

TEACHER'S NOTES BOOKLET

THE  
CANTERVILLE  
GHOST  
AND OTHER STORIES

OSCAR WILDE

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## GRADING SCHEME

### LEVEL ONE (500 headwords)

present simple  
present continuous (present)  
*going to* (future)  
past simple  
imperative  
*can* (ability and permission)  
*would like* (requests and offers)  
*must* (obligation)  
*let's, shall* (suggestions)  
gerunds  
adverbs (time, manner and place)  
adjectives (comparatives and superlatives)

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### LEVEL TWO (800 headwords)

*all of the above, plus*  
present continuous (future)  
*going to* (intentions)  
present perfect  
past continuous  
past perfect  
passive (simple forms)  
*will/shall* (future, requests and offers)  
*must/can't* (deduction)  
*have to* (obligation)  
*should* (advice)  
gerund as subject  
*too/enough* + adjective  
reported speech (with *ask/tell/say*)  
zero and first conditional  
defining relative clauses

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### LEVEL THREE (1200 headwords)

*all of the above, plus*  
present perfect continuous  
passive (all tenses excluding modals)  
*was/were going to*  
*used to*  
*make/let*  
*may/might* (possibility)  
reported speech

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### LEVEL FOUR (1800 headwords)

*all of the above, plus*  
past perfect continuous  
future perfect  
future continuous  
passive (modals)  
*had better/would rather*  
second and third conditionals

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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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Oscar Wilde's most famous works are his plays and his one novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Students may have heard some of his famous remarks or know of his colourful life.

Oscar Wilde published most of his work in the last decade of the nineteenth century and died in Paris in 1900, a characteristically stylish time and place to die, although he actually died in poverty and disgrace. Europe in the last decades of the nineteenth century was an optimistic, forward-looking place. Traditional beliefs and methods in all intellectual fields were being challenged. In high Parisian society this was the beginning of the 'belle époque'.

Other famous figures from this time were: writers Robert Louis Stevenson and Thomas Hardy in Britain and Henry James in America who were, like Wilde in *The Canterville Ghost*, interested in the cultural contrast and cross-currents between the old world of Europe and the New World; artists (Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, Degas); architects (Gaudí, Rennie Mackintosh, Louis Sullivan and the Chicago School skyscrapers). Advances in science followed in rapid succession (the telephone - Alexander Graham Bell, the electric light bulb - Joseph Swan, and in 1899 the wireless - Guglielmo Marconi). In music there were Gilbert and Sullivan at one end of the scale and Verdi at the other. Traditional ways and beliefs were being challenged in all intellectual spheres.

Oscar Wilde himself was associated with the Aesthetic Movement which believed in art for art's sake, where art was concerned with the form of

what it represented rather than its moralistic content. He dressed in a flamboyant style and became almost a professional society wit. He struggled to achieve success with his writing. He married in 1884 and in order to support his young family (sons, born in 1885 and 1886), he began to write stories in the increasingly popular genres of ghost and fairy stories. Books became much cheaper to produce towards the end of the nineteenth century and improvements in working conditions gave people more leisure time. Suddenly there was a huge market for popular types of fiction.

Wilde's stories were often unconventional, however. Good often did not triumph. In *The Canterville Ghost*, for example, we are encouraged to sympathise with the ghost who killed his wife rather than the upright American family.

When success finally came for Oscar Wilde, beginning with the first of his society comedies, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, produced in 1892, it did not last long. In 1891 he met Lord Arthur Douglas and fell desperately in love with him. This very public homosexual (and at that time illegal) affair took him through two criminal trials and ended in his complete disgrace and two years' imprisonment with hard labour. He was made bankrupt and when he came out of prison, he had nothing. His wife died in 1898 and he was forbidden to see his children to whom he had been devoted. He himself died two years later in poverty, either of meningitis or, more probably, of syphilis.

# TO THE TEACHER

Welcome to the Teacher's Notes for the Richmond Reader, *The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories*. Here you will find a wide variety of activities based on the three stories. Materials for the students are given on the worksheets on pages 9 to 14.

There are six worksheets. Photocopy them as you need them for your students. Each activity in the Teacher's Notes that uses a worksheet indicates which worksheet to use after its title.

