Trabajo Fin de Máster

THE USE OF LITERATURE IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM: M. R. JAMES’ GHOST STORIES.

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1. Abstract

This work consists of two main parts: a theoretical part and a practical section. In the theoretical part, a short investigation about the history of literature in the classroom will be carried out, focusing on a specific genre which is fiction and, in our case, contemporary horror fiction. In the practical part, all this theory will be put into practice and a didactic unit will be developed using several short stories by Montague Rhode James.

Key words: literature in the classroom, TEFL, contemporary horror fiction, M. R. James, ghost stories.

Resumen

Este trabajo consiste en dos partes principales: una base teórica y una sección práctica. En la parte teórica, se llevará a cabo una pequeña investigación sobre la historia de la literatura en la clase, enfocándonos en un género específico que es la ficción y, en nuestro caso, la ficción de terror contemporánea. En la segunda parte, toda esta teoría será puesta en práctica y se desarrollará una unidad didáctica basada en varios trabajos de Montague Rhode James.

Palabras clave: literatura en la clase, TEFL, ficción de terror contemporánea, M. R. James, historias de fantasmas.
2. Introduction

The reason why I have decided to write my master’s dissertation about Literature is because I have always been very fond of it and it also has been my favourite part of my English Philology degree. However, when talking about Secondary Obligatory Education, I have discovered that literature in the English classroom is almost inexistent. This is due to many reasons like the lack of time, for example, or the fact that teachers must teach many obligatory grammar concepts and they focus more in this aspect, etc. But, what if all the objectives that we must achieve could be achieved by reading literature? Why not using literature as a source of input instead of the typical class-book? I have also discovered that this is not a new topic of discussion, as there are many experts and important authors who have already debate and written a lot about this issue, so, I have made a short investigation about this (state of the art) in which I mention different opinions and arguments for or against the use of literature in ESL. The works of authors such as, Widdowson, Hill, McKay, Sage, Demetriou, Day or Gajdusek have been the basis of my study in which I have found more advantages than disadvantages towards this matter and also, motivation.

In the second part of this essay, a Didactic Unit will be outlined putting into practice all previously exposed in the theoretical part to show how literature can help us practice not only reading, but also writing, speaking, listening and interaction, apart from many other psychological and social skills. As I wanted to make it engaging, I have chosen “horror literature” which is quite interesting for teenagers and we could exploit on Halloween, for example. In this respect, I have also made an investigation on the subject “Horror Fiction”, history, authors and works, background and evolution until reaching the modern masters of horror, where we find our author, M. R. James. The works of Punter, Lovecraft or Sullivan have also been crucial for this investigation. Montague Rhode James will also be described regarding his ghost stories and style. In addition, his stories are set in the Victorian era of Britain, a part of history which I find quite interesting to show the students; inventions, society, important events or values of the time.

In conclusion, this essay plans to defend the use literature in the English classroom as a vehicle to learn and use the language as well as to comply with the current legislation requirements in the subject English as a Foreign Language.
3. State of the art

This section consists of an investigation on the works of several authors who have dealt with the use of literature in the teaching of English as a foreign language; supporters and non-supporters, advantages of using literature in the L2 classroom, fiction as a helpful tool and also some types of activities. Furthermore, a short investigation in the matter of horror fiction will be carried out dealing with its history and evolution. Finally, I will talk about M. R. James, mainly the features of his personal style and work.

3.1. The use of literature in the classroom

Nowadays, nobody can deny the multiple benefits of using literature in the classroom but it has not always been like this; as Widdowson (1984:194) states:

> There was a time when literature was accorded high prestige in language study, when it was assumed that part of the purpose of language learning, perhaps even the most essential part, was to provide access to literary works. [...] Now, literature figures at hall in language programs.

But what were the arguments against using literature in the English classroom?

> First, there is the matter of purpose. It can be argued that literature contributes nothing to the utilitarian objectives of language learning [...] Literature has no practical uses and so it is useless. (Widdowson, 1982:194; the bold types are mine)

Basically, what is the point of teaching literature to people who are learning English regarding their academical and occupational needs? What is the point of teaching poems to a biologist? Moreover, there is another argument against literature in classroom that has to do with the process of learning;

> ...it is pointed out that literature is a potentially disruptive influence in the well-ordered world of the carefully controlled language course [...] It also offends against another cardinal principle of conventional language teaching: the principle of correctness. (Widdowson, 1982:204-205; the bold types are mine)

To explain this better, he also provides an example; imagine that we are working with this poem in our English classroom:

> Can storied urn or animated bust
> Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
> Can Margaret back to its kennel call the dog?
Can John back to the library bring the book?

These are not grammatically correct sentences and if they were used by any student, it automatically calls for correction:

*Can John bring back the book to the library?*

*Can Margaret call the dog back to its kennel?*

...

So, literature has no utilitarian purpose and it is not a suitable source of input for a grammatically correct process of learning. But Widdowson continuous; if we delete literature of our textbooks, writers have to invent their own. Here is an example of prose fiction of a textbook, a story called *Walking in the Park*:

Penny and Kate are walking in the park. It is a big park with tall trees and a small lake. Penny is looking at the birds. The birds are flying over the lake...

Can these texts be considered as literature? “Considered as discourse, they have the essential character of literature” (Widdowson, 1982:211; the bold types are mine). With this implication of discourse, the author is highlighting meaning (capacity for making sense). These kind of texts are “deficient” because they represent language only to matters of routines and they forget the human part of the language user. There are no problems to solve or nothing deep to think on as meaning is explicit and has been carefully prepared for an easy assimilation. They draw attention to nothing but language. Discourse is about “procedures of interpretation; we negotiate meaning and set about making sense of expressions by referring them to other parts of the text in which they occur” (Widdowson, 1982:210). Imagine know this example (selected from one of the short stories we are going to work on, “The Ash-tree”):

He opened the book and the first words he read were from the book of Luke, chapter 8: ‘Cut it down’ were the words he read (pg.3).

Of course, much more interesting than Penny’s story, I suppose. Here, the student should start to wonder and he/she should come across some referential questions about these two lines which seek for meaning; who is he? Cut down what? Could it be related to the title “The Ash-tree”?

We tend to use sentences to teach students language use like:

*He was running through the park.*

*She was running through the park.*

*They were running through the park.*
Here, “the discourse potential is suppressed” as Widdowson (1982:211) cites. Sentences are not supposed to create interaction; students just sit and copy grammatically correct sentences but without being engaged.

These kind of texts, “do not exploit the possibilities of creativity. Literature, on the other hand, does” (Widdowson, 1984:211; the bold types are mine), which is extremely useful to train writing and composition.

But Widdowson (1982:214) also gives us the clue to integrate good meaningful input;

[… we still have the responsibility to provide guidance by the careful selection and presentation of literary texts so that their potential as discourse for developing learning can be realized”. And this is the reason why I am going to talk later about “graded readers.

Another argument against the use of literature in the classroom, as McKay (1982:531; the bold types are mine) describes it is that “to the extent that literary texts reflect a particular cultural perspective, they may be difficult for ESL students to read”, however, as a defendant of the cause, she mentions in her investigation a case with the use of English literature with Puerto Rico students that made her conclude that: “literature may work to promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both the teacher and the student” (McKay, 1982:531; the bold types are mine).

In my point of view, this is the reason why so many experts and teachers recommend delivering input before demanding output; when working with a text or a story we must provide a context and explain the background for that writing. The teacher should prepare engaging activities to submerge the student into the proper atmosphere; work previous vocabulary, debate some cultural, space and time differences, etc.

For instance, we know that the author we are going to work with is not a very actual one and maybe students could be less engaged but, among the short stories we are going to work, there are some that are set in a real location like Suffolk, in England. The teacher can show them how Suffolk looked like in the nineteenth century, present pictures of those creepy Victorian houses, some scary family photographs of the beginning of the century with those old costumes, etc. For example, “Lost Hearts” is a story about a young orphaned boy who is adopted by his uncle with really bad intentions; we could show our students how children were treated in the nineteenth century and make them trade places with the protagonist. Maybe after reading the story they can appreciate better their living conditions comparing them to those of those poor children. There will be always values to teach and to think on and we will definitely open our student’s mind to cultural differences and to respect and
appreciation. As stated by Demetriou (2016), “Literature broadens the student’s mind. They learn to respect other cultures as literature is after all one of the many cultural manifestations of a country.”

In this respect, Howard Sage (1987:4) depicts another principle in Literature which is an advantage in the teaching of values and morals in the classroom, quite related also to what McKay said about the cultural perspective; the principle of universality in Literature. From the beginning of time, literature has always been a way of describing not only people and events, but also people’s problems and ideas, necessities and inner thoughts; human condition.

Literature is rooted in daily life, the activities that people carry out each day. The world of ordering food and drinks, catching buses and trains, and marking and making appointments runs through all the literature. And, of course, it is a world that ESL students must become familiar with.

