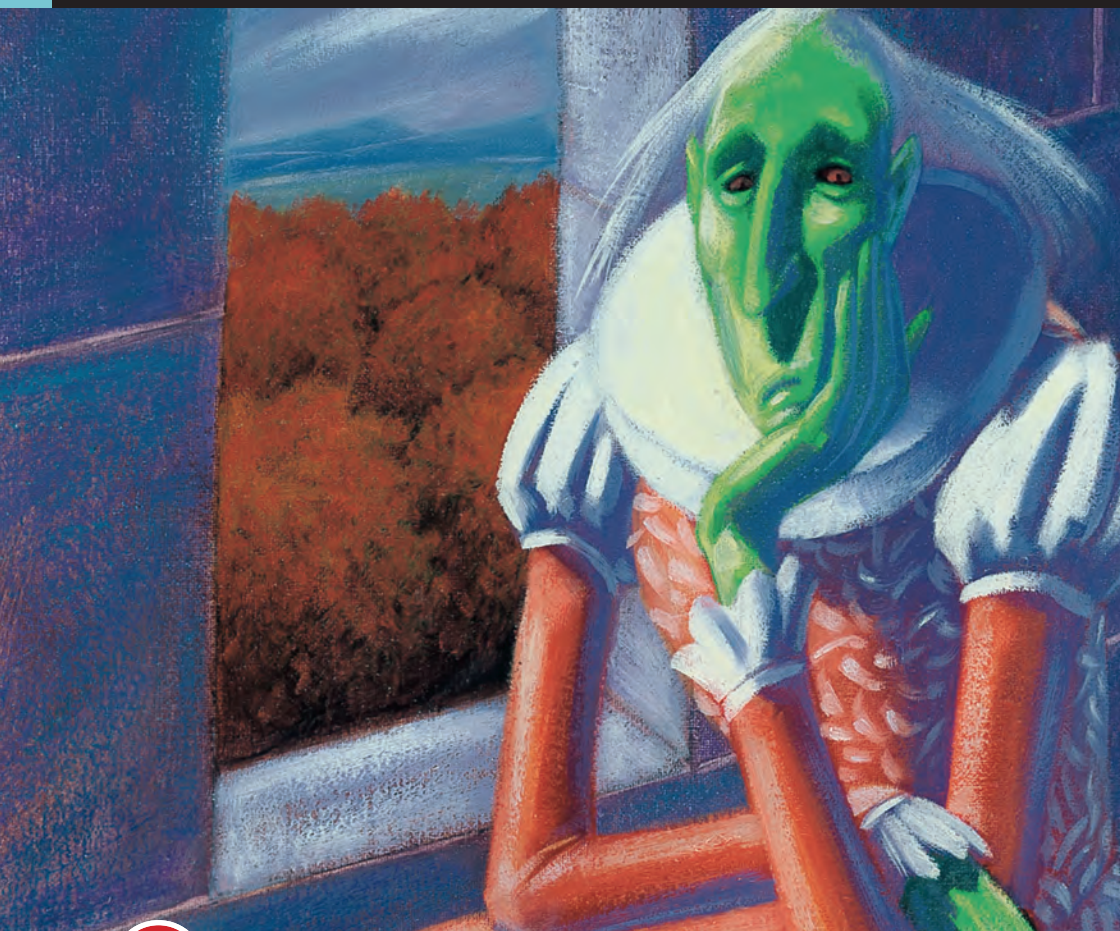


Oscar Wilde

# The Canterville Ghost



Free Audiobook



Oscar Wilde

# The Canterville Ghost

Adapted by Derek Sellen

Activities by Derek Sellen and Robert Hill

Illustrated by Gianni De Conno



**THE OTIS GHOST**  
*The Only True and  
Original Spirit*

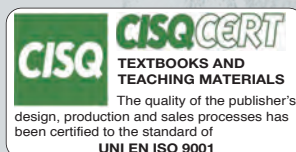
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This story is recorded in full.

**n. track**  
**end**



These symbols indicate the beginning and end of the passages linked to the listening activities.



**Oscar Wilde** in a photo taken in 1854. The hair, the fur coat, the gloves and the walking cane are all signs of a ‘dandy’, a man who thinks a lot about his appearance.

## *The Life of Oscar Wilde*

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1854. After he finished his education in Ireland, he studied at Oxford University in England. He was an excellent student. He travelled a lot in Europe and made many friends. But he also made many enemies. He wore unusual clothes and had unusual opinions about religion and life. He liked to be the centre of attention.