All the activities have suggestions for class management. They are all labelled as *whole class*, *group*, *pair* or *individual* tasks or a combination.

You may want to assign the individual activities for homework, but make sure that the students know exactly what to do before they start. Some of the activity types may be new to them.

## THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

### Activities before reading the story

#### 1 Starting a new book No WS Whole class then pairs

- Introduce the reader, explaining that there are three short stories.
- Ask students to find features that will help them understand the story, for example the chapter titles. Authors often use these to focus the reader's attention on the main point of the chapter. Tell students to make a list of features in pairs. Suggested features: *cover*, *blurb* (the short piece about the book on the back cover), *chapter titles*, *glossary*, *comprehension exercises*.
- Show students how the glossary works. Tell them to flick through the book and find an asterisked word. Then tell them to find the word in the glossary and read the definition. Explain that the context and illustrations will help them understand many of the words.

#### 2 Discussion No WS Whole class

- Talk about ghosts with the class. First, arrive at a reasonable definition of a ghost, perhaps as the spirit of someone who has died who comes back to haunt the places he/she once lived in. Ghosts are said to be able to walk through walls and change their form.
- Find out how many students believe in ghosts and ask them to tell the class about any ghosts they know about from their family history or from places they have visited.

### Activities while reading the story

#### 3 A contrast of values WS | Individual or whole class

- Begin this activity after reading Chapter 1. In *The Canterville Ghost*, Oscar Wilde characterises the American way of life as modern and the English way of life as traditional.
- As they read the story, students use the chart to note down any differences between the American and the English approach to life.
- If the class finds this difficult, complete the chart as a whole class activity.

The completed chart might be something like this:

| American ways                            | English ways                             |
|--|--|
| money the most important thing           | social position the most important thing |
| status achieved by individual effort     | status achieved by birth                 |
| no time for ghosts                       | moving because of the ghost              |
| nothing is impossible                    | tradition cannot be interfered with      |
| cannot be frightened                     | easy to frighten                         |
| no history or tradition                  | plenty of history and tradition          |
| believe in the simple life and hard work | jewels important to the upper class      |

**4 Practical jokes** *WS1 Individual*

- Begin this activity after reading Chapter 2. The twins – the Stars and Stripes – are very fond of playing practical jokes on people and particularly on the Canterville ghost. Washington Otis sometimes joins in as well. Students use the chart to keep a record of the jokes they play and the attacks they make on the ghost. They should update the chart after each chapter.

The completed chart:

| Page number | Practical joke   |
|-------------|--|
| p 19        | throw a pillow at his head   |
| p 20        | throw pieces of firewood at him  |
| p 25        | they make a pretend ghost out of a brush, a bed sheet and a pumpkin and leave it in the middle of the corridor   |
| p 29        | they put things in his way so he would fall over them in the dark  |
| p 29        | they put butter at the top of some stairs  |
| p 29        | they place a container of ice-cold water on top of the slightly open door to their bedroom   |
| p 31        | they hide in a dark corner in the library, wait until the ghost appears and then jump out and shout 'Boo!'; Washington is ready to hose him with the garden hosepipe |

**Activities after reading the story**

**5 Ghostly outfits** *WS 2 Individuals*

- Students write one or two sentences describing each of the ghost’s outfits. They may need help with vocabulary.

**Possible answers**

- His first appearance (p17 and illustration on p18). The ghost appeared as a terrible old man with eyes as red as fire, long, dirty grey hair and old clothes full of holes. He had heavy chains on his arms and legs.

- His second appearance (pp20 & 22 and illustration on p21). He had tried to put on his suit of armour.
- When he meets Mrs Otis at the top of the stairs (p22). A large black dog.
- His third appearance (p23 and illustration p24). He wore a large hat with a red feather and a white shroud. He carried a large, bloodstained knife.
- Headless Rupert (p29 and illustration p30). (Students will need help with vocabulary for this.) He wore an Elizabethan (sixteenth-century) costume with riding boots, a hat with a feather and a short jacket with a ruff.

**6 Character profile** *No WS Individuals*

- Ask students to choose one of the main characters in *The Canterville Ghost*: Mr Hiram B Otis, Mrs Otis, Washington, Virginia, the twins, the Duke of Cheshire.
- Don’t let them choose the Canterville ghost because they will be covering the same ground in Activity 7 below.
- Students record all the information they can find about their character, writing each piece of information in a separate box.
- If you like, get students to turn their notes into a paragraph.