But not all are disadvantages (bearing in mind that all previously mention are “problems” that we could easily solve), Demetriou (2016), among others, name some of the several advantages of using literature in the classroom:

- Literary (oral or written) texts are authentic (or fairly authentic) sources of input.
- Literary texts introduce a variety of contexts and situations that would be difficult to reproduce faithfully in the daily practice of a classroom.
- Students are exposed to different types of language, from dialogues to descriptions of varied degrees of difficulty, depending on their linguistic level and maturity.
- Literary characters usually connect well with the student’s world of fantasy, therefore, students feel more motivated to learn the language.
- Literature stimulates the student’s imagination, which can be improved by encouraging him/her to make up his/her own endings, draw pictures of the plot or the characters, dramatize the action in front of their mates, etc.
- Literature motivates the student to practice the skill of reading mainly, but the skills of speaking, writing and listening should also be practiced. The different skills that can be practiced with the different literary genres are:

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1 I have used a good amount of information from my class notes of the subject Intercultural Values of the Teaching and Learning of a Foreign Language and its Literature, by Dr Eroulla Demetriou.
a) **Speaking**: reciting poems, drama, singing songs.

b) **Listening**: drama, oral narrations of fairy tales, songs, poem declamations, etc.

c) **Writing**: fiction (writing short stories, descriptions, dialogues, etc.)

d) **Reading**: fiction (especially novels and short stories, most of the times in the form of “graded readers”)

- Literature makes good readers of our students and reduces their dependence on TV and computers.

Jennifer Hill (1986:9) also talks about the **communicative use** of literature in classroom (which is strictly related to what Widdowson says about discourse): “Literature, [...] is more likely to provide the necessary stimulus to incite students to speech”; students are more likely to interact when they have something meaningful to say or something they would really like to transmit. If we ask a student to make a sentence using “if” and “would”, he may block and invent something but, if we have just finish a story and we ask to the students “What would you have done in the protagonist’s situation?” Well, surely, their brain should be thinking on something, imagination starts working and finally, they would make the effort of expressing their point of view and trying to use already learnt rules like “If I were him...”, “I agree/disagree”, “I would not have done...”, “I would have...” etc. And this way, we are making them use the language, not study it by heart.

This does not mean that teachers should only focus and use literature in classroom; grammar must be taught but, as Hill (1986:7; bold types are mine) states; “Literature provides de possibility of **internalizing** the language and reinforcing points previously mentioned”. For example, if we are teaching the past continuous, we can explain the structure Subject + Auxiliary Verb (was/were) + verb(+ing) but, it is when they see this structure several times when they realize and take the habit of using it. This is achieved with these M. R. James short stories; “Mr Denton was going to his house when he passed a shop”, “he and his aunt were building a new house”, etc. We are not only reinforcing past continuous but also past simple and vocabulary. Hill (1986:8) concludes:

[...] such exposure to authentic material will reinforce what students have previously studied as an academic exercise; the structures and vocabulary will subconsciously register and concepts already known will be reinforced by their discovery in a different context. Students become aware of the wider areas covered by a certain word, of its function in a phrase and sentence, of the words with which it is
usually associated, and all without conscious attention as they enjoy the book.

Hill (1986:9) mentions as well motivation: “Literature provides not only a genuine context for communication; it also gives pleasure by engaging the emotions. [...] Sometimes students need the added stimulus of an exciting story”.

We have been taught, or tend to teach and use texts according to an academic purpose; reading for information. We teach therefore techniques as skimming, scanning, tips for recognizing the titles of the main topics, look for specific information, etc., “just to understand them” but, as Gajdusek defends (1988:232-233; bold types are mine); “we also want to teach our students habits of inquiry and speculation, critical reasoning and the conscious testing of inferences and hypothesis”.

As a sort of conclusion if there must be one for this ever-ending issue of using or not using literature in the classroom, from my personal point of view, I have discovered that there are much more arguments in favour than against its use and many more writers and experts that defend it than opponents. All previously mentioned is the evidence that we should be positive and enthusiastic if we decide to introduce a didactic unit based of literature because of the multiples objectives that our students can achieve, conscious and unconsciously.

3.1.1. Graded Readers

As I have commented before, taking into account Widdowson’s advice to select carefully the texts that we as teachers are going to present, it is worth mentioning the use of graded readers, which are fiction and non-fiction (in our case, fiction) books in which the language is carefully controlled so that it conforms to the competence (linguistic and cultural) of the readers. Their main characteristics are:

- The number of new words is controlled, so that learners are given the opportunity to guess the meaning of any new word as they are introduced in a context of known terms.
- Grammatical structures are limited to those that the student knows or are familiar with already.
- The amount of information is reduced; as is has been proved that the ability to absorb new information in a foreign language is lower, especially at the early stages of a student’s learning process.
Narrative techniques are simplified, to the extent that in the case of classical texts they are adapted to match a simple easy-to-follow narrative structure.

- Pictures and photographs are generously included to support the text and to increase the student’s level of understanding of the text and the level of motivation.

3.1.1.1. Criteria for selecting graded readers

There are three main tendencies among teachers as far as choosing a graded reader for their students.

Some think that teachers should be more inclined to use classical literary works (naturally, adapted for young learners of English as a foreign language). Normally, these teachers choose the book that students must read. Other teachers believe that these adapted versions interfere with the original work and creates artificial language. These teachers think that students should be provided with authentic material. Teachers are in charge of choosing the right book with the right level for the students. Other teachers leave students to choose the book that they wish to read and do not necessarily encourage the reading of classics, whether adapted or not, as they are of the opinion that students would rather read a “light” book than a “heavy” and “boring” classic.

But, as Demetriou (2016) states,

[...] in spite of these currents of opinion, what is certain is that the teacher should encourage the reading of books that look as authentic as possible, with high quality illustrations and suited topics which will play an important role not only in ELT but also working basic competences.

If I am asked personally, I think that it might also depend on the level of our students; you cannot work with an authentic classic work with students at their first year of Compulsory Secondary Education, not even in Non-Compulsory Secondary Education, where they are supposed to have a B2 level but it would still be difficult for them and, from the point of view of my personal experience, useless, as they have only two hours of this subject per week and they would spend them looking for new vocabulary, analyzing complex grammatical sentences, etc. As stated by Richard Day (2016:5-6)

[...] difficult books force the reader to focus on the linguistic code and not on the meaning. As a result, students spend their valuable time and energy decoding the words and using their dictionaries. This
means that they are not learning to read and to enjoy reading in the 
foreign language.

I think that literature and graded readers should be exploited in Compulsory 
Education, where students have got three or four hours a week of English and they are 
less worried and pressured regarding Selectividad\(^2\). Students are younger and we have 
enough time to teach them reading techniques and, in general, this competence that is 
becoming every day more important; learn to learn. In this case, I, as a future teacher, 
have selected the book we are going to read regarding this criteria:

- **About the content/subject matter:** Is it relevant/interesting/amusing/meaningful? Ghost stories are engaging 
  for anybody and students normally like this topic. Moreover, it would be 
  perfectly exploitable during Halloween period or Christmas.

- **About illustrations:** Does the book include illustrations? Are they 
  attractive/colorful? Do they help in the understanding of the book? 
  This reader has got some black and white illustrations that work as a 
  complement to give us an idea of what is happening in the text. We can 
  also work with the images and practice speaking i.e. “What can you see 
  in the picture? Can you describe the image?” etc.

- **About the student’s attitude:** Is the book related to the student’s 
  experiences and characteristics? Does it arouse curiosity or interest in 
  getting to know other cultures or more about language? The author 
  that I have selected has got a special quality: his stories are far from 
  gothic, he bases his stories in common life situations, stories that could 
  perfectly happen to one of us and this is the point that we have to make 
  our students see. We have to bring our students into the stories, make 
  them empathize with the protagonist. Ideally, we could achieve that our 
  students liked this kind of literature and went on reading, investigating 
  and looking for more stories and books.

- **About values:** Does the book teach or encourage certain positive 
  attitudes in the student? Of course it does; every story has a moral or 
  something to think on. This is ideal for preparing debates where 
  students can be critical and give their personal opinions.

- **About the language level:** this graded reader has been carefully 
  selected; we, teachers, who love English language and literature would 
  love to give them the original work of M. R. James, but our students are 
  not English Philologists: we cannot expect them to read and understand

\(^2\) Or any other similar end of cycle exam.
the original work. This book, however, has got abridged stories, and besides, the lexicon and grammatical aspects are perfectly adapted for their level.

Also, as Demetriou, states “if an English teacher is very fond of literature, he/she is going to tend to use it and exploit it on the lessons”. We cannot forget the teacher’s personal likes and, I have to say that I am very fond of horror literature and that is why I have chosen this material. Moreover, I wanted to do something different from the Gothic classics and Edgar Allan Poe, something “new”, a kind of homage for M. R. James, a writer who is slightly less popular among readers. When you work with something you like you put more enthusiasm; it is easier for students and teachers to become involved and engage with what we are doing.

3.1.1.2. Classification of graded readers according to their lexical complexity

Nowadays, there is a common framework of reference to determine graded readers’ grade of difficulty according to their approximate number of headwords. The classification is:

- **Level 0** (Easystarts/starters): 250 headwords.
- **Level 1** (Beginners): 400 headwords.
- **Level 2** (Elementary): 700 headwords.
- **Level 3** (Pre-intermediate): 1000 headwords.
- **Level 4** (Intermediate): 1400 headwords.
- **Level 5** (Upper intermediate/Lower advanced): 1600-1800 headwords.
- **Level 6** (Advanced): 2000 headwords.

