his fame and success, he published his most excellent work, “The Importance of Being Earnest”. But at the same time, he received a rude shock in a sensational trial. He was sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment and convicted for gross indecency. In prison, he wrote, ‘De Profound’, a long letter describing his spiritual journey through his trials. On being released, he left for France and never returned to Ireland or Britain. There he wrote his swan song, “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” (1898). It is a long poem commemorating the harsh realities of prison life. He died in penury<sup>1</sup> in Paris at the age of forty six.




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### THE NOVEL AT A GLANCE

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*THE* story of the novelette, *The Canterville Ghost* revolves around a villa named, ‘The Canterville Chase’. It is an old and grand building with several corridors, staircases, secret ways and chambers and gothic architecture. In brief, the house has all the features that make it horrible and mysterious. Lord Canterville the present owner of the house, is a traditionalist and a conservative. The house is haunted by the ghost of Sir Simon, an ancestor of the present Lord Canterville. Sir Simon murdered his wife on flimsy grounds in 1576. In revenge, he was starved to death by his wife’s brothers. Since he died unwept, unprayed and unrepented, the ‘Angel of Death’ did not show mercy to him and he was denied a place in the ‘Garden of Death’. As a result, the ghost had been troubling almost all the occupants of the house who dared to live there. One of the main traits of the house is that there have been the ever present, blood-stains on the floor, where the blood of Sir Simon’s wife had fallen. These blood-stains change colour. They become scarlet red, emerald green and yellow. The sight of the blood-stains is enough to frighten a weak-hearted man. Mrs. Umney, an old woman, is the caretaker of the house. She considers it her duty to warn every new occupant of the consequences of living there. She recants how

1. The state of living very poor, extreme poverty.

## The Canterville Ghost

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various guests, visitors and inhabitants of the house died, they either shot themselves, committed suicide or became insane at a mere sight of the ghost.

The ghost itself appears in various guises. Generally, he would appear with his hand and feet heavily shackled, his eyes burning like cinder, his cheeks crumpled and his mouth when opened, looked like a cave of fire. He would give out hollow laughter and produced noise by rattling his chains as he moved in the corridor of the house. Sometimes a green skeleton of a hand was seen tapping a windowpane. Sometimes he placed the two hands of his skeleton on the shoulders of a lady who eventually fainted. On other occasions, sometimes his skeleton was seen sitting comfortably in an arm chair or he was seen getting down the stairs emitting green light. If someone showed extraordinary courage, he would appear before the person in the guise of a headless evil. These were some of his methods by which he frightened people. The house, therefore, lay vacant round the year. The rumours of the ghost had spread far and wide. Everyone said that the Canterville Chase was a haunted house.

However, things change when an American family arrives to buy the house. Mr. Otis, an American minister is very eager to buy the grand house. The family consists of his wife Mrs. Otis, their eldest son Washington Otis, a fifteen-year-old pretty daughter Virginia and the twins called "The Stars and Stripes". Mrs. Otis looks charming even in her middle age. Washington has qualified himself for American diplomacy. He is an excellent dancer and Virginia is an expert rider. The twins are very delightful and lively. They are all bold, scientific and materialistic. They neither believe in the existence of ghosts nor are they afraid of ghosts. The other character who comes to spend his holidays at the Chase with the family, is young Lord Cheshire who is secretly in love with Virginia and is finally married to her.

When Mr. Otis expresses his desire to purchase the house to Lord Canterville, he makes it clear to him that the house is haunted and he may bear the consequences of living there. Others too who come to know of Mr. Otis's desire of purchasing the house, do their best to dissuade him from finalising the deal. But Mr. Otis turns a deaf ear to all these rumours and remains firm on his decision of buying the house. He tells them that if the house is haunted, he is ready to buy it with its furniture and the ghost. He is willing to pay even for the ghost. He says that the Americans do not believe in the existence of ghosts and they can buy anything and every thing with their money.

As the Otis family moves into their new house, there appear some signs that can be called bad omens and can easily be connected with the ghost. Just as, a flock of rooks fly over their heads, the sky is overcast with clouds and big drops of rain begin to fall. But the Otis family does not take any notice of this. When the blood-stains are noticed on the floor, everybody is surprised. Then Mrs. Umney tells them the story of the blood-stains and adds that several efforts have been made to remove them, but the stains are still there on the floor. Washington at once uses a powerful detergent to remove the blood-stains. As he removes them, the whole room gets filled with light and a loud thunder is heard. Mrs. Umney faints, but on regaining her senses, she is consoled and asked not to be afraid.