**7 Obituary** *WS 3 Individuals*

- Students use the words provided to complete the obituary for the Canterville ghost.

**Answers**

- |                 |             |
|-----------------|-------------|
| 1 funeral       | 10 starved  |
| 2 led           | 11 unlocked |
| 3 won           | 12 ghost    |
| 4 congratulated | 13 kitchen  |
| 5 suit          | 14 skeleton |
| 6 married       | 15 mad      |
| 7 library       | 16 tears    |
| 8 bloodstain    | 17 grave    |
| 9 murdered      | 18 last     |

**THE MODEL MILLIONAIRE**

**Activity before reading the story**

**8 Meaning from context** *WS 4 Individuals*

- Hand out Worksheet 4. Students follow the instructions for the activity.

- Make sure students come back to the activity to check their answers after they have read the story.

**Answers**

| New word       | Part of speech | Definition   |
|----------------|----------------|--|
| charming       | adjective      | nice, with an attractive manner and conversation           |
| profile        | noun           | the side view of the face                                  |
| beggar         | noun           | person who asks for money in the street                    |
| feel sorry for | verb           | think someone is unlucky to be in the position they are in |
| shabby         | adjective      | in poor condition, for example clothes or furniture        |
| temper         | noun           | someone's general mood                                     |

**Activity while reading the story**

**9 Profile of Hughie** *No WS Individuals*

- Ask students to record information about Hughie as they read the story. Tell them to include page numbers so they can refer back later and write their notes up into a paragraph.

**Activities after reading the story**

**10 The title** *No WS Whole class*

- Read aloud the final sentence of the story: 'You don't often meet a millionaire model, but a model millionaire is even less common!'
- Check that students understand the two meanings of model:
  - 1 The Baron models for the artist, Alan Trevor, and is therefore a millionaire who models.
  - 2 The Baron provides a good example (is a good model) because he is generous with his money.

**11 Telling the story** *WS 4 Individuals*

- Students put the sentences in the right order to tell the story.

**Answers**

D F B I G E A J H C

## THE SPHINX WITHOUT A SECRET

### Activity before reading the story

#### 12 Talk about the pictures *No WS Individuals then groups*

- Give students five minutes to look through the pictures and read the captions.
- Get them to work in groups and predict what the story might be about.
- They will probably suggest that the story is set in Paris from the opening illustration. In fact, the story is told in Paris but actually took place in London.

### Activity while reading the story

#### 13 Tick the adjectives *WS 5 Individuals*

- Students decide which adjective applies to which character.

|              | Lord Murchison | Lady Alroy |
|--------------|----------------|------------|
| distant      |                | ✓          |
| good-looking | ✓              |            |
| honest       | ✓              |            |
| married      |                |            |
| mysterious   |                | ✓          |
| nervous      |                | ✓          |
| respectable  |                | ✓          |
| secretive    |                | ✓          |
| tall         |                | ✓          |
| truthful     | ✓              |            |
| very rich    |                | ✓          |
| widowed      |                | ✓          |

### Activities after reading the story

#### 14 Complete the sentences *WS 5 Individuals*

- Students follow the instruction, choosing the right verb form for each sentence.

#### Answers

1 was sitting, called 2 had not seen 3 could not say  
4 haven't been out 5 am not lying

#### 15 A news report *No WS Pairs or individuals*

- Tell students to look at page 70. The story mentions an article which appeared in the Morning Post, reporting the death of Lady Alroy.
- Discuss with the whole class what details the article might include:
  - who she was: her social status, her marital status, whether she had any children, her age
  - where she lived
  - where she died
  - why she died
  - who discovered her

The article would probably not include anything about her secret life in Cumnor Street. Nobody knew about it except Gerald Murchison.

- Students write the report. Tell them to think of a suitable headline.

#### 16 Nothing to declare but my genius *WS 6 Pairs or individuals*

- Let students do the completion task first. Go through the quotations checking answers and checking that students understand what they mean.