In 1882, Oscar Wilde went on a lecture tour <sup>1</sup> of the United States.

1. **lecture tour** : he talked in public in many different cities.

When he arrived, the Customs Officer <sup>1</sup> asked him: 'Do you have anything to declare?' Wilde answered: 'I have nothing to declare except my genius.'

When he left, he said: 'I have civilised America.'<sup>2</sup>

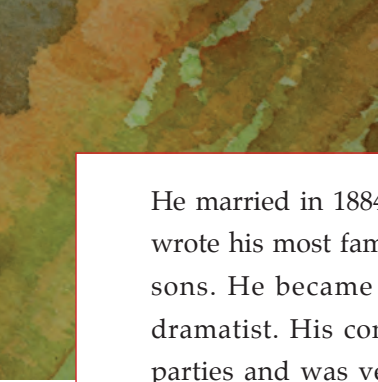


Arriving in America.



Leaving America.

1. **Customs Officer** : person who checks the luggage of people arriving in or leaving a country.
2. **have civilised America** : I have brought culture to America.



He married in 1884. He and his wife, Constance, had two sons. He wrote his most famous children's story, 'The Happy Prince', for his sons. He became famous in London as a poet, a writer and a dramatist. His conversation was very witty.<sup>1</sup> He went to many parties and was very popular. He was the most famous writer in London when his play *The Importance of Being Earnest* was performed in 1895. It is his best play.

Wilde was homosexual and he was sent to prison for this for two years (1895-97). Many of his friends did not defend him. After he was released, he lived in France. The last years of his life were very sad. He died in 1900, only forty-six years old.

## The Times of Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde lived in the Victorian Age. Queen Victoria ruled Britain for over sixty years from 1837 to 1901. During her reign,<sup>3</sup> Britain was a very powerful nation. It had successful industry, a large empire and great writers and artists.

Tower Bridge and the Houses of Parliament were built. Charles Dickens wrote his novels. Railways were developed. Britain and other European nations explored Africa and took lands there. London, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and other big cities grew quickly. Many people were rich but there were also many very poor people too.

Most Victorians had very strong moral beliefs. Marriage, patriotism and going to church were considered very important. It was a difficult time for people who had unconventional<sup>4</sup> ideas.

1. **witty** : clever and funny.
2. **peak** : the top point.
3. **reign** [rein] : period when a king or queen has power.
4. **unconventional** : unusual, different from normal society.



**The Inauguration of the Great Exhibition, 1 May 1851**, by David Roberts (1796-1864).

This international exhibition was sponsored by Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband.

It took place in an enormous building of glass and iron called the 'Crystal Palace'.

More than 6 million people visited the exhibition, which lasted 23 weeks.

Oscar Wilde's plays and stories are often very light-hearted and they laugh at Victorian beliefs. He often suggested that art and wit were the most important things in life. He liked to shock people. America was a new nation, growing in power and success. Many English people thought that it had money but no civilisation. Oscar Wilde sometimes laughed at the Americans. But, in *The Canterville Ghost*, the American family have many good qualities. Wilde shows that the English can learn from the modern opinions and behaviour of Mr Hiram B. Otis and his family, who are not afraid of anything.

**1 Comprehension check**

- 1 Was Oscar Wilde English, Scottish, Irish or Welsh?
- 2 When he went on a lecture tour of the USA, what did he say on arriving and leaving? How do you think Americans reacted to this?
- 3 In 1895 Oscar Wilde was the most famous writer in London, but five years later he was dead. What happened to him? How and where did he die?
- 4 How was Wilde different from most Victorians?

## 2 Wit

Wilde was famous for his wit, his ability to be clever and funny – ‘witty’ – at the same time. You have already read one example of his wit: ‘I have nothing to declare except my genius’. Here are some more. Choose the one you like best.

- I can resist everything except temptation.
- I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in a train.
- Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.
- All art is quite useless.

## 3 Discussion

Is there anyone in your culture that you could compare with Oscar Wilde, for any reason? Try to think of someone involved in the arts (a writer, a musician, painter, sculptor, architect, etc.).

## INTERNET PROJECT

Connect to the Internet and go to [www.blackcat-cideb.com](http://www.blackcat-cideb.com). Insert the title or part of the title of the book into our search engine. Open the page for *The Canterville Ghost*. Click on the Internet project link. Go down the page until you find the title of this book and click on the relevant link for this project. This will take you to the official Oscar Wilde website.

