'She had dropped her handkerchief when she took the key out of her bag. It was lying on the doorstep, and I picked it up and put it in my pocket.

'At six o'clock, I went to see her as we had arranged. She was lying on a sofa in a silver-coloured dress and looked very lovely.

'"I'm so glad to see you," she said. "I haven't been out all day."

'I stared at her, very surprised. I pulled the handkerchief out of my pocket, and gave it to her. "You dropped this in Cumnor Street this afternoon, Lady Alroy," I said very calmly.

'She looked at me in terror, but she didn't take the handkerchief.

'"What were you doing there?" I asked.

'"What right have you to question me?" she answered.

'"The right of a man who loves you," I said. "I came here to ask you to be my wife."

'She hid her face in her hands, but I could see the tears pouring from her eyes.

'"You must tell me," I continued.

'She stood up and, through her tears, she looked straight into my eyes. "Lord Murchison," she said. "There is nothing to tell you."

'"You went to meet somebody!" I cried. "This is your mystery."

'Her face went terribly white, and she said, "I did not go to meet anybody."

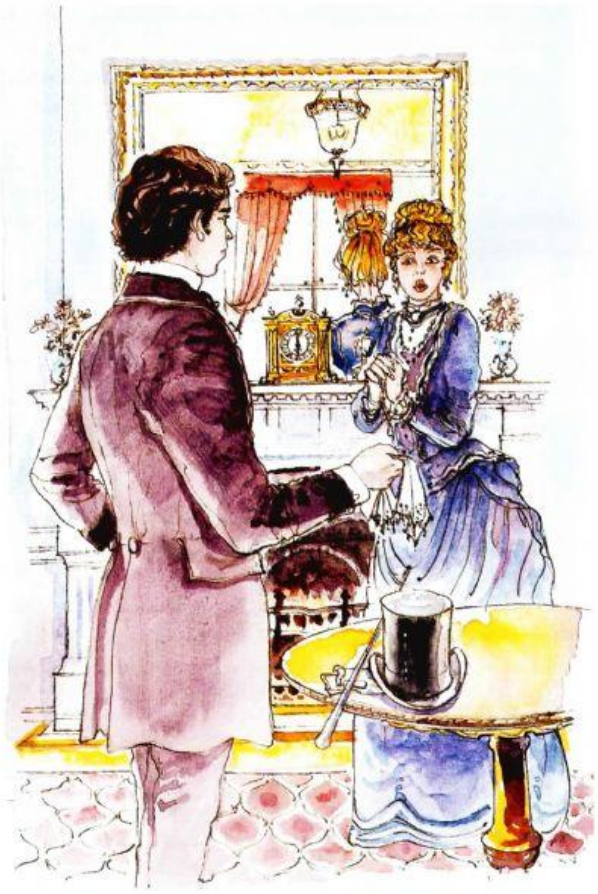
'"That's not true," I said.

'"It *is* true," she replied.

'I was mad – completely out of control. I don't know what I said, but I said terrible things to her. Finally I rushed out of the house. She wrote me a letter the next day, but I sent it back unopened, and left for Norway with my friend, Alan Colville.

'After a month in Norway, I returned to London. When I returned I saw in the *Morning Post* newspaper a report about the death of Lady Alroy. She had caught a very bad cold at the theatre one evening, and had died a few days later.

'I shut myself in my rooms and saw nobody for days. I had



'I pulled the handkerchief out of my pocket, and gave it to her.'

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loved her so much, so madly. God! I had loved that woman!'

'You went to the street – to the house in it?' I said.

'Yes,' he answered. 'One day I went to Cumnor Street. I had to go. Doubts were destroying my mind. I knocked on the door, and a woman of good appearance opened it. I asked her if she had any rooms to rent.

'"Well, sir," she replied politely, "the sitting room is really taken, but I haven't seen the lady for three months. And the rent hasn't been paid, so I think I can let you have it."

'"Is this the lady?" I asked, and I showed her the photograph.

'"Oh, yes! That's her!" she said. "When is she coming back, sir?"