Then after one or two peaceful nights, the ghost sets out on his intention and duty of frightening the Otis family. As he walks down the corridor making a great noise by rattling his chains, Mr. Otis' sleep is disturbed, he comes out of his room with a bottle of lubricant and advises the ghost, to lubricate his chains as they make a great deal of noise. The ghost is upset at Mr. Otis' boldness and dashing the bottle of the lubricant against the floor, he runs downstairs. But there he is hit with pillows thrown by the twins. The ghost is crestfallen at the Otis' boldness. Thereafter, the ghost uses every trick of his to frighten the Otis family but every bid of his is foiled by the twins or Washington. Now the tables have been turned. Continuous frustrations of the ghost disappoint and depress him. Now his honour is at stake. He is told that he may stay in the house as long as he wishes, provided that he behaves himself. But how can the ghost accept it, for if he behaves himself, he ceases to exist. His very existence depends on the mischief he creates. The blood-stains however, continue to reappear in various hues but no one takes them seriously. The whole concept of the ghost has been traversed. The ghost is afraid of human beings, mainly of all the little twins.

One day, little Virginia finds him in a room in a most depressed posture and she feels pity for him. He is lost in the thought of his past glory and victories, but is sad to think of what has happened to him. In Virginia, he finds someone who is kind enough to him. Finding a soft corner for himself in Virginia's heart, the ghost discloses his secret wishes. He tells her that—he wants to die a natural death and get a quiet corner in the graveyard, but he has been denied it because he died unwept and unprayed. He tells

her that if she weeps and prays for him, the 'Angel of Death' may show mercy on him and grant him a corner in the Valley of Death. Virginia agrees to it. The ghost disappears with Virginia to a mysterious place, perhaps the 'Valley of Death'.

On the other side, when Virginia does not appear for the evening tea, everyone is alarmed. A hunt is made to search for Virginia, but she is found to be missing. When she is not found anywhere, the hunt is postponed till the next day and all go to bed utterly worried and concerned for Virginia. At about midnight just when everyone was about to sleep, Virginia appears in the same mysterious way as she had disappeared. Everyone is delighted with the return of Virginia. Her parents clasp her in their arms and the little twins dance with-joy. Virginia surprises every one by announcing that the ghost has given up the house. She gives a vivid description of her disappearance with the ghost and tells that she wept and prayed for the ghost who repented before embracing death. God forgave him and the 'Angel of Death' showed him mercy and he was given a quiet corner in the 'Garden of Death'. Virginia shows her parents a little box full of gems and jewels which the ghost had given to her as a gift. Then she leads the members of her family to a secret chamber where they see the skeleton of the ghost hanging from a wall.

The next morning, Mr. Otis arranges for a funeral for Sir Simon, the ghost of Canterville Chase. Lord Canterville, among others, was the chief mourner. Sir Simon is buried with dignity in a quiet corner of the graveyard. As the coffin is lowered into the grave, Virginia steps ahead and places a big cross on his grave. Just then the moon appears from behind the clouds and sheds its yellow light on his grave a nightingale starts singing in a corner of the churchyard which is an indication of God's mercy upon him.

The next day, Mr. Otis goes to the Lord Canterville to return the jewel box to him as it was given to Virginia by Sir Simon who is his ancestor, but he refused to take the jewels saying that they belong to Virginia, who is a little angel who saved Sir Simon's soul. Later it was agreed that the jewels were to be given to Virginia as a present on her wedding. She is later wed to the young Duke of Cheshire. The twins are sent to Eton and Mr. Otis resumes his work on the history of the Democratic Party. Thus, the story comes to an end with a message that love and kindness are superior to hate and revenge and that man need not be afraid of the supernatural.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

## MAJOR AND MINOR CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL

**1. Lord Canterville**

He is the owner of the 'Canterville Chase' through inheritance. He is an Englishman who follows the traditions completely. Before selling the 'Canterville Chase' to Mr. Otis, he warns him about the existence of the ghost in the villa for the past three centuries. This reflects his true ethics and speaks volumes about his honesty. As a traditional man, he comes down to Chase, from London, to be a part of the funeral of the ghost. His values and honesty can also be noticed in the incidence of refusing to accept the jewels which the ghost had given to Virginia, he rather suggested that Virginia was the rightful owner of the jewels.