Lately, the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR)\(^3\) set different taxonomies to determine the linguistic level of the graded reader; A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. According to this, A1 level corresponds to 1\(^{st}\) CSE (Compulsory Secondary Education) (ESO)\(^4\); A2 level corresponds to 2\(^{nd}\) CSE; B1 level would be ideally achieved at their 3\(^{rd}\) CSE; a B1-B2 level would correspond to 4\(^{th}\) CSE; B2 level is achieved at their 1\(^{st}\) Non-CSE (Bachillerato)\(^5\) and B2-C1 level for 2\(^{nd}\) NCSE.

The book we are going to work with, *The Locked Room and Other Horror Stories*, from Penguin Readers (a well-known British publishing house), is a level 4 book corresponding to an Intermediate level and it supposed to contain approximately 1400

\(^3\) The Common European Framework of References for Languages is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and in other countries.

\(^4\) In Spain, ESO stands for Enseñanza Secundaria Obligatoria, which means Compulsory Secondary Education. It is made up of four courses of one year each.

\(^5\) Bachillerato stands for Non Compulsory Secondary Education which is a two course pre-university cycle.
headwords. According to the CEFR this book would be suitable for a B1-B2 level which corresponds to 4th year of CSE.

3.1.1.3. Classification of graded readers according to their grammatical structures

Graded readers can also be classified according to their level of grammar difficulty. The set grammar for the different years and levels of CSE and NCSE is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grammar Structures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st CSE (ESO)</td>
<td>To be, To have got, present simple, imperatives, present continuous, can/can’t, must/mustn’t, shall in interrogatives, would/wouldn’t like, going to for future reference, comparison of adjectives and adverbs, past simple of to be and common verbs, will for future reference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd CSE (ESO)</td>
<td>Present simple and continuous, past simple and past continuous, future reference with present continuous, going to and will, present perfect (with ever and never), imperative and let’s, infinitives and gerund after common verbs, coordination with but, and, or; subordination with because, when, if; defining relative clauses with who, which, that and where, comparison of regular and irregular adjectives and adverbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd CSE (ESO)</td>
<td>Present Perfect with yet, already, still and yet, past perfect, passive forms with going to and will, verb + object + infinitive (e.g. “I want you to go”), reported statements with say and tell, time clauses introduced by when, while, until, before, after and as soon as, clauses of purpose (so that, in order to, to).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th CSE (ESO)</td>
<td>Present Perfect with for and since, reported questions and requests/orders with ask and tell, 1st and 2nd conditional (if and unless), non-defining relative clauses with who and where, clauses of result with so, so … that and such … that; clauses of concession with although and though, clauses of comparison with (not) as/so … as; (not) … enough to; too … to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st NCSE (Bachillerato)</td>
<td>Present Perfect Continuous, passive forms with the Present Perfect, reported speech with precise reporting verbs (e.g. suggest, promise, apologize, etc.) 3rd conditional, may/might, non-defining relative clauses with which and whose, clauses of concession with even though, in spite of, despite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd NCSE (Bachillerato)</td>
<td>Present Perfect for negative duration (haven’t … for ages), Past Perfect Continuous, passive forms with Past Perfect and unrestricted use of modal verbs, reported speech introduced by more examples of precise reporting verbs (e.g. threaten, insist, complain, etc.), wish, if only, it’s time + past tense, mixed conditional sentences, complex sentences with more than one subordinate clause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd NCSE (Bachillerato +)</td>
<td>Future reference with Future Continuous and Future Perfect, passive (all tenses) in continuous forms, wish and if only + would/past perfect, inversion of had in 2nd and 3rd conditional sentences without if, inversion of word order after initial negative adverbs (no sooner..., hardly..., etc.), non-finite –ing clauses, complex sentences with no restriction on number of subordinate clauses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Classification of graded readers according to their grammatical structures.
3.1.2. Fiction as a helpful tool

Regarding theoretical aspects, a more specific genre in literature which is fiction or short fiction will be described, as we are going to work with short stories.

To give a reason why, again, we must cite Sage (1987:43);

A good story is a joy. Short fiction helps impart both pleasure and knowledge to nonnative students. Neither must be postponed nor sacrificed [...] short fiction is a supreme resource for observing not only language but life itself. In short fiction, characters act out all the real and symbolic acts people carry out in daily lives, and do so in a variety of registers and tones. [...] The world of short fiction both mirrors and illuminates human lives.

As Murat Hişmanoğlu (2005:61-62; bold types are mine) states, quoting from Arioğul:

The inclusion of short fiction in the ESL/EFL curriculum offers the following educational benefits:

- Makes the students’ reading task easier due to being simple and short when compared with the other literary genres.
- Enlarges the advanced level readers’ worldviews about different cultures and different groups of people.
- Provides more creative, encrypt, challenging texts that require personal exploration supported with prior knowledge for advanced level readers.
- Motivates learners to read due to being authentic material.
- Offers a world of wonders and a world of mystery.
- Gives students the chance to use their creativity.
- Promote critical thinking skills.
- Facilitates teaching a foreign culture (i.e. serves as a valuable instrument in attaining cultural knowledge of the selected community.
- Makes the students feel themselves comfortable and free.
- Help students coming from various backgrounds communicate with each other because of its universal language.
- Helps students to go beyond the surface meaning and dive into underlying meanings.
- Acts as a perfect vehicle to help students understand the positions of themselves as well as the others by transferring these gained knowledge to their own world.
In conclusion, the fact of introducing short fiction as a source of input in our lessons provides many benefits; students’ and teacher’s tasks will be easier as these kind of stories are shorter than the thick classics; the different topics in which they are based are universal so students can empathize as anybody who has experienced a story; and thirdly, as Sage (1987:43; bold types are mine) describes it: “it contributes to the development of cognitive analytical abilities, bringing the whole self to bear on a compressed account of a situation in a single place and moment”.

3.1.3. Types of activities

I have taken into account many valuable ideas from Demetriou (2016) to work with graded readers like:

- **Warm-up and follow-up activities** designed so as to enable our students to feel involved in the book.
- Activities must be prepared so as to allow them to share and express their personal experiences, perceptions and free opinions.
- Activities should be varied and engaging.

The selected book has many short stories of about two or three pages each one. On each session, what we are going to do is try to work on one of them, even though this could be difficult as we have to take into account they are not much used to read and even more in English; their ability and rhythm to acquire and understand new information and of course, many more problems that can occur while a lesson.

If we are going to start by reading “The Ash-Tree”, for example, and also with the following stories, we will have to prepare **pre-reading** activities like:

- **Preliminary discussions**: “What do you think this story is going to be about?” “Look at the pictures on the story, do they tell you something?” “What do you know about Witches?”
- **Vocabulary pictures**: pictures of the context of the story like an “ash-tree”, “Victorian house”, “moors”, “Suffolk”, “witch”, etc.
- **Sequencing pictures**: give them some scattered pictures of the story so they can think and try to give it a sense or order.

This type of activities, apart from engaging them into the lesson, foster speaking and interaction as well as listening and reading. We could spend around 10 minutes on this tasks; it is important to submerge the student well into the context. According to Gajdusek (1988:238), they “might culminate in an introductory oral reading”.
To get into the story, we also have to prepare **while-reading** activities or “**factual in-class work**” as Gajdusek (1988:238; bold types are mine) names them:

[...] due to time constraints, it is often better to allow students to begin work with the text **at home**—with strong encouragement to read the story at least twice: the first time to gain an overall sense of the piece and enjoy the story, a second time to look for answers to problems and questions prepared for them in anticipation of the factual and analytical work that is to follow. It really helps students assume responsibility for in-class work if they have been given some fairly factual questions to answer (on paper) during a second, at-home reading and **before** they come to class.

This “factual in-class work” or the questions that we are going to give are students are:

- Point of view: *Who* is telling the story?
- Character/s: *Who* is the story about?
- Setting: *When* and *where* the story takes place?
- Action: *What* happens?

The further question “*why*” can be posed later as part of the “analytical work” or post-reading activities.

So, with this technique, we want to check on the general understanding of the story. We can propose extensive reading (skimming), suggesting an alternative title for the story, underline important information, chart completion, answering comprehension questions (yes-no questions and the above mentioned wh- questions), explaining the gist of the story, to produce a student-made mini-dictionary of new learnt words, etc.

If we want to check on specific understanding, intensive reading (scanning) is proposed. Activities to deduce meaning from the context, recognizing discourse patterns and markers, comprehension questions on specific details of a given extract, etc.

With this kind of activities we can improve, apart from reading, our writing skill as well as speaking and interacting. Also, as Demetriou (2016) suggests, “when using readers with our students we should maintain a constant practice of two major activities: silent and independent reading and reading aloud”.

With silent and independent reading, the student (hopefully) obtains pleasure and satisfaction, widens his/her grammatical knowledge and enriches his/her vocabulary.

Reading aloud, reinforces the student’s oral skills and improves his/her pronunciation. Before making the student read aloud, we could listen to an audio of the pages previously worked so that they have a notion and a guide about pronunciation, rhythm
and intonation for them to follow when they face the reading aloud moment. Audio-books can easily be founded nowadays and downloaded to work with them in class. This technique is most interesting and perfectly suitable for our short ghost stories as each story has “mini-chapters”, a fact that allows us to stop each 2 pages and after having worked on them, read them aloud to finish the lesson. These “cliffhangers” could even motivate students for the next lesson or even make them continue reading on his/her own.