'"The lady is dead," I replied.

'"Oh dear!" said the woman. "I'm very sorry to hear it. She paid me three pounds a week and she just came and sat in my sitting room sometimes."

'"Did she meet someone here?" I said.

'"No, sir," said the woman. "Never. She always came alone, and she saw nobody."

'"What did she do here?" I cried.

'"She sat in the room, sir, reading books," answered the woman. "Sometimes she had tea, but always alone."

'I didn't know what to say, so I gave the woman five pounds and walked home. What do you think it meant? Do you think the woman's story was true?'

'Yes, I do,' I said.

'Then why did Lady Alroy go there?'

'Gerald,' I answered, 'Lady Alroy was simply a woman who had to have a mystery. She took the room for the pleasure of going there secretly. She imagined that she was a mysterious character in a story. She had a great love of secrets and mysteries, but she herself was just a sphinx without a secret.'

'Do you really think so?' he said.

'I'm sure of it,' I said.

He took the leather case out of his pocket, opened it, and looked at the photograph.

'I'll never be sure,' he said at last.

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ACTIVITIES

The Canterville Ghost

Before you read

1 Are there great ghost stories in the literature of your country? Tell your favourite story.

2 Look at the Word List at the back of this book.
- **a** Which words are useful for the ghost story that you told in Question 1?
- **b** Find seven words for people.
- **c** In the past, what did people:
  - travel in?
  - wear to war?
  - fight with?
  - use to light a room?

While you read

3 Write the names of the Otis family's American products beside their purposes.
- **a** To clean bloodstains from the floor .....
- **b** To stop the noise from rusty chains .....
- **c** To cure stomach trouble .....
- **d** To pour over a ghost and frighten it .....

4 Who might say these words, an American (A) or a British person (B)?
- **a** 'It is dangerous to live in a haunted house.' .....
- **b** 'Ghosts can make people ill.' .....
- **c** 'Money can solve most problems.' .....
- **d** 'Ghosts do not exist in our country.' .....
- **e** 'We saw a ghost last night. Now we're afraid someone in our family is going to die soon.' .....
- **f** 'Please join us for tea in the library.' .....
- **g** 'We have a product for every problem.' .....
- **h** 'We like our weather. It's always changing.' .....
- **i** 'I met a ghost last night and gave him some good advice.' .....
- **j** 'It's fun to see what the ghost has done each morning.' .....
- **k** 'Where's my pea-shooter?' .....
- **l** 'I have owned a suit of armour for years and years.' .....
- **m** 'May I introduce myself? I am Sir Robert Jones and this is my wife, Lady Margaret.' .....
- **n** 'We'd pay a hundred thousand dollars for a family ghost.' .....
- **o** 'We don't want everything to be new and modern in our old houses.' .....

After you read

5 Answer these questions about the twins and their methods for annoying the Canterville ghost.
- **a** What do they throw at the ghost's head?
- **b** What do they shoot at him?
- **c** How do they do with a brush?
- **d** What do they stretch across passages?
- **e** What do they put on the top of the stairs?
- **f** What do they put on the top of their bedroom door?
- **g** What do they scream at the ghost?

6 Who says these words? Who or what are they talking about?
- **a** 'It's been famous for three centuries – since 1584.'
- **b** 'Pinkerton's Wonder Stain Cleaner will clean it in a second.'
- **c** 'Well, I'll make them sorry! Oh, yes, I will!'
- **d** 'If you behave yourself, no-one will annoy you.'
- **e** '...she was a bad housekeeper. She knew nothing about cooking.'
- **f** 'There the grass grows long and deep, and there are the white stars of wild flowers.'
- **g** 'My dear little girl, thank God you're safe.'
- **h** 'God has forgiven him.'
- **i** 'I must ask you to take them to London with you. Virginia asks for only one thing – the box in which they were kept.'
- **j** 'You can have your secret if I can have your heart.'