#### Answers

1 enemies 2 Work 3 fox 4 parents 5 country  
6 Democracy 7 not 8 price

## Extended writing

**17 Then and now** No WS *Whole class then individuals*

- Introduce the subject of how society was organised in the late nineteenth century with the class. List topic headings on the board. You might include the position of women, the extremes between rich and poor, the strict codes of behaviour, working conditions, diet, health, living conditions, transport, scientific belief, religion. Ask students to choose one or two of these headings and find out more about these particular aspects of life in their own country in the late nineteenth century. Tell them to make notes and bring them to the next lesson.
- In the next lesson, talk about the differences in social organisation between then and now. Record students' findings in note form on the board, building up a chart that contrasts points of interest.
- Explain that students are going to write an essay based on some of this information. Tell them to copy down any notes they want for their work. They can concentrate on areas of particular interest to them. Encourage them to include opinions, facts and evidence in their essay and to give it a strong introduction and a brief, pithy conclusion. They might even like to include one of the quotations from Oscar Wilde if it is relevant to their topic.

## Project

**Write a short story** No WS *Whole class then groups or individuals*

- First discuss the themes that Wilde deals with in his short story. Tell students to think about the three stories for a few minutes and note down the themes that Oscar Wilde explores in his work.
- Students might suggest the following:
  - society, particularly the fashionable upper class
  - fantasies of the rich – the millionaire being portrayed as a beggar; the rich widow slumming it in the back streets, trying to create an identity for herself
  - the empty lives of the rich
  - secrecy and deception.
- Introduce the topic of the short story. Discuss what a short story is and encourage students to name other short story writers they know in their own language or in English. A short story may be about:
  - a very minor incident
  - the flavour of a place or time
  - a passing feeling that many people experience
  - a small part of a much larger event
  - a moral tale.
- Students can either work in groups or on their own. Tell them to work on an idea for a short story. They can retell a story they have read or a fairy tale they know from childhood or describe a very simple incident from their own lives.
- The next stage is to plan the story. Help with key vocabulary at this stage or make sure students have dictionaries to find their own.
- Leave the writing stage until another lesson. Ask students to think about their story in the meantime, composing it in their head.
- Students can write the first draft of their stories either at home or in class. Collect in and correct their first drafts.
- Hand out paper for students to write out or key in their final version so that everyone has the same type of paper. Get students to make a cover and a contents page. Bind the finished stories together in a book, either with a plastic binder or staples. Circulate the book of stories around the class, giving everyone a chance to read it. Later you can display it in the classroom.



*Begin these activities after you have read The Canterville Ghost.*

**ACTIVITY 5 Ghostly outfits**

Write one or two sentences describing each of the ghost's outfits listed here:

- his first appearance (page 17)




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- when he meets Mrs Otis at the top of the stairs (page 22)

- his third appearance (page 23)




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- his second appearance (pages 20 and 22)

- Headless Rupert (page 29)




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## WORKSHEET

3

Do this activity after reading *The Canterville Ghost*.

## ACTIVITY 7 Obituary

Most daily newspapers have an obituary column. Here they give brief biographical details of people who have died recently, highlighting their achievements and paying less attention to their faults.

Complete this obituary for the Canterville ghost.

Use these words:

bloodstain ghost married tears led  
unlocked funeral kitchen last starved suit  
won congratulated mad library grave  
murdered skeleton

## SIR SIMON DE CANTERVILLE 1535-1584-1891

Yesterday, the (1) \_\_\_\_\_ took place of one of the oldest members of a great aristocratic house, the Cantervilles. The present Lord Canterville (2) \_\_\_\_\_ the walkers behind the carriage carrying his 350 year-old ancestor.

Sir Simon led a long and full life and death. He (3) \_\_\_\_\_ many tournaments, often in the presence of Queen Elizabeth I, who once (4) \_\_\_\_\_ him on his fine (5) \_\_\_\_\_ of armour. Unhappily (6) \_\_\_\_\_ to a woman he did not love, Sir Simon murdered his wife, Lady Eleanore de Canterville, in 1575 in the (7) \_\_\_\_\_ of Canterville Chase. A (8) \_\_\_\_\_ had marked the spot of the

murder for more than three hundred years, until it was washed away by one of the present inhabitants of Canterville Chase, a Mr Washington Otis.