Finally, we must propose some post-reading activities or “analysis work” as Gajdusek (1988:245) names it; “having established the facts, students can now begin to ask why and to develop their own attitudes toward the characters, values, and situations of the story, in short, to move beyond information to involvement and experience”. The student has been communicating with the text and with the classmates to set the situation, the problem/s mentioned, the vocabulary, etc. but, if we want them to use the language to express his own ideas, we have to make them be critical.

We can also prepare some follow-up activities like:

- Watching the video after the short story; some of the ghost stories of M. R. James have been made into short films or short videos that we can find on famous webpages like Youtube, BBC, etc. They can even be founded subtitled so it is easy for the students to follow it. This is a way of relaxing and enjoy watching what we have read; a very good activity to improve our listening skill and a way of bringing literature into visual and actual context.

- Try and write a similar story in pairs or in groups, an activity that we could introduce as a final project; students select one of their favourite stories and produce a similar one. These students will be highly compensated as this is a really challenging project. We could even make a contest and their own stories could even be published (if possible) for the rest of the students at high school.

- To dramatize if possible one of the short stories; also another interesting final project. Students would have to prepare their dialogues, costumes, make-up, rehearse, etc. And they could even make a representation for the high-school in which they would be recorded.

- Drawing a comic.

- Writing down an alternative ending for the story. This activity fosters the student’s imagination.
- Debating about the story; likes/dislikes, personal opinions, etc. This activity fosters critical thinking.

As well as with the rest of the activities previously mentioned, these ones also reinforce all basic skills; reading, writing, speaking, listening and interacting.

4. **History of Horror Fiction**

In this section, I am going to talk about a specific literary genre which is “supernatural horror” or “weird fiction” as Lovecraft names it.

To start with, it is mandatory to cite Lovecraft (1973:12), who is probably one of the most famous weird fiction writers and the author of many interesting and complete essays concerning this genre; “the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown”. This is the very beginning of the supernatural horror fiction.

From the dawn of History, our ancestors, in their way to evolution, have based their reactions to the environment and the world on their instincts and their emotions. Human kind developed feelings like pain or pleasure according to the phenomena they experimented, they understood and comprehend. But, for all that he could not understand, he would give “invented” explanations, marvelous interpretations. The fear for what you cannot predict; events which origins are unknown, unexplainable, were for the first man terrible things that came from outer-space, from some other reality or world they simply could not explain. All these beliefs have accompanied human kind and establish a world of the “supernatural” (religion, is a very good example in this case as we tend to explain lots of phenomena with the existence of a God, something else we cannot see or understand but, we imagine is there). Human kind remembers pain more than pleasure; the unknown is related to a feeling of pain, fear, danger. Therefore, when we mix this strong sensation of fear for the evil and the human kind curiosity and morbidity what we obtain is the power of the imaginative mind, the birth of the “literature of cosmic fear” (Lovecraft, 1973:14-15).

But this kind of literature has nothing to do with the physical world or physical fear; crimes, bloody bodies, etc. but with that inner fear for what Nature’s laws cannot explain, the presence of unknown forces. According to Lovecraft (1973:16), “atmosphere is the all-important thing, for the final criterion of authenticity is not the dovetailing of a plot but the creation of a given sensation”. A good horror tale must create to the reader this sensation of being in contact with the outer-world, supernatural, incomprehensible entities and events.

We must think then, if horror-tales are so well connected with inner human beings instincts and emotions, it is also connected to the first ways of thought and
developments of speech as well as with a part of our culture and folklore. From prehistoric times, to Egyptians, Semitics, many races and civilizations have “cosmic terror” present on their rituals and ceremonies.

It was a matter of ballads and songs which were inherited by oral tradition until the great impulse of the Middle Ages were all these oral tales of vampires, witches, werewolves, changed to be literary compositions even illustrated. Traces of this medieval movement are still present nowadays as, for instance, the mysterious gargoyles of Notre-Dame (and all related to this Gothic period) or even “black-mass” rituals, which are as ancient as religion but, Satan is supposed to be adored; tales of the werewolf, spirits of death people seeking revenge, etc. This weirdness in literature is patent in many works; from our Anglo-Saxon Beowulf to Dante and his macabre atmospheres or Elizabethan drama with the witches of Macbeth or the ghost in Hamlet.

During the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century there was a proliferation of literature of this kind but, it was like, under covered, as it was not considered a serious or accepted form of writing (the upper class was very fond of rationalism, it was de era of “Enlightenment” and all this supernatural matter was less appealing) but, towards de middle-end of the century came the birth of the romantic feeling among poets and writers, who defended that human experiences should not be simply explained by rationalism but also with human feelings and imagination. It was the era of joy in Nature, the beauty of past times, marvelous stories with strange scenes and maybe some touches of the weird.

Romanticism and “instinct” gave birth to a new school of writing; the “Gothic” movement of horror and fantastic prose fiction.

4.1. Gothic Fiction

To start with, it is necessary to talk about the birth of this movement as it is the reference in which future horror writers (contemporary, 20th century writers) are going to get inspired from6.

The subject matter in this essay is literature therefore a literary definition of the concept would be preferable although it is also used as an historical concept, artistic concept, etc. In literature, Gothic compiles a serial of works written between 1760s and 1820s by nowadays prestigious weird writers like Horace Walpole, Anne Radcliffe or Mary Shelley. In general, this concept is used to refer to horror fiction itself; not

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6 In this section, I provide a miscellany of Lovecraft’s ideas extracted from his elsewhere referred article.
only works in Europe but also in America. Even lately, with the apparition of cinema, we use this term to refer to old horror films as “Gothic films”.

But, why are Ghotic and “terror”, for the common reader, almost twin terms? We have to go back to the context of the term’s creation to discover why Gothic is associated with horror. If we study its origin, we find that its original meaning is “to do with the Goths”, the barbarian northern tribes who fought against the Roman Empire, what implies the notion of “barbarian” and “foreigner”, “weird”. But in the eighteenth century, they simply related the concept to the “Dark Ages”, the Middle Ages and all that preceding the seventeenth century. So, if Gothic has to do with medieval and barbarian, it is clear that it is also totally opposite to the concept of “classical”; if classic was order, Gothic was chaos; if classic was simple, Gothic was the exaggeration; if classic offered patterns and models to follow correctly and harmoniously, Gothic was the excess, the wildness and the uncivilisation. Furthermore, Gothic is a phenomenon also inevitably related to the different historical contexts through which it is developed. For instance, if we are to analyze any work within Gothic, the presence of “evil” is going to be an inevitable concept; a concept which changes or focuses on the different situations, in which the author writes the story; political situation of the time, the fears of the population of the time (i.e., Wuthering Heights reflects the inner feelings of its author, Emily Brontë, who spoke and defended in some way what many women of the time were suffering like the patriarchal authority, for instance and the confinement of women to house labours), etc.

Focusing on these kind of Gothic works, we could describe them with a serial of particular characteristics; highlight of the terrifying events (as the death of a beloved who returns from the death as a ghost to seek revenge or consolation); archaic settings like haunted castles, dark monasteries, etc.; highly stereotyped characters like the “villain” and the “hero/heroine”; the use of the supernatural (as ghosts, witches, vampires, monsters, etc.) and the literary suspense and creation of a horror atmosphere. However, all this type of scenery that we tend to associate with Gothic has its origin even before the appearance of this movement; Edmund Spencer, for instance, one of the greatest poets in the English Language, in the sixteenth century, already wrote poems were dreary and sorrowful feelings can be noticed. Also the “Graveyard Poets”, a number of pre-Romantic English poets of the eighteenth century (often considered as the precursors of the Gothic movement), already wrote about skulls, coffins, skeletons and death itself.

As Punter (1996:4) states:

Gothic is a particular attitude towards the recapture of history; a particular kind of literary style; a version of self-conscious un-realism;
a mode of revealing the unconscious; connections with the primitive, the barbaric, the tabooed.

One of the major exponents of the beginning of Gothic (and for some experts the founder of the school) was Horace Walpole with his tale *The Castle of Otranto* (1764); a story containing all elements previously mentioned; he wanted to combine medieval romance elements (traces of romanticism) along with those of the “modern novel” and weird or fantastic elements.

Influenced by Romanticism and Lord Byron but also by Gothic, Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* (1818), which is considered to be the first science fiction novel in which a scientist must deal with the moral issues and consequences of creating life out of death (a monster).

Gothic as a literary form was established and there was a proliferation of writers and works which would enlighten the path to future weird writers; it was the nineteenth century the siècle of Gothic success, along the Victorian era (1836-1901), where we can find masters as Edgar Allan Poe, who is the maximum representative in this genre as stated by Lovecraft (1973:53); “[...] to him we owe the modern horror-story in its final and perfected state”.

While his antecedent writers were still bound to certain literary conventions like; happy endings, the exaltation of virtues which triumph at the end; the teaching of a moral, standards and values of the time and the own author’s vision of the story and protagonists, Poe just described events and feelings as they were, highlighting the weird aspect of the facts and emotions of the human who experience situations having to do with pain more than pleasure, in spite of focusing on the traditional elements of the Gothic stories. He was very fond of psychology and he understood perfectly the mechanisms that activated fear in the human brain which make his stories even more realistic as well as majestic works if we mention his artistic form of writing, poetic in many of them.

