

Long Reading Text - Novel - 12Marks

The Canterville Ghost –Oscar Wilde

1. ‘Oscar Wilde’s ‘The Canterville Ghost’ is written in such a way that the story, in spite of being about a ghost, does not scare the readers, instead it makes them laugh.’ Comment.

Answer: ‘The Centerville Ghost’ does not scare readers, instead it makes them laugh.

Despite the attempts made by Sir Simon who is the ghost in the story to appear in the most scary guises, the family refuses to be frightened, and Sir Simon feels increasingly helpless and humiliated. When Mrs. Otis notices a mysterious red mark on the floor, she simply replies

that she does “not at all care for blood stains in the sitting room.” When Mrs. Umney, the housekeeper, informs Mrs. Otis that the blood stain is indeed evidence of the ghost and cannot be removed, Washington Otis, the eldest son, suggests that the stain be removed with Pinkerton’s Champion Stain Remover and Paragon Detergent: A quick fix, like the Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator, and a practical way of dealing with the problem.

The most humorous character in the story is undoubtedly the ghost himself, Sir Simon, who goes about his duties with theatrical elegance and talent. He assumes a series of dramatic roles in his failed attempts to impress and terrify the Otises, making it easy to imagine him as a comical character in a stage play. The ghost has the ability to change forms, so he taps into his range of tricks. He takes the role of ghostly apparitions such as a Headless Earl, a Strangled Babe, the Blood-Sucker of Bexley Moor, Jonas the Graveless, Suicide’s Skeleton, and the Corpse-Snatcher of Chertsey Barn, all having succeeded in horrifying previous castle residents over the centuries. But none of them works with these Americans. Sir Simon schemes, but even as his costumes become increasingly ghostly, his antics do nothing to scare his house guests, and the Otises succeed in failing him every time. He falls victim to trip wires, pea shooters, butter-slides, and

falling buckets of water. In a particularly comical scene, he is frightened by the sight of a “ghost,” rigged up by the mischievous twins.

In this way, ‘The Centerville Ghost’, makes the readers laugh all the way instead of making them squeeze in horror.

2-: The Canterville Ghost is study in contrast. Justify the statement.

Ans. The story of The Canterville Ghost is the embodiment of contrasts. The story begins with the plot where American Characters wish to settle down in European context. The story provides insights into the worlds of European conservatism & American rationalism. Mr. Otis is a representative character of American culture who wants to believe only in the present, mirroring a practical, pragmatic and capitalist point of view in every sphere of life. On the other hand, Lord Canterville and Mrs. Umney belong to the European culture and they are determined to safeguard their traditions and customs faithfully without verifying the authenticity and practical value of it. The writer has used gentle humour to point out the human foibles that make human beings superstitious, blind follower of culture and narrow minded.

In the present story, the writer wants to show the contrast and difference between the two cultures in their way of thinking as well in their way of life. Virginia establishes empathy with the ghost and the ghost narrates his tragedy of isolated life that keeps his past alive and haunted. She has held a composite dialogue with the ghost. As a result, the ghost repents of his misdeed. It contrasts with the behaviour of the rest of the family members. The author satirizes American capitalism and superior complexity and he makes fun of British puritanism and traditionalism.

Member of the Otis family always laughs at the eccentric nature of the ghost without taking into account the miserable condition of the ghost. They do not respect and try to study the value of the British tradition. It shows their conceit.

3. Virginia holds a composite dialogue to bring two cultures together. Justify it. (Value based question).

Ans. VALUE POINTS:

-She represents the positive view of young generation.

-Believes in dialogue to understand other’s problem.

-Established empathy with the person (the ghost) who always remained in the past; escapes from the reality,

-Restores faith in the ghost through interaction

-Made the ghost realize his misdeed.

- Conduit between two culture – way of life
- Cross cultural understanding
- Mouth piece of the writer
- Aspiration of the new generation to be inclusive.
- Doesn't neglect the traditions of Europe, respects them try to understand.

4. The Canterville Ghost mirrors the mindset of a middle class family. Discuss it.

Ans. VALUE POINTS

- Otis family – showing off their modernism, fearlessness, superior complexity, American Capitalism
- Prefer material things to traditional values
- The Ghost – egoism, way to repent on his misdeed, male domination, sticking to tradition without any sense
- Sir Simon murdered his wife because she was not a good cook, nor could do repair work.