Nine years after his terrible deed, Sir Simon was (9) \_\_\_\_\_ himself, by his wife's brothers. They locked him up without food or water in a small room in Canterville Chase. He (10) \_\_\_\_\_ to death. The room where he died remained undiscovered until last week, when the daughter of the Otis family (11) \_\_\_\_\_ its secret.

After his death, Sir Simon enjoyed a long career as a (12) \_\_\_\_\_. He was very successful and for three hundred years he was shown the

greatest respect. He drove a butler to kill himself in the (13) \_\_\_\_\_ when he saw Sir Simon's ghostly green hand opening the window. He terrified an old aunt of the present Lord Canterville by placing two (14) \_\_\_\_\_ hands on her shoulders as she dressed for dinner. And Lord Canterville's uncle went (15) \_\_\_\_\_ after seeing Sir Simon turn himself into a large black dog.

But he was unable to frighten any member of the Otis family from America. He became ill and depressed towards the end of his death, until Virginia Otis, with her (16) \_\_\_\_\_ and innocent love, was able to lead him to a peaceful (17) \_\_\_\_\_. And to echo the simple message on his gravestone - Peace at (18) \_\_\_\_\_, Sir Simon!

**WORKSHEET 4**

**Do these activities after reading the chapters given.**

**ACTIVITY 8 Meaning from context**

Do this activity before reading *The Model Millionaire*. All the words in bold in the sentences below appear in *The Model Millionaire*. Work out the part of speech and choose the correct definition for each word, using the context of the sentence to help you.

When you have read the story, check to see if you were right.

- 1 Hughie is a **charming** man. Everybody loves him.
- 2 As he turns his head to the side you can see what a fine **profile** he has.
- 3 I never give **beggars** any money when I see them in the street.

- 4 But I do **feel sorry for** beggars – it must be a miserable life.
- 5 She looks terrible – her coat is **shabby** and she never washes her hair.
- 6 I can never ask my father for anything because he is always in a bad **temper** and would say no.

**Definitions**

- think someone is unlucky to be in the position they are in
- the side view of the face
- in poor condition, for example clothes or furniture
- someone’s general mood
- person who asks for money in the street
- nice, with an attractive manner and conversation

**Parts of speech**

noun, verb, adjective

| New word       | Part of speech | Definition |
|----------------|----------------|------------|
| charming       |                |            |
| profile        |                |            |
| beggar         |                |            |
| feel sorry for |                |            |
| shabby         |                |            |
| temper         |                |            |

**ACTIVITY 11 Telling the story**

Do this activity after reading *The Model Millionaire*.

These sentences below tell the story. Put them in the right order.

- A Alan tells Hughie, ‘My old beggar man ... seems to like you. He wanted to know your name and address.’
- B Hughie visits Alan Trevor and finds he is painting a portrait of a beggar.
- C The Baron gives Hughie and Laura a cheque for ten thousand pounds.
- D Colonel Merton will not let Hughie marry his daughter unless he can find ten thousand pounds.
- E The beggar smiles at Hughie and thanks him.
- F Hughie tries to earn a living but fails.
- G Hughie gives the beggar one gold piece.
- H Alan tells Hughie the identity of the ‘beggar’.
- I Alan leaves the studio for a few moments and the beggar sits down to rest.
- J Hughie tells Alan that he gave the Baron money.

# WORKSHEET 5

**Do these activities after reading the chapters given.**

## ACTIVITY 13 Tick the adjectives

Do this activity while you are reading *The Sphinx without a Secret*.

Which adjectives apply to which character? As you read the story, complete the chart.

|              | <b>Lord Murchison</b> | <b>Lady Alroy</b> |
|--------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| distant      |                       |                   |
| good-looking |                       |                   |
| honest       |                       |                   |
| married      |                       |                   |
| mysterious   |                       |                   |
| nervous      |                       |                   |
| respectable  |                       |                   |
| secretive    |                       |                   |
| tall         |                       |                   |
| truthful     |                       |                   |
| unmarried    |                       |                   |
| very rich    |                       |                   |
| widowed      |                       |                   |

## ACTIVITY 14 Complete the sentences

Do this activity after you have read *The Sphinx without a Secret*.