In this subject, Poe was unique; not only for his particular style but also for his special mind itself and his own psychological state of depression, loneliness, “madness” and freakiness which allowed him to produce most weird stories, emerging from his most obscure vision of the world. It is worth mentioning some of their works as *The Fall of the House Usher* (1839), his famous poem *The Raven* (1945) or *The Oval Portrait* (1842), influenced by Anne Radcliffe’s works.

We also need to mention the Brontë sisters, often known as the precursors of Female Gothic. Emily Brontë’s, previously mentioned, *Wuthering Heights* (1847) protagonist,
Cathy and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) protagonist, Jane, are examples of this female role of the time and the difficulties of escaping these restrictions.

Also, Sheridan Le Fanu, an Irish weird writer who was admired by M. R. James and also influenced authors as Bram Stoker with his short stories collection *In a Glass Darkly* (1872).

Charles Dickens ought to be mention as well, as he was also influenced by Gothic so he introduced this dreary atmosphere and traces of darkness into his works, including them in a more modern and urban setting like London. A clear example is *Oliver Twist* (1837), which deals with the juxtaposition of the well-accommodated rich society and the calamities of the poor part of the population.

Towards the end of the century (1880), there was a revival of the genre that, as we have said before, as a mutating genre along history, fictionalized the fears of the time which were no others but the questioning of the social structures of the time, ethical and moral degeneration, etc. Some representative works are; Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Strange Case of Dr Jeckyll and Mr Hide* (1886), Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) or Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), in which Stoker creates the most famous “villain” on history, Count Dracula, who is still nowadays the stereotype of vampire, as well as the “dark” and east part of Europe, specially Transylvania, a special place for Gothic settings.

This brief description of the movement is totally necessary to understand the evolution of horror fiction and, although Gothic would be a subject matter worth of a separate and complete full essay, we have to continue developing horror fiction through history and his writers until reaching the author which attains us; M. R. James.

### 4.2. Modern Masters of Horror

Dealing with post-Victorian writers means dealing with twentieth century writers, which implies that they are not so far away from us; they are practically contemporary. But, at the same time, they are also close in time to “traditional Gothic”, a peculiarity that explains its influences in the authors. However, according to Lovecraft (1973:87), “horror-tales of today” as he would name them, had evolved in a way that we could not even compare them to the past “ naïve and artificial” works of nearly a century distance. These stories are now natural and convincing; more realistic. In this century, more experienced and formed writers have had their technique improved, having also acquired all psychological knowledge that had advanced tremendously with the
passing years. Weird tales now, are quite close to our reality, faithful to Nature’s law except in the moment when the author incorporates the supernatural element.

In the context of this century, there are facts which determine the evolution of horror fiction as, for example, the appearance of cheap periodicals which led to a boom in horror writing.

In America, some of these pulp magazines, which were fiction magazines printed between 1896 and 1950s on cheap wood pulp paper, were the All-Story Magazine, Weird Tales or Unknown Worlds. But it was in Victorian Britain where they invented these equal short of pulp magazines named “penny dreadfuls”, which was the term given to cheap popular serial literature; stories published in weekly parts, each one costing one penny. Thanks to the rise of capitalism and industrialization, literature began to be affordable to many people who started to consider reading another form of entertainment and literary rates rose.

It was here when many influential horror writers appeared; Howard Phillips Lovecraft (H. P. Lovecraft), whose famous essay Supernatural Horror in Literature (1973) has been crucial for this study and also the creator of the Mythos (Cthulhu Mythos) which still nowadays influences horror as we know it.

Lovecraft, on his masterpiece essay, also names some outstanding writers of the time like Arthur Machen, who wrote around twelve short and long stories between 1890 and 1990. He was a man of letters and cultivated, with a Celtic heritage and knowledge of the medieval and Britanno-Roman life which allowed him to create quite realistic settings and atmospheric tension. One of his best-known works is The Great Good Pan (1894), considered by Stephen King as the best horror story written in English.

Another author reflecting the strangeness in ordinary things and experiences was Algernon Blackwood, one of the most recognized ghost stories author (also a journalist and a broadcasting narrator) of the time and, as Arthur Machen, member of the “Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn”; an organization devoted to the study and practice of the occult, metaphysics, and paranormal activities during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. His works aim to awake in the reader a feeling of awe and respect for the supernatural rather than terror. His short stories collection Incredible Adventures (1914) may be one of the most important in this century.

Lord Dunsany has also a mention on this essay. He was an Irish writer and dramatist who wrote more than eighty books within a wide variety of topics including, of course, fantasy. Dunsany employs his knowledge on mythology and folklore to describe a
fantastic world where he would include some touches of the weird, as well as humoristic and ironic ones. He was more interested in the beauty of the settings and descriptions rather than on terror. Nevertheless, there are works like The Gods of the Mountain (1914) which are full of supernatural fear.

We could say that these authors, along with M. R. James who deserves his own separate summary, are the most representative of the century, although, as we have cited before, the proliferation of horror fiction due to the advance of technology increased in a very fast way; not only writers, but with the apparition of cinema, for example.

Even before cinema, comics were very famous as they had explicit illustrations and colorful images that accompanied the stories, which is the kind of morbidity that attracts the reader. Some of them were even censored (this also happened to “Penny dreadfuls”). One of these famous comics is Tales from the Crypt (1950), which was made into a TV cartoon serial afterwards.

The early horror cinema was inspired in horror literature too and it is true that this tradition of horror films have lasted until the present day. Cinema also evolved and different subgenres of horror were created; “slasher films” (usually about a psychopath stabbing victims), “gore films” (full of free graphic violence), or “psychological horror movies” (less violence, more atmosphere), etc.

What we can conclude is that these authors set the basis for our present day contemporary horror fiction; stories like Cool Air (1925), In the Vault (1926) and The Outsider (1926) written by Lovecraft, already outlined our modern “zombie” , for example.

They left behind Gothic to introduce terror in our daily life, the supernatural was not only in Gothic romances or old stereotyped stories but could happen to anyone, anywhere and in this subject matter, Montague Rhode James was one of the masters of bringing the strangeness and fear into any reader’s normal life.

4.3. M. R. James

This section is reserved for the author concerning this essay and the didactic unit which I am going to develop based on his ghost stories. An investigation on his life, context and influences will be carried out in order to understand better his works. Also, his particular style will be studied to show how interesting would be to work with these texts in classroom.
4.3.1. Life and Scholarly work

Montague Rhode James (1862-1936) was born in Goodnestone Parsonage, near Dover in Kent, but at the age of three he moved to Suffolk, where he would spend part of his life; this is the reason why some of his stories (“Lost Hearts” or the “Ash Tree”) are inspired in this location. As much as his popularity is due to his literary activities, he was also a medievalist and provost\(^7\) of King’s College in Cambridge (1905-18) and Eton College (1018-36). He also became the director of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (1893-1908). James was a successful post-Victorian man of letters.

He was not only known for his ghost stories but also for his scholarly work; James prepared an amount of fifteen to twenty thousand of bibliographic descriptions of medieval manuscripts, as well as the *Apocryphal New Testaments*.

M. R. James published four volumes of ghost stories during his lifetime (1862-19369): *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1904), *More Ghost Stories* (1911), *A Thin Ghost and Others* (1919) and *A Warning to the Curious* (1925). But, he decided to publish them because of the enthusiasm of his friend James MacBryde to illustrate his stories. Originally, James was a teller; he would gather with his colleagues every year at Christmas to deliver the reading of a story.

Here is an illustration by James MacBryde to the story “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad”.

![Figure 1 MacBryde’s illustration to the story "Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad".](figure1.jpg)

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\(^7\) Or pro-vice-chancellor; in addition to his teaching and researching work, he also had management responsibilities at University, a charge reserved for those academics with a bright career and at least ten years of previous service.
4.3.2. Ghost stories and style

When talking about his ghost stories and style, it also obligatory to mention the Irish writer that would influence him the most; Sheridan Le Fanu (1814-1873). Many similarities can be appreciated between both authors in vision and style, for instance, the characters; the protagonist is no more a prototypic Gothic villain (with the exception of Mr Abney in *Lost Hearts*), but a normal person, a mere victim. As Jack Sullivan (1978:70) states, “the strategy of both writers is the same: to make the reader glance nervously around the room and say, *‘If this could happen to him, it could happen to me’*. James also uses this constant crescendo along his stories; he creates an atmosphere where apparently everything begins peacefully until something (normally the discovery of some antiquarian object) happens and tension increase until, in any moment, the evil appears.

Apart from setting his stories in a daily life context and cheerful places like a university, cathedrals, etc., with common people as characters, to give more authenticity, James also follows Le Fanu’s technique of “narrative distance”; stories are always told by somebody who told him what he experienced. This technique implies mystery, as the reader does not know if the event could be true or not. Moreover, in his preface for *Collected Ghost Stories*, when asked if he actually believed in this kind of supernatural phenomena he answers “I am prepared to consider evidence and accept it if it satisfies me”. This is no more than “false modesty” that “is part of the mystique of his fiction” as Sullivan describes it (1978:74).