- ▶ Click on ‘fast facts’. Choose one fact from the ‘Did you know?’ part that you find most interesting.
- ▶ Click on ‘photos’. Choose one photo that you find most interesting.
- ▶ Click on ‘quotes’. Choose one quote that you find most interesting and/or witty.

Now share your fact, photo and quote with the class.

# *The Characters*



Mr Hiram B. Otis



Mrs Lucretia Otis



The Twins



Virginia



Washington



Mrs Umney



The Ghost



Lord Canterville

## Before you read

### 1 Ghostly words

These are all words connected to ghosts and ghost stories. Match the words to the pictures.

ghost   coffin   chains   shroud   skeleton  
bones   vampire   moonlight   blood



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



I

## 2 Vocabulary

Match the words with the pictures. Use a dictionary to help you if necessary.

carriage apron steps fireplace lightning cigar



A



B



C



D



E



F

For the questions below, you can choose more than one of the words above. Which of the things above:

- 1 ☐ can you walk up and down?
- 2 ☐ is a kind of transport?
- 3 ☐ are connected with light and heat?
- 4 ☐ is something you often find in ghost or horror stories?
- 5 ☐ is used in a kitchen?
- 6 ☐ is considered bad for your health?

### 3 Key words

#### A Haunt

If a ghost *haunts* (*haunt-haunted-haunted*) a place it means the ghost often appears in that place and frightens people who are there. We say that this place is *haunted*.

**What happens at haunted places? Write down *three* things and compare all your ideas in class.**

For example: *The ghost makes noises.*

#### B Faint

If a person *faints* (*faint-fainted-fainted*) he/she stops being conscious for a short time, and normally falls down. This can happen because of hunger, heat, pain or shock.

**Why do people faint in ghost stories? Write down *two* reasons and compare all your ideas in class.**

#### C Stain

A *stain* is a mark that is difficult to remove. For example, if some coffee falls on your white T-shirt, and you don't wash it immediately, you'll have a coffee stain on your T-shirt.

**What kind of stains do you often find in ghost stories? Write down *one* idea and see if all the class has the same idea.**

### 4 Reading pictures

**Look at the picture on page 17. Talk about the following points in pairs, and then share your ideas in class.**

- What kind of room are the two people in?
- Describe what the two people are doing.
- Look at their faces. Can you describe how they are feeling?
- Why do you think they are feeling like this?



## PART ONE

# The Stain

Mr Hiram B. Otis was American. He was rich and very important. He wanted to live in an old house in England, so he decided to buy Canterville Chase, the home of Lord Canterville. Everyone told him that he was very foolish. 'Canterville Chase is haunted,' they said.

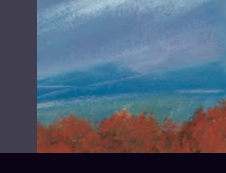


track 02

Lord Canterville himself told Mr Otis why he preferred not to live in the house. 'Many members of my family have seen the Ghost. My grandaunt, the Duchess, was dressing for dinner one night when, suddenly, the hands of a skeleton touched her on the shoulders. She never recovered<sup>1</sup> from the shock. My wife, Lady Canterville, cannot sleep at night because of the mysterious noises in the house.'

'My Lord,' said Mr Otis, 'I'll take the house with the furniture and the Ghost. I come from a modern country where we have

1. **recovered** : became well again.



## The Canterville Ghost

everything that money can buy. If ghosts really existed in Europe, I'm sure that an American would take one back home. He would put it in a museum or a show for everyone to see.'

Lord Canterville smiled. 'The Ghost really exists. People have seen it many times in the last three hundred years, since 1584 in fact. It always appears before the death of any member of my family.'

'Well, sir, in *my* home the *doctor* appears before the death of any member of my family,' laughed Mr Otis.

'But I'm an American,' he continued, 'and Americans don't believe in ghosts. They're an old-fashioned European idea.'

'If you don't mind a ghost in the house, that's all right. But please remember that I have told you.'

A few weeks later Lord Canterville sold Canterville Chase to the Americans.

There were six people in the Otis family. Mr Otis himself was a minister of the United States government. His wife, Mrs Lucretia Otis, was a beautiful lady. As a young woman in New York, she had been famous for her beauty. She was full of energy and very healthy.

They had called their oldest son Washington<sup>1</sup> in a moment of patriotism. He was tall, blond and good-looking. He liked dancing very much and his only fault was that he enjoyed the company of the British aristocracy. His sister, Virginia, was fifteen years old with large blue eyes; she was lovely. She loved riding her pony in the country. A young English lord, Cecil, Duke of Cheshire, was in

1. **Washington** : George Washington became the first president of the United States in 1789.