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7 How did the ghost frighten these people in the past?
   a Lord Canterville's aunt
   b four girl servants
   c a man-servant
   d Lady Stutfield
   e Lord Raker and three servants
   f Lady Barbara Modish
   g Old Lady Startup
8 How does the ghost plan to frighten the Otis family on Friday, 17th August?
   a Washington
   b Mrs Otis
   c Mr Otis
   d Virginia
   e the twins
9 What do you know about the marriages between these people? Which couple do you think is the happiest?
   a Hiram and Lucretia Otis
   b Sir Simon and Lady Eleanore de Canterville
   c Cecil and Virginia, the Duke and Duchess of Cheshire
10 Work with another student and act out this conversation. One of you is the ghost of Sir Simon de Canterville and the other is Virginia Otis. You are in the little room where Virginia finds the ghost and you talk about death. Then you go into the great black hole that appears when the wall slowly opens. What do you talk about there? How does Virginia return to her family?

Lord Arthur Savile's Crime

Before you read

11 A chiromantist tells fortunes by reading people's hands. What other methods do fortune tellers use? Have you ever had your fortune told? Do you believe in fortune-telling?
12 Part of the title of this story is *A Study of Duty*. What duties do most people feel responsible for? Do you believe you have a duty to obey society's rules and laws or to obey certain people?

While you read

13 Who is it? Read the description and write the correct name.
   a Forty years old; enjoys pleasure; famous hostess .....
   b Young, tall, handsome; not especially clever, but very romantic .....
   c Unattractive little chiromantist; has green eyes and wears gold glasses .....
   d Lady Windermere's friend; fat hand with short square fingers; strong sense of duty .....
   e Cheerful, adventurous; has a second wife; hates cats .....
   f Beautiful girl; sweet, innocent with dreamy eyes; in love .....
   g Reads French story-books; has stomach trouble; hates doctors but loves medicines .....
   h Lord Arthur Savile's brother; travels in Italy .....
   i Important churchman; has a clock collection .....
   j Rough-looking German; makes bombs; lives for art, not money .....

After you read

14 Follow Lord Arthur Savile from the beginning of the story until Lady Clementine's death. In which order does he visit these places?
   a Pestle and Humbey's
   b Venice-Ravenna-Venice
   c Lady Windermere's party
   d His club
   e Sybil Merton's house
   f His house in Belgrave Square
   g Lady Clementina's house

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15 Match Lord Savile's activities with the places in Question 14.
   a He is waiting for news of Lady Clementina's death.
   b He buys a capsule of aconitine.
   c He intends to poison the old lady.
   d He delays his wedding to the young lady.
   e He studies Erskine's book on poisons.
   f He hears some frightening news from Mr Podgers.
   g He decides who he will murder.

16 Why are these important when Lord Savile tries to murder his uncle, the Dean of Chichester?
   a The dean's collection of clocks
   b Rouvaloff
   c A small golden figure of Liberty
   d Five pounds
   e Jane Percy

17 What:
   a frightens a number of people at Lady Windermere's party?
   b does the chiromantist see in Lord Arthur's hands?
   c is aconitine?
   d does Lord Arthur do in Venice?
   e does Lord Arthur use to try to kill his uncle?
   f happens to Mr Podgers?
   g does Lady Windermere think of chiromancy at the end of the story?

18 Discuss these questions.
   a Read these statements by Lady Windermere. What do they tell us about her character?
   'Nothing interesting is ever quite right.'
   'All my guests do what I tell them to do.'
   'A future wife ought not to know everything about the man she's going to marry.'
   'Nobody cares about relatives who aren't close these days – it's not fashionable.'
   'I've never heard anything so silly in all my life.'

   b What do these sentences tell us about Lord Arthur's character?
   He was glad that he had done the right thing.
   Next, he would have to try a bomb. That seemed sensible.
   Lord Arthur hated pretending.
   'I've tried to do my duty!'
   'Because of chiromancy, I have all the happiness in my life.'

19 Work with another student. Act out this conversation.
   Student A: You are Lord Arthur Savile. You are happy because you have thrown Mr Podgers over the bridge. Tell your brother about the murder.
   Student B: You are Lord Surbiton, Lord Arthur Savile's brother. You are shocked by your brother's news. Ask him about his reasons for murdering Mr Podgers.