But, as well as similarities, there are aspects that differentiate James from Le Fanu as, for example, the economy of his style. As Sullivan (1978:74) describes it;

> [...] the stories use very available verbal source to avoid calling attention to themselves, as if the otherworldly phenomena are creepy enough on their own not to require a loud voice for their exposition.

For him, the hyperbole and verbal effusiveness of the Gothic must be avoided, as he assume this technique as a way of “cheating”; on the contrary, his stories are aimed for “skeptical readers” who still have as reference this supernatural literature of the eighteenth century; he wants to make clear the existence of the supernatural world but, grounding his stories in empirical reality; the ghost hypothesis is consistent when we have empirical evidence of it.

Paradoxically, this economy of style disappears when James is due to make a description of some settings; as a medievalist and cultivated man of letters, fond of antiquaries and past times, his descriptions are realistic and rich, as some of them are
real locations as Suffolk (England), St Bertrand de Comminges (France) or Viborg (Denmark), described with this special taste for the past times. This nostalgia for the past is patent in his works; in “Lost Hearts” and “The Ash Tree”, for example, the opening paragraphs are like little essays regarding the descriptions of the Victorian houses of the eighteenth century.

The curious fact in his stories is that, normally, almost any old object could be the source of evil; old books, a picture, a whistle, etc. It is a feeling of bringing something from the past, something that should be dead into life. This is something that adds even more authenticity and reality to his stories.

But he also introduces some stylistic devices, as for example, humor, which in traditional Gothic was avoided and if included, unintentional. James uses it consciously, to provide authentic settings and normal daily life dialogues to submerge the reader into quotidian situations until he directs you to the crucial moment.

Another technique to create distance is, as stated by Sullivan (1978:87), “deliberate obscurity”. Some James’ stories are plenty of descriptions and stylistic narrative devices and others are like a puzzle. He even advises to the reader that the story Two Doctors, for example, is an incomplete dossier, “a riddle in which the supernatural appears to play a part. You must see what you can make of it”. Open endings which let the reader thinking.

All of these characteristics made James originate the “Jamesian School”: his own style which would influence many posterior ghost stories writers.

To reinforce the use of these texts in classroom, M. R. James Ghost Stories are set in the Victorian era of Britain, a part of history which could be quite interesting to show to our students; society, inventions, values of the time, etc.
5. Didactic Unit: The Locked Room and Other Horror Stories by M. R. James

5.1. Introduction

The didactic unit which I am going to develop is aimed for a group of students of 4th grade of Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE). It is formed by six sessions (two weeks) in which we are going to work with M. R. James’ Ghost Stories and all activities and tasks will be related to this author and his works. As the topic is “horror”, this unit would be ideal for the 1st term of the Course Planning, in October, during Halloween.

5.2. Justification

This didactic unit has been designed following the applicable legislation; Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2/2006, de 3 de Mayo. It is based on M. R. James’ ghost stories. The main purpose of this unit is to give our students some knowledge about literature and more specifically, horror literature. This will be achieved by working with M. R. James ghost stories in correlation with popular culture. The students are exposed to different types of language, from dialogues to descriptions; they will be stimulated through M. R. James most famous short stories which are the precursor to our present day horror stories and films. With this didactic unit, I also want to put into practice what I have previously exposed in the theoretical part, engage students into reading and demonstrate how literature can be useful for teachers to achieve what the Real Decreto 1631/2006 and Decreto 231/2007 demands regarding General Objectives of Stage and Area and the development of the Key Competences as well.

5.3. Background Information and contextualization

This unit is contextualized for a 4th year of Compulsory Secondary Education group of students of a public high school, in a classroom with 32 students (17 boys and 13 girls), in which three of them have specific needs; they have a lower level on the subject so activities must be adapted for them. The average level is A2/B1 in the Foreign Language according to the CEFRL. In the classroom, students sit in rows of three and sometimes in pairs or in groups of four to realize communicative and interactive activities.
5.4. Objectives and Competences

The different objectives and competences of which this didactic unit is composed are those appearing in Real Decreto 1631/2006 and Decreto 231/2007:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Didactic Objectives</th>
<th>Stage Objectives</th>
<th>Foreign Language Objectives</th>
<th>Key Competences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To practice reading using the graded reader prepared for this unit.</td>
<td>a, b, d, e, g, i, j, l (RD 1631/2006)</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10</td>
<td>1. Communicative competence in one’s mother tongue and in a foreign language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To acquire some knowledge about the Victorian era of Britain.</td>
<td>a, b (D 231/2007)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Knowledge and interaction with the physical and natural world.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To acquire some knowledge about “horror literature” and ghost stories from the beginning of the 20th Century.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Data processing and digital competence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To learn about historical and cultural values.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Social and civic competence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To learn new vocabulary related to the stories.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Cultural and artistic competence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To recognize and practice “Conditionals”.</td>
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<td>7. Learning to learn competence.</td>
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<td>To practice pronunciation by reading aloud.</td>
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<td>8. Personal autonomy and initiative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>To practice listening by listening to videos and to the oral texts.</td>
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<td>To practice speaking through debates and discussions.</td>
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<td>To practice writing through writing a personal composition.</td>
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Table 2 Didactic Objectives and Competences.
5.5. Content

According to the Ley Orgánica de Educación, 2/2006, de 3 de Mayo, contents should be gathered into four different groups:

1. **Listening, speaking and interacting.**
   - Listening to the oral exposition of the stories.
   - Debating some cultural and moral issues in class.
   - Express critical opinions.
   - Interact with the partner or group in speaking tasks.
   - Reading dialogues in pairs, aloud.
   - Watching to a video about the Victorian era.

2. **Reading and writing.**
   - Reading a graded reader; *The Locked Room and Other Horror Stories* by M. R. James.
   - Writing a personal composition about a specific topic.
   - Answering comprehension questions.
   - Write summaries about the stories.

3. **Linguistic awareness and reflection upon the language.**
   Within linguistic awareness, there are four main categories:

   a) **Functions**
      - Describing the main topics of a story.
      - Inventing a story.

   b) **Grammar**
      - Reinforcing past tenses.
      - Learning the “Conditionals” formulae.
      - Recognizing structures, verbs and practice them.

   c) **Vocabulary**
      - Learning vocabulary related to the stories.
      - Using the new vocabulary to write your own short story.
      - Learning new expressions or idioms.

   d) **Pronunciation**
      - Practicing pronunciation by reading the stories aloud in the classroom.
      - Reinforcing the pronunciation of some words (ex. “cupboard”; Session 1)
4. **Socio-cultural aspects.**

- Presenting literature and its development to our students as an inner element of our society.
- To promote a positive attitude towards other cultures and countries.
- Developing students’ sensibility towards literary texts and their contexts.
- Fostering the use of a foreign language to communicate.
- Learning the historical events and social background of the language they are using.
- Acquiring knowledge about horror and ghost stories of the beginning of the 20th century.
- Fostering the appreciation of literature.

5.6. **Cross-curricular Issues**

- *Moral and civic education* (rights & duties of democratic societies). As the students are going to read M. R. James’ stories, which are really well contextualized in his Victorian culture, a relatively contemporary era of British History, they will develop interest, motivation and respect for this culture and its folklore, apart from their own one.

- *Multicultural education*: in society today, and specifically in schools and high schools, it is very normal to find students of several nationalities or ethnics with their own traditions, feasts and folklore in general. In this unit, the students will be able to know, to appreciate and interact with their classmates or teacher and to interchange impressions or doubts about British culture in the Victorian era and its main features.

- *Leisure education* promoting sensibility towards the importance of English Literature or any kind of literature in general.

5.7. **Interdisciplinarity**

This unit is related to other relevant subjects such as:

- Geography (Britain, Suffolk)
- History (Victorian Era of Britain)
- English Literature (reading M. R. James’ “Ghost Stories”)
5.8. Methodology

The methodology in which this didactic unit is based is *the communicative approach*; the teacher must provide input before expecting output. I will give my students plenty of information before starting the unit (as, for example, M. R. James’ introduction or the characteristics of the Victorian era, just to engage the student into the tasks and create a context), or even starting a story (as, for example, the previous pictures to the story “Lost Hearts”). We are going to extract and learn a lot of vocabulary from the stories and we are going to reinforce verb tenses; all this information is what students are supposed to use to communicate, express ideas and, in general lines, accomplish our main objectives and develop the different competences. As what we want is interaction and communication, students will be given total freedom to speak and interact (inside the limits of well behavior), we will treat them as adults so, they must talk, act and express their ideas like adults. The teacher will be constantly encouraging students to participate and this participation will suppose 20% of the final mark.

Apart from reinforcing the previous knowledge (as with “tense activities”, for example), we are going to practice the main skills; reading, listening, speaking, writing and interaction, as well as developing new grammatical structures as “conditionals” and learning new vocabulary.