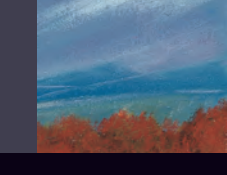
love with her. The youngest children were twins.<sup>1</sup> They were often naughty but everybody liked them.

When the family came to live at the house, they drove from the station in a carriage. It was a lovely July evening. The sun was low in the sky and the birds were singing. But as they came near Canterville Chase, the weather changed. Dark clouds appeared. Some large black birds flew over their heads. It began to rain. In the garden near the house, they saw an old black tree with no leaves or flowers on it.

An old woman dressed in black with a white apron was waiting for them on the steps of the house. This was Mrs Umney, the housekeeper.<sup>2</sup>

1. **twins** : two babies born at the same time.

2. **housekeeper** : person who looks after the house.



## The Canterville Ghost

‘Welcome to Canterville Chase,’ she said. They followed her through the dark wooden hall into the library. Tea<sup>1</sup> was ready for them.

Suddenly Mrs Otis saw a dark red stain on the floor by the fireplace.

‘What’s that mark?’ she asked.

‘It’s blood,’ replied the old housekeeper.

‘How horrible!’ said Mrs Otis. ‘I don’t like bloodstains in the sitting room. Please remove it.’

Mrs Umney smiled.

‘It’s the blood of Lady Eleanore de Canterville. Her husband, Sir Simon de Canterville, murdered her in that exact place in 1575. Sir Simon disappeared nine years later and nobody has ever found his body. But his guilty spirit still haunts Canterville Chase. And nobody can remove the stain.’

‘Nonsense!’ cried Washington in a loud voice. “‘Pinkerton’s Champion Cleaner” will clean it away. It’s the latest American stain remover.’<sup>2</sup>

He knelt down and rubbed<sup>3</sup> the floor with the ‘Champion Cleaner’. In a few moments, the blood had disappeared.

‘I knew “Pinkerton’s” would do it,’ he said triumphantly.

At that moment, there was a great flash of lightning and a boom of thunder.<sup>4</sup> They jumped to their feet, and Mrs Umney fainted.

‘What a terrible climate,’ said Mr Otis calmly, lighting a cigar. ‘I’m not surprised that people want to emigrate.’

1. **tea** : (here) a small afternoon meal: cold meat, salad, cakes and cups of tea.

2. **stain remover** : a liquid which takes away marks.

3. **rubbed** : cleaned by moving the cleaner back and forward (see picture on page 17).

4. **thunder** : loud noise in the sky during a storm.





‘My dear husband, look at Mrs Umney,’ said his wife. ‘What can we do with a housekeeper who faints?’

‘We’ll reduce her wages,’<sup>1</sup> said Mr Otis.

As soon as he said that, Mrs Umney recovered, but she was still very upset.

‘Don’t laugh at the Ghost, sir. I have seen terrible things in this house.’

However, Mr Otis and his wife told her that they were not afraid of ghosts, and the old housekeeper went to bed.

1. **wages** : money for a job paid weekly.

## Go back to the text

### PET 1 Comprehension check

Look at the sentences below about the events and characters in Part One. Reread Part One to decide if each sentence is correct or incorrect. If it is correct, tick (✓) A as your answer. If it is not correct, tick (✓) B.

	A	B
1 Lord Canterville did not believe in the Ghost.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Mr Otis thought that ghosts were an un-American idea.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 The weather improved as they approached the house.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 The tree in the garden seemed to be dead.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Mrs Umney was the person who guarded the house.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Mrs Umney believed the stain was the blood of a murdered woman.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Washington did not agree with Mrs Umney's ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Everyone was afraid when they heard the thunder and lightning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 Mr and Mrs Otis reduced Mrs Umney's wages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 The Otis family thought that the Ghost was dangerous.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

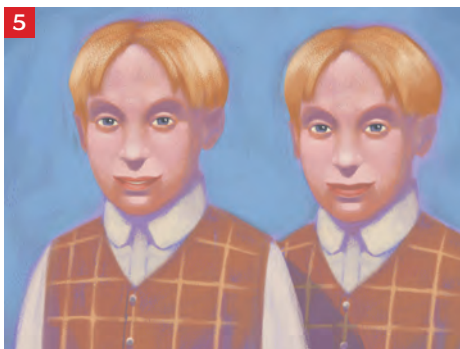
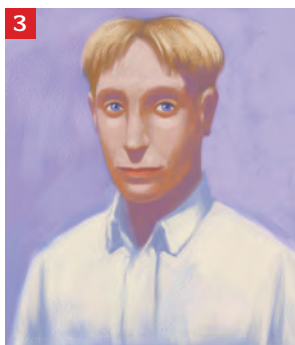
### 2 Humour

'Humour' is the quality in something that makes you laugh or smile. If you laugh or smile at something you think that it is 'humorous' or 'funny'.