**2. The Ghost**

It was the ghost of Sir Simon who had died in the year 1584, but his spirit still haunted the Chase for the past three centuries. He had killed his wife for unreasonable logic and was therefore, starved to death by the brothers of his dead wife as an act of revenge. Since he died unwept and without repentance, he turned into a ghost and was denied a place in the Garden of Death. For the past three centuries, he had been in the house, scaring people by taking up various guises. His appearance was unkempt and ghostly yet, he failed to scare the Otis family. Becoming depressed, he shared his secret with Virginia, who eventually help him attain a natural death. Kind - hearted that he was, the ghost gifted a box of jewels to Virginia, as a token of thanking her for the help.

**3. Mr. Otis**

He was an American Minister, the head of the Otis family and the new owner of the Canterville Chase. He is a true representative of American culture, exhibiting traits like a determined mind, and is rational and pragmatic. He is by no means scared of the ghost, gives due right to the ghost to stay in the Chase when he is attacked with a pillow by the Twins.

He is also an affectionate father, which is clearly noted when Virginia had gone missing. Also, his honesty is tested when he goes to return to Lord Canterville the box of jewels gifted to Virginia by the ghost.

#### **4. Mrs. Otis**

She is the wife of Mr. Otis and is as rational as her husband. Even as a middle-aged woman and a mother to four children, she continues to carry the charm and the liveliness in her personality. She too is unafraid of the ghost and asks that the bloodstain should be removed at once. She consoles Mrs. Umney when she faints and also offers a bottle of Doctor Dobell's Tincture medicine to the ghost to cure his digestion. She proves to be a generous hostess, when she throws a garden-party believing that the ghost has left the Chase. She is a loving mother and gets deeply distressed when Virginia goes missing, but clasps her affectionately when she reappears.

#### **5. Washington Otis**

He is the eldest child of the Otis' and was named by his parents in a moment of great patriotism. He too is not afraid of the ghost or his acts. A reasonable, bold and a scientific man, he makes several efforts to remove the blood-stains and also becomes party with twins to chase away the ghost. He is known to be an excellent dancer and has qualified himself for the American diplomacy in London. He is also shown to be an affectionate brother and goes out in search of his sister Virginia when she goes missing.

#### **6. Virginia**

She is a lovely girl of fifteen years of age, with large blue eyes, and is the only daughter of the Otis couple. Beautiful, noble, tender and kind-hearted, she mainly remains aloof from the supernatural events happening at the Chase. She loved to ride horses. It is Virginia who gets to know the secret of the ghost and helps him die a natural death and find a place in the Garden of Death. Virginia has been an honest person through-out. Despite knowing the fact that the blood-stains were mere paint colours that the ghost stole to scare the Otis', she does not reveal it. Also, she keeps the promise to keep the secret of the ghost intact, even from her husband, the Duke of Cheshire. She rather tells her husband that the experience taught her that love is stronger than life and death.

**7. The Twins**

Together called 'The Stars and Stripes', the twins are the youngest of the siblings. Lovely and delightful persons, they are the heroes of the novel. They leave no stone unturned to scare the ghost and turn all his acts unsuccessful, to the extent that the ghost goes on the back foot and becomes defensive. The actions of the twins add humour to the novel and make the ghost look comic and ridiculous.

**8. Mrs. Umney**

She is the housekeeper of the Canterville Chase and has been so for quite a long time. A representative of old British traditions, she too is a believer of ghosts and faints at the sight of the blood-stains. She is a fine housekeeper too, which can be seen during the event when the Otises' move to their new abode and are welcomed by the tidy Mrs. Umney and are served tea by her.

**9. Duke of Cheshire**

He is a handsome young fellow who is absolutely in love with little Virginia. He too participates in the search party for Virginia and when she reappears, he can't help but shower his love on her. It is in due course that both get married. He believed in Virginia when she decided to withhold the ghost's secret to herself and was contented with the fact that she loved only him.



# Oswaal CBSE The Canterville Ghost For Class 11



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