Choose the correct form of the verb in brackets to complete these sentences.

- 1 One afternoon I \_\_\_\_\_ outside a café in the heart of Paris, when suddenly someone \_\_\_\_\_ my name. (sit, call)
- 2 Gerald and I were at university together, but I \_\_\_\_\_ him for ten years. (not see)
- 3 It was the face of someone who had a secret, but I \_\_\_\_\_ if the secret was good or bad. (not able to say)
- 4 'I'm so glad to see you,' she said. 'I \_\_\_\_\_ all day.' (not be out)
- 5 'I \_\_\_\_\_, Lord Murchison,' she said. 'I went to meet no one.' (not lie)

**Do this activity when you have finished reading the book.**

### ACTIVITY 16 Nothing to declare but my genius

When Oscar Wilde was asked if he had anything to declare at customs in New York, he famously replied, 'I have nothing to declare but my genius.' He was famous then and still is today for his witty remarks and aphorisms. (An aphorism is a saying that states a general truth. We can also call it a maxim.)

Oscar Wilde's sayings are among those most often quoted in the English language. Below are some famous remarks, each with one key word missing. Use these words to complete them:

work fox parents country democracy not  
price enemies

- 1 'A man cannot be too careful in his choice of \_\_\_\_\_.'
- 2 '\_\_\_\_\_ is the curse of the drinking classes.' (an adaptation of the favourite Victorian expression, 'Drink is the curse of the working classes.')
- 3 'The English country gentleman galloping after a \_\_\_\_\_ – the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable.'
- 4 'Children begin by loving their \_\_\_\_\_; after a time they judge them; rarely, if ever, do they forgive them.'
- 5 'Anybody can be good in the \_\_\_\_\_.' (where there are no temptations; it is not so easy in the city)
- 6 '\_\_\_\_\_ means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people.'
- 7 'There is only one thing worse than being talked about, and that is \_\_\_\_\_ being talked about.'
- 8 A cynic is 'a man who knows the \_\_\_\_\_ of everything and the value of nothing.'

Think of a quotation you like. Translate it into English and write it here.

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## KEY TO BOOK EXERCISES

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### THE CANTERVILLE GHOST

**A**

1d 2a 3b 4c

**B****Suggested answers**

- 1 When Sir Simon Canterville mysteriously disappeared in 1584.
- 2 Because he thought a ghostly figure in armour would excite even the Otis family and because it had helped him to win competitions.
- 3 His wife's brothers locked him up and gave him no food. He starved to death.
- 4 What happened when she was locked up with the ghost.

**C**

1c 2b 3b 4c

### THE MODEL MILLIONAIRE

**A****Suggested answers**

- 1 False. He liked Hughie, but he didn't think Hughie had enough money to marry his daughter.
- 2 False. He had to leave the tea business because he was not very good at it - he forgot to write down orders and lost a lot of customers.
- 3 True.
- 4 False. Baron Hausberg was not a beggar, he was a millionaire.

**B****Suggested answers**

- 1 Because he did not like working long hours while his friends did nothing all day long.
- 2 He told him to get ten thousand pounds and then ask if he could marry Laura.
- 3 He was an artist and a friend of Hughie's.
- 4 Because he thought Hughie knew he was not a real beggar.

### THE SPHINX WITHOUT A SECRET

**A**

1d 2b

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# THE RICHMOND READERS SERIES

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The Richmond Readers Series presents a selection of high quality, original and simplified stories which have been graded in four levels, from beginner to upper-intermediate. Our grading scheme has been devised with reference to the Council of Europe's Waystage and Threshold syllabi and the Cobuild lists of the most frequently occurring words in the English language. Structures and vocabulary have been selected according to two criteria:

- 1 what students are likely to have been taught
- 2 what students will be able to deduce through transference from their own language

Each Reader has a glossary and a number of different exercises to check comprehension and practise language manipulation.

The Teacher's Notes Booklets are a unique feature of the Richmond Readers Series. Each Reader has an accompanying booklet with photocopiable worksheets, background notes for the teacher and ideas for additional activities, discussion work and project material.

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## **Richmond Readers offer the student**

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## **Richmond Readers offer the teacher**

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Support for the teacher, with a large number of additional activities and projects provided in the Teacher's Notes.

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