In the following tables, I am going to resume my didactic unit which is based in six sessions, and for this respect, I must describe the acronyms which I will be using in them;

- T → Teacher
- Ss → Students
- PW → Pair Work
- IW → Individual Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1 (55’)</th>
<th>Day 2 (55’)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. R. James Introduction (T-Ss; 3’)</td>
<td>Homework correction and vocabulary practice (T-Ss; Ss; 10’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian era video + Comprehension Activity (T-Ss; Ss PW; 20’)</td>
<td>Verb tenses activity (Ss; PW; 5’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Cultural Debate (T-Ss; Ss; 3’)</td>
<td>Conditionals explanation (T-Ss; Ss; IW; 25’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and voting the stories (T-Ss; Ss IW; 15’)</td>
<td>Small cultural debate (T-Ss; Ss; GW; 5’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Discussion (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)</td>
<td>Introduction to <em>Lost Hearts</em> activity and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reproduction of the beginning of the story “Martin’s Lake” (T-Ss; 1’)</td>
<td>Homework explanation (T-Ss; Ss; 10’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework Explanation (T-Ss; 5’)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3 Methodology and time planning for days 1 and 2.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 3 (55’)</th>
<th>Day 4 (55’)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Homework correction (T-Ss; Ss; 8’)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Oral introduction of the text (T-Ss; 3’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Small discussion (T-Ss; S; 2’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Vocabulary and tenses practice activities (T-Ss; Ss; PW; 5’)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Reading aloud (Ss; 4’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Small discussion (T-Ss; Ss; 4’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Reading aloud (Ss; 4’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Vocabulary practice (T-Ss; Ss; PW; 4’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Small discussion (T-Ss; Ss; 2’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Reading aloud (Ss; 8’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Vocabulary practice (T-Ss; Ss; 2’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Small discussion (T-Ss; Ss; 3’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Watching the video “Child Labor in Victorian Era” (T-Ss; 6’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Small discussion (T-Ss; Ss; 2’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Homework explanation (T-Ss; 2’)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 4 (55’)</th>
<th>Day 5 (55’)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Homework correction (T-Ss; Ss; 8’)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vocabulary practice (T-Ss; Ss; 6’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Story Discussion (T-Ss; Ss; 15’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Invent and write part of the story (T-Ss; Ss; 6’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Final writing composition explanation (T-Ss; 8’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Victorian inventions activity (T-Ss; Ss; 3’)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Small debate (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Homework explanation (T-Ss; 2’)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 5 (55’)</th>
<th>Day 6 (55’)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Homework correction (T-Ss; Ss; 10’)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vocabulary and verb tenses practice (T-Ss; Ss; 10’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Small debate (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Watching the video “Witchcraft in Europe” and comprehension activity (T-Ss; Ss; 20’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Small debate (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Suggesting some more stories (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Homework reminder (T-Ss; 5’)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 6 (55’)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Classroom preparation (Ss; 5’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Story telling (Ss; 40’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Voting (Ss; 10’)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Methodology and time planning for days 3 and 4.

Table 5 Methodology and time planning for days 5 and 6.
5.9. **Attention to Diversity**

In order to deal with diversity and to take into consideration all the students, specially focusing our attention in those who might have problems to follow the lesson, we have thought of different ways of providing the same classroom experience to every member of the class. Reinforcing activities will be provided to those students with a lower level of English.

To finish with, it is important to say that the teacher will be checking on them to make sure that everyone enjoys the same classroom atmosphere.

5.10. **Materials**

The materials that we will be using are:

- Graded Reader; *The locked Room and Other Horror Stories* by M. R. James.
- The Smart-board if possible, as it would be an ideal device to show and work with the student’s text in order that they can see and easily follow the teacher, or the traditional board.
- Activities handmade by the teacher.
- Notebook, pencil, pen, etc.

5.11. **Assessment: Evaluation criteria vs Evaluation tools:**

**Evaluation Criteria:**

- Whether or not the students have practiced reading by using the graded reader prepared for this unit.

- Whether or not the students have acquired some knowledge about the Victorian era of Britain.

- Whether or not the students have acquired some knowledge about “horror literature” and ghost stories from the beginning of the 20th Century.

- Whether or not the students have learnt about historical and cultural values.

- Whether or not the students have learnt new vocabulary related to the stories.

- Whether or not the students are able to recognize and practice “Conditionals”.

- Whether or not the students have practiced pronunciation by reading aloud.
- Whether or not the students have practiced listening by listening to videos and to the oral texts.

- Whether or not the students have practiced speaking through debates and discussions.

- Whether or not students have practiced writing through writing a personal composition.

**Evaluation tools**

40% Mini – Exam

30% Active participation in class, positive marks, etc.

20% Personal Composition (Short Story – about 100 words)

10% Daily Homework
5.12. Lesson Plan: Step-by-step Account

5.12.1. Session 1  *(Monday)*

By the beginning of this Didactic Unit, students must have the graded reader we are going to work with *The Locked Room and Other Horror Stories* by M. R. James, from Penguin Readers; they can buy it or, if the high school norms allow it, hand it on to the students in the form of photocopies.

To introduce the unit, the teacher will show the book and ask the students if they are familiar with either the book or the author.

The teacher will explain to students; *(T-Ss; 3’)*

"M. R. James was an English writer. He was born in 1862, in the *Victorian Era of Britain*. He wrote a great collection of Ghost Stories and he is considered one of the modern masters of horror literature. He had a tradition; he would tell a ghost story each *Christmas Eve* to his friends at University”.

Teacher will ask to students; “*What’s the Victorian Era? Let’s see a video about this part of British history. Then, in pairs, answer the questions:*  *(T-Ss; Ss PW; 20’)*

*(Teacher will use the interactive smartboard and will play the video for students twice, pausing as much as necessary)*

Video from Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgHGYyeYLLl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kgHGYyeYLLl)
Students also will be given a photocopy with the next comprehension activity:

1- Why was this period named like this?
2- Queen Victoria’s reign starts in ______ until she dies in ________
3- The main characteristics of this period are: __________ stability and strict ____________________.
4- What three things determined the type of person (your identity) in this era society? ____________, ____________, and ____________.
5- In this era, women’s place is at ______ whereas men’s place was in the ___________ world__.
6- There were 3 types of classes: the ____________, which were the rich people; the ____________, like teachers, doctors, etc. and the ____________, the poorest people, like maids, industrial workers, etc.
7- One way of showing you was part of the “elite” was your ________.
   Women wore elaborate _________ and men wore suits and large _________.

After this exercise, the teacher will pose the question to the class in order to have a small debate:   (T-Ss; Ss; 3’)

What do you think of questions number 4 and 5? Was this a fair situation?

The teacher must remind students they have to speak and participate, which will result in a positive mark for all those who talk.

After our debate, teacher will let students explore the reader and tell them there are nine stories to work with. In order to make students participate, the teacher will give them a sheet of paper with a small prompt to each story. Students must read and they can talk among them. At the end, each student must choose the most attractive one for him/her and write the name on a small piece of paper. Finally, we will count the votes and we will work the three or four most voted stories.

T- “The book has nine stories but, in class, we are going to work on three or four (depending on the time), here is a brief description to each story. Read the descriptions and choose the one you would like to read the most, then, write the name on a small piece of paper; we are going to vote, ladies and gentlemen”.
   (T-Ss; Ss; 15’)

Students will be given the following outline (teacher handmade):
**The Locked Room and Other Horror Stories by M. R. James.**

**CHAPTER 1 – The Ash Tree**
Strange events and terrible deaths occur in an old Victorian house. But why? And... What’s the matter with that mysterious ash-tree always watching the mansion?...

**CHAPTER 2 – A School Story**
A mysterious Latin professor who become mad, strange messages coming from nowhere and two boys who see a non-human silhouette outside their teacher’s window, just the night before his disappearance...

**CHAPTER 3 – The Curtains**
One day, Mr Denton finds an old diary belonging to Mrs Poynter. The next day, he and his aunt find a nice drawing in the diary. They decide to use this drawing to create the new curtains for their new house. But, strange things start to happen... it seems that the old diary and the drawing guard a mysterious story...

**CHAPTER 4 – The Flies**
The villagers of a small town notice that Mr Davis, from the farmhouse, has a new strange friend. They watch them practice magic and rituals in the night. One day, a villager shouts for help; he has discovered Mr Davis’ friend hanging of a tree. But this is just the beginning... what they find later will scare you to the bone...

**CHAPTER 5 – The Locked Room**
A young Mr Thomson decides to spend some days at Suffolk, in an old guest house. There is a strange monument-stone in the middle of the town. Soon, the protagonist starts hearing mysterious noises coming from a locked room. What Mr Thomson discovers inside cannot be explained.

**CHAPTER 6 – The Painting of---ngley Hall**
Mr Williams decides to buy an old and precious painting of an old Victorian house. But, each time that somebody looks at the picture, is different! Is it, the image, really moving? Will this mystery have an explanation?...

**CHAPTER 7 – Lost Hearts**
A small, orphan boy is adopted by his uncle. In his new house, he starts to have terrible nightmares and later, terrible visions! The story of this boy is the story of his uncle’s secret...
CHAPTER 8 – Martin’s Lake
A handsome and rich man meets a lady, who falls in love with him. But he is already engaged to another rich girl! He has to split up with her!... One day, after watching them argue, the lady disappears. The man’s nightmare has just begun...

CHAPTER 9 – The Two Cousins
The strange story of a librarian who is involved in a serial of casualties...; a mysterious customer searching for an even more mysterious book; a human-figure in a black coat with no eyes! Something appearing in the middle of the night?;...