5. Describe the universal message of the story. (Value based question) Ans. VALUE POINTS

- Cross cultural understanding
- Excessive belief in tradition and customs make the person superstitious and blind follower
- Traditions keep the past alive
- The Ghost is the imagination of bankrupt mind -
Through composite dialogue – solve any problem
- Modern outlook and challenging nature , pragmatism always challenge the nonsense customs and rituals
- Egoism of capitalism and puritanism of Europe - conflict

Question 13: Long Answer Question (Approximately 130 Words) 07 Marks

1. How does the writer justify that the place is haunted?

Ans. The Canterville Ghost is well designed and imaginative product of a creative mind of Oscar Wilde. The Canterville Ghost is not just a suspense story of ghost but also it is the great example to give a universal message through word woven.

The following are the examples, incidents and action that may prove that the place has been haunted.

The Ghost has been seen by many a person and there was a man who can be trusted by one and all witnessed the appearance of the ghost. He was nothing but the Rector of the Parish, the Rev. Augustus Dampier. Secondly the grandmother of Lord canteville felt unconscious when two skeleton hands were placed on her shoulder. Moreover, Lady Canterville often had very little sleep at night. Mrs. Umney always found blood stains on the carpet.

The rankling of the chain heard by Mr. Otis, one who did not believe in the superstitiousness. The disappearance of Virginia made the Otis family confirmed about the presence of the Ghost. These are the examples described by the writer to justify that the place is haunted.

2. Do you think that The Canterville Ghost is just a ghost story? Justify.

Ans. VALUE POINTS

-Yes /No

-Ghost stories get us to the world of horror

-Makes the readers curious, excited, anxious

-Main themes would be – death, horror, witch, evils, traditional prophecies

-It is a story with a difference. The writer used the Ghost as an image to weave a plot of cross culture understanding. The ghost is not horrible. He didn't succeed to terrify the Otis family. He also wanted to leave the place

-He confessed his misdeeds, wants to terrify only not to murder anybody

-He himself was frightened by the twins; his miserable condition makes the story humorous.

3. How did the Ghost himself get rid of his stereo type role? Ans. VALUE POINTS

- Became dejected as nobody fears him
- Made no appearance
- The ghost confides in Virginia -
The Ghost seeks help from Virginia
- He requested Virginia to weep for him as a result he got salvation. Prayed for him -He was repentant
- God has forgiven him because of Virginia

4. What are the attempts made by the Ghost to terrorize the Otis family?

Ans. VALUE POINTS

- The persistent blood stains
- Strangely there was thunder and lightning – at their arrival
- The sound of clanking metal
- The ghost with burning – red eyes
- Emitting a ghostly green light
- Extinguishing the candle, giving out frightening sounds of demoniac laughter

5. Describe the behavior of each character in the story with the Ghost.

Ans. VALUE POINTS

- Mr. Otis – challenged the existence of the ghost, to prove his modernism -
Mrs. Otis – cool minded ordered Umney to clean up the floor
- Virginia – restored faith in him, provides platform to express his inner heart, establishes empathy and helps him to get rid of this victimization.

-The Twins – made a fun of him, first who dared to frighten the Ghost, made the Ghost realize his mistakes and shortcoming, made him belittled.

-Washington – wanted to remove the blood stains practically, with Pinkerton’s champion stain Remover, shows his indifferent attitude towards the existence of the ghost.

Questions for Practice

The Canterville Ghost

R. 1. It was the ghost who was haunted by the American family. Explain the statement indicating instances from the novel.

Q. 2. The Canterville Ghost presents more instances of belied expectations and terrors than that of frightening incidents usually incorporated in ghost novels. Discuss.

Q. 3. Describe the character of Virginia in the novel.

Q. 4. The activities of the ghost are at the same time horrifying and amusing. Support the statement with help from relevant instances from the novel.

Q. 5. State your views on Duke of Cheshire and Virginia’s relationship in the novel.

Q. 6. Why did the American Republican Minister, Mr. Otis purchase the Canterville Chase despite knowing it to be haunted?

Q. 7. Mention the plans made by the ghost to frighten the Otis family.

Q. 8. Write a detailed note on the tricks played by the twin on the ghost.

Q. 9. If given an option, which part of the novel would you like to change or modify and why?

Q. 10. Explain the role played by supernatural elements apart from the ghost in the novel.

Q. 11. The ghost and Mr. Otis’s family presented a cultural clash between English and the United States. Explain.

Q. 12. How did the ghost help Virginia ‘to see the significance of life and death, and why love is stranger than both’?