The Sphinx Without a Secret

Before you read

20 What does a sphinx look like? Where can you find one? How is a sphinx connected to secrets and mysteries?

21 List the most important things for a good relationship with a husband/wife or close friend. How high on the list would you put trust? How can secrets and lies cause problems in a relationship?

While you read

22 Circle the correct answer.
   a The storyteller and Lord Murchison become friends in *Oxford / Paris*.
   b Lord Murchison prefers to travel in a *yellow / green* carriage.
   c Lady Alroy's smile makes the storyteller think of *two / three* famous works of art.
   d Lord Murchison sees Lady Alroy for the first time when she is *at a party / in a carriage*.
   e Madame de Rastail tells Lord Murchison that Lady Alroy is *unmarried and rich / married and poor*.
   f On the day after Madame de Rastail's party, Lord Murchison *meets / doesn't meet* Lady Alroy at her London house.

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g After several visits to Lady Alroy's London house, Lord Murchison decides to *ask her to marry him / stop seeing her.*
h Lady Alroy drops *her key / her handkerchief* on Cumnor Street.
i Lord Murchison writes *many / no* letters to Lady Alroy after she lies to him about Cumnor Street.
j Lord Murchison is in *Norway / London* when he learns about Lady Alroy's death.
k Before her death, Lady Alroy pays *three / five* pounds a week to rent the sitting room in Cumnor Street.
l The storyteller thinks that Lady Alroy rents a room in Cumnor Street because she *pretends to have / has many dark* secrets.

After you read

23 Discuss these questions.
a Why does Lord Murchison fall in love with Lady Alroy? Make a list of reasons.
b In your opinion, does Lord Murchison have enough good reasons for wanting to marry Lady Alroy?
c Do you believe in love at first sight? Why (not)?

24 Discuss how you think Lord Murchison feels in each of these situations.
a On an afternoon outside the Café de la Paix in Paris when he meets his old friend from Oxford University
b Walking down Bond Street in London when he sees Lady Alroy in a yellow carriage
c At a dinner party at Madame de Rastail's house when he meets Lady Alroy
d At Lady Alroy's house for the first time when he learns that she is not at home
e After several visits to Lady Alroy's house when he decides he wants to marry her
f On his walk to Piccadilly to meet Lady Alroy when he sees her on a poor little street
g At Lady Alroy's house when she lies to him about her visit to Cumnor Street
h When he reads about the death of Lady Alroy

i At the house on Cumnor Street after Lady Alroy's death when he learns about her secret

25 Discuss these questions.
a No one in this story uses the title *Mr* or *Mrs* (Mrs Knox at Whitaker's Library is not a real person.) What three titles are used?
b Think about the titles that people use in 'The Canterville Ghost' and in 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime'. What do these titles tell us about Oscar Wilde and his short stories?

Writing

26 You are Virginia Otis and you have lived at Canterville Chase for two weeks. Write a letter to a school friend in the United States. Tell her about the house, the bloodstain in the library and your missing paints. Tell her what you think is happening. Also tell her about the young Duke of Cheshire.

27 You are Mrs Umney and the Otis family are the first Americans you have ever met. Write to your sister and tell her about some of their strange, foreign beliefs and habits.

28 Write the ghost story that you told in Activity 1. Use words from the Word List at the back of this book.

29 You are a film-writer and you want to write a film with ghosts in it. Make a list of horrible ways for your ghosts to frighten people. Describe what the ghosts will look like.

30 You witnessed Lord Arthur Savile throwing a man into the River Thames. Write a statement for the police. Give descriptions of the men if you can.

31 Write about Lady Windermere's and Lord Arthur Savile's different opinions on chiromancy at the end of their story. Include your own opinion on the subject and explain your reasons.

32 You are Lady Alroy. Lord Murchison discovers your secret visits to a house on Cumnor Street. He becomes very angry and says some terrible things. Decide what you think of him. Do you want to marry him or not? Write a letter to him after he rushes out of your house.

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