- A A lot of the humour in this story comes from what the Americans say or do when they meet English traditions – for example, the Ghost! The first moment is when Lord Canterville says that the Ghost always appears before someone in the family dies, and Mr Otis says that in his family the doctor always appears. Find a couple of other moments like this. Do you think these moments are humorous?
- B Why does Mrs Umney recover after she has fainted? Do you think this is a humorous moment?

### PET 3 Who reads what?

Each member of the Otis family wants to read a ghost story. On page 21 there are descriptions of eight stories. Decide which story (letters A-H) would be most suitable for each person or people (numbers 1-5).



- 1 ☐ Hiram likes ghost stories with a moral lesson. He believes the stories should teach the reader how to behave better.
- 2 ☐ Lucretia likes ghost stories which include a romantic interest. She also likes happy endings and not too much suspense.
- 3 ☐ Washington likes ghost stories set in unusual places. He likes a lot of excitement but no violence or cruelty.
- 4 ☐ Virginia likes reading books about nature, especially about gentle wild animals.
- 5 ☐ The twins like stories with a lot of blood and horror. They want to read a book with a lot of excitement.

**A The Lake Children**

By a lake in Ireland, the ghosts of two children live among the deer and rabbits. The story tells about their efforts to communicate with their parents to tell them that they are safe in the spirit world. It has a happy ending.

**B The Everest Spirit**

Sherpa Ghan is a ghost in the Himalayas. When a group of climbers have an accident, the ghost helps them to survive. After many adventures, including an exciting encounter with a Yeti, they return safely to their camp.

**C The Invisible Thief**

This story teaches the reader a lesson — crime pays! A female robber is shot and killed by the police but continues her criminal career as an invisible ghost. The book follows her daring robberies as she becomes the richest ghost in the afterworld!

**D Hacker and Chopbones**

Hacker and Chopbones are the ghosts of Viking warriors. After death, they find themselves in a twenty-first century city where they continue to fight, killing their enemies and threatening our civilisation with destruction. Terrifying!!!

**E Never Together!**

Keep a box of tissues near. This is a real tear-jerker about two lovers who die and spend their time as ghosts searching for each other in a world of mists and illusion. But destiny is against them.

**F On Earth and in Heaven**

Two ghosts haunt an old castle. One is mean and selfish and enjoys terrifying people. He never escapes from his existence as a lonely, ugly spirit. The other ghost helps the people he meets and, as a reward, becomes a beautiful angel in heaven.

**G Together in Eternity**

A jealous rival kills two lovers. Their love lasts beyond death and they haunt the places where they used to be so happy. Finally, they find a beautiful palace where they can live together for the rest of eternity.

**H Blood and Horror in the Mist**

The title seems exciting, but this story does not contain very much excitement. Two ghosts witness a murder in the mist. Following this they help to unmask the murderer by doing research in the police archives. A book for readers who like intellectual puzzles.

**‘Many members of my family have seen the Ghost.’**

Lord Canterville talked about two time periods:

- 1 from the past until now (Present Perfect)  
*She **has never recovered** from the shock.*
- 2 at a specific, finished time in the past (Past Simple)  
*The hands of a skeleton **touched** her on the shoulders.*

#### 4 Present Perfect or Past Simple

Look at the sentences below. Use the Present Perfect or the Past Simple of each verb to fill the gap. Be careful: some of the verbs are irregular.

- 1 I ..... a ghost in my life. (*never see*)
- 2 It was 1 a.m. The ghost ..... slowly along the corridor. (*come*)
- 3 She ..... America six times. (*visit*)
- 4 In 1891, Oscar Wilde ..... *The Canterville Ghost*. (*write*)
- 5 They ..... any plays by Oscar Wilde. (*never perform*)
- 6 Five years ago, he ..... a play by Oscar Wilde. (*see*)
- 7 Sir Simon ..... his wife in 1575. (*murder*)
- 8 ‘Sir Simon’s Ghost ..... the house since then,’ said Mrs Umney. (*haunt*)
- 9 ..... you ..... ‘Pinkerton’s Champion Cleaner’? (*ever use*)
- 10 Mrs Otis ..... in New York from 1856 to 1870. (*live*)

#### 5 Vocabulary – rooms

**A Find the missing words below. Each word is the name of part of an old country house. There are clues to help you.**

- 1 You go up and down these –  – – – –
- 2 This is the first room in the house  ALL
- 3 You sleep in this room –  – – – –
- 4 You cook in this room – – – –  – –
- 5 This room is full of books L – – –  – –
- 6 Babies sleep here N  RSERY

- 7 You eat dinner here \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  \_ \_ \_ \_ \_
- 8 This room is at the top A \_  \_ \_
- 9 This room is underground C  \_ \_ \_ \_ \_
- 10 This is long and narrow CORR \_  \_ \_
- 11 You can wash in this room \_ \_ \_ \_  \_ \_ \_ \_
- 12 You can relax in this room L \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_  \_ \_
- 13 This is another name for 12 L \_  \_ G E
- 14 The horses live here  \_ \_ \_ L E
- 15 This is usually the smallest room TO \_ \_  \_

Now look at your answers carefully. Read downwards from 'T'.  
What do the letters spell? T \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

### B In which rooms would you put these things?

wardrobe coffee table oven sink washbasin  
cot bookshelf chest of drawers mirror  
medicine cabinet shower fridge

### C Room and furniture quiz.

You have one minute to prepare! In pairs, think of three other things or pieces of furniture. Then ask the other students in the class in which rooms they would put them.

## PET 6 Writing a letter

Your friends have just moved to another country. Now you are writing them a letter. Ask them about the country. Write your letter in about 100 words.

Dear Phil and Julie,  
How are you?

## T: GRADE 5

## 7 Speaking: home life

Look at the picture of Canterville Chase on page 15. Bring a picture of your home. Use the following points to help you talk to the class.

- 1 Describe where you live and compare it to Canterville Chase.
- 2 Say how long you have lived in your present home.
- 3 Say where you would prefer to live: in a big old house or a modern flat, and why.

## 8 The National Trust

Fill in the gaps in the text using the words in the box. Then talk about the question in the last sentence of the text.

about after (x 2) as by (x 3) for (x2) from in (x 4)  
like (x 2) of (x 4) than to (x 3) without

Big old country houses (1) ..... the house Oscar Wilde invented (2) ..... Sir Simon and the Otis family are known (3) ..... Britain (4) ..... 'stately<sup>1</sup> homes'. You can visit most (5) ..... them although, of course, you have (6) ..... buy a ticket to go (7) ..... . Some of them are owned (8) ..... old families, but many (9) ..... them are owned (10) ..... an organisation called the 'National Trust'. This organisation was started (11) ..... 1895 in order (12) ..... look (13) ..... land and buildings (14) ..... historic interest or beauty. Today it is the biggest owner (15) ..... land and buildings (16) ..... Britain (17) ..... the Government and the royal family. People can become members (18) ..... a certain amount of money, and then they can visit National Trust properties (19) ..... buying a ticket. There are (20) ..... 2.5 million members, and each year there are more (21) ..... 11 million visits (22) ..... members and non-members (23) ..... National Trust properties. Is there an organisation (24) ..... the National Trust where you come (25) ..... ?

1. **stately** : big, impressive and with a lot of dignity.

## Before you read

### 1 Vocabulary

Match the parts of the body with the pictures. Use a dictionary to help you if necessary.

pillsows ankles knees elbows



A



B



C



D

On what parts of the body would you put chains ? .....

- 2 Match the words with the pictures. Use a dictionary to help you if necessary. First find the peashooter, which is a tube that children use to blow small hard things (for example, dried peas) at other people.

pillows armour peashooter gun



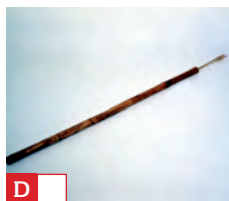
A



B



C



D

The four things in the pictures can all be used to attack people. Which, do you think, would be used by:

1 the Ghost?

2 Mr Otis?

3 the twins?

### 3 Key words

#### Respect

If you have *respect* for someone you have a good opinion of them; you *respect* them and behave in a *respectful* way — a kind and polite way. Who will not have 'respect' in Part Two, do you think?