After having voted, the teacher will explain students’ homework for next day (Wednesday). Imagine that the most popular four stories (in order) are; Martin’s Lake, Lost Hearts, The Flies and The Ash-Tree. We will begin by Martin’s Lake and the teacher must elicit from the students: (small discussion → T-Ss; Ss; 5’)

T- “We will start with Martin’s Lake:

- What does the title suggest to you?

- Look at the picture, who can describe it? Read the sentence below the picture, what do you think there was in the cupboard?

* The correct pronunciation of the word “cupboard” → /ˈkʌbəd/

The teacher will start reading the beginning of the story with great enthusiasm, closing curtains and creating an engaging atmosphere. (T-Ss; 1’)

To end the lesson, the teacher will explain the students their homework: (T-Ss; 5’)

T- “I want you to read this story at home and, for next day, which is Wednesday, I also want you bring the answers to these questions:

- Who is telling the story?

- Who is the story about?

- When and where does the story take place?

- What happens? Short summary.

Also, I want you to underline unknown vocabulary you do not understand”.
At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher will ask if the students have read the story and whether if they liked it or not. The teacher will choose students at random to answer the questions until they feel more comfortable to offer themselves volunteers. After having discussed the questions, vocabulary will be practiced and the teacher will ask for and teach the meaning of some words like: (T-Ss; 10’)

*What’s the meaning of…*
- “slaying” → to be having a very good time, laughing.
- ...Martin “took pity on her” and invited her... → to have compassion for her.
- Her face “lit” up with a smile, pg.43/ ...when she “lit” the lamps again..., pg.44 → past simple of “light”.

Teacher will propose an activity that can be done in pairs: (Ss; PW; 5’)

*Find in the story the past simple forms of the following verbs and translate them into Spanish:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take</th>
<th>Light</th>
<th>Hear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regret</td>
<td>Hit</td>
<td>Ride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit</td>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>Tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch</td>
<td>Feel</td>
<td>Know</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In this session, “Conditionals”, which is part of the obligatory grammar contents of 4th CSE will be reviewed, and special attention will be paid to 3rd Conditional, as it is the most useful to express hypothesis, ideas, opinions and all the critical thinking we want to extract from them.

The following chart will be given to the students as a guide. The teacher will explain the four types and they will be asked to write their own two examples. (T-Ss; Ss; IW; 25’)

42
### CONDITIONALS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Your examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zero Conditional 0</td>
<td>Used to express <em>general truths, habits or facts.</em></td>
<td>If + Present Simple, Present Simple</td>
<td>- If you drop an egg, it breaks. – If you go under the rain, you get wet.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Conditional 1</td>
<td>Used to express <em>possible events in the future.</em></td>
<td>If + Present Simple, Will + Infinitive</td>
<td>- If you call me, I will go with you. – If we pollute the air, the Earth will be destroyed.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Conditional 2</td>
<td>Use to express <em>things that are impossible to happen in the present and its consequences.</em></td>
<td>If + Past Simple, Would + Infinitive</td>
<td>- If I won the lottery, I would buy a mansion. – If I saw a ghost, I would scream like crazy.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Conditional 3</td>
<td>Things that <em>did not happen in the past and their imaginary results.</em> (Hypothesis)</td>
<td>If + Past Perfect, would + have + past participle</td>
<td>- If I had been in your situation, I would have called the police. - If I had heard that noise, I would have run away very far.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The teacher then, makes questions to make students use conditionals; at the same time they give their opinion about the characters in the story:

*Answer these questions using the 3rd Conditional (the most original and elaborated one will get a sweet):*

- If you had been Ann, what would you have done in her situation?
- If you had been George Martin, would you have hit her or killed her? What would you have done?
Then, as this story touches some controversial topics like “gender violence” or “death penalty” the teacher will introduce a few questions to make students participate in a small debate. (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)

- Although this story happens in 1683, do you think that, in our present society, is there “gender violence”? Do you know of any cases? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- In 1683, the penalty for killing somebody was “death”. Do you think that this is something possible nowadays? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

The last minutes of the lesson are reserved for introducing the next story. (T-Ss; 10’)

Students will be given some photographs to submerge them in the Victorian context:

Relate the words to the photos:

- Eighteenth Century House.
- Victorian era servants.
- Victorian era working children.
- Victorian house interior.

For homework (for Friday), read the next story (“Lost Hearts”) and, while reading the story, take a look at these pictures. Then, answer the questions:

- **Who** is telling the story?
- **Who** is the story about?

- **When** and **where** does the story take place?

- **What** happens? Short summary.

Also, I want you to underline unknown vocabulary you do not understand”.

Reinforcing activities will also be provided by teacher for our three students that might need more practice with grammar. These activities are easier than the previous ones but necessary to set a good base.

Choose the correct answer:

1. If I tell you what I heard, ............... anyone else.
   a) you'll tell   b) no telling   c) don't tell

2. If I ............... you my camera, will you be very careful with it?
   a) lent   b) will lend   c) lend

3. Greg ............... be a very good violinist if he practiced more.
   a) should   b) could   c) had to

4. If the children ............... raise €200, the parents would donate the other €200.
   a) would   b) could   c) will

5. Tony would prepare meals much faster if he ............... a microwave oven.
   a) has   b) had   c) has had

5.12.3. Session 3  (Friday)

To start with the lesson, the teacher will ask the students if they have read the story or not and whether if they liked it or not. The teacher will ask for volunteers to answer and comment the questions they had for homework.

After having corrected the questions, the teacher will ask any student to describe the picture on pg.35; “Can you describe the picture on page 35? Did you relate it with the pictures I gave you last Wednesday?” (T-Ss; Ss; 8’)

As this story is one of the longest as well as one of the most interesting ones, we are going to practice pronunciation by reading it aloud. The story is divided in five little parts separated by a dot. The teacher will start by reading aloud page 34, so as the students can notice the intonation, rhythm, pauses, pronunciation of some words and enthusiasm. (T-Ss; 3’)

The teacher will pose the following question to the students in order to make them speak and express their beliefs: (T-Ss; Ss; 2’)

- *Why do you think Mr Abney was so interested in Stephen’s age?*

- *Did you find the repetition of the question suspicious?*
In each part, vocabulary and tenses will be practiced; teacher will ask the students: 
(T-Ss; Ss; 5’)

*What’s the meaning of:*

- It all "seemed" very “pleasant” to the boy... (1st paragraph) → - To seem: to appear to be / pleasant: agreeable, good → It all appeared to be good to the boy.
- ... his “elderly” cousin, Mr Abney (2nd paragraph) → elderly: older, old.
- I hope you are not to tired to eat you “supper”? (3rd paragraph) → supper: dinner.
- She was “quite” “willing to” share this information... (pg.36, 1st paragraph) → quite: really, totally. / willing to: wanting to, disposed to; from “will”.

The teacher must teach the students to think and guess the meaning from the context, relating information and paying attention to some words like “willing to”; the student must notice the compound “will-ing” or, for example, “elderly” → “eld” → “old”

*Find in the text the past simple forms of the following verbs and translate them into Spanish. You can do the activity in pairs:*

Arrive → Fall → Think → 

To Seem → Become →

Students now will start reading aloud until next stop in page 37. The teacher will walk around the classroom telling the students when to stop in order to let another student continue reading. The teacher will knock on the table of the student he wants to continue reading (this way students pay more attention as “anyone could be next”. This is a technique I learnt from my practice period) and tells the previous reader he/she’s got a positive. (Ss; 4’)

The teacher asks them some questions; (T-Ss; Ss; 4’) (The teacher must encourage students to speak; whoever speaks has got one positive, participation is very important)

*Let’s comment on some aspects:*

- What do you think about these two previous children of Mrs Bunch’s story?
- Are there similarities between Stephen and these children?
- Do you think they just disappeared?
- What do you think that Stephen saw in the bathroom?
- What would you have done in Stephen’s situation?
- What do you think about Mrs Bunch? Would you trust her?

Students continue reading until page 38, where we will make another stop. (Ss; 4’)

After reading, vocabulary will be practiced: (T-Ss; Ss; 4’)

What’s the meaning of?

- “uneasy” night (pg.37, 3rd paragraph)  → nervous, worried, unquiet.
- “mending” (next line)  → To mend: to repair, to fix, to restore.
- “night-shirt” (same line)  → a “shirt” for the “night” to “sleep”: pyjamas.
- how did you “manage” to “tear” your… (next line)  → To manage: to get to, to achieve, to accomplish. / To tear: to break, to split, to cut.
- as the “scratches” on… (4th paragraph)  → marks, cuts, injuries.
- I “wonder” how those… (5th paragraph)  → To make yourself the question, to doubt.

The teacher asks the students: discussion (T-Ss; Ss; 2’)

- What do you think it happened to Stephen to have those scratches?
- Why do you think Mr Parkes was so scared? What do you think there is under the house?

Students continue reading until the end of the story. (Ss; 8’)

After reading the story, vocabulary and expressions will be practiced: (T-Ss; Ss; 2’)

- What does the narrator means when he says: “Stephen suddenly saw something which made his hair stand on end” (pg.39) Is there a similar expression in Spanish?  → gooseflesh.

The teacher finally asks some questions and the most elaborated and original ones will get an extra positive: (T- Ss; Ss; 3’)

- What does it mean the last sentence of the story?
- Why do you think that Mr Abney should kill children and not adults?
- Did you like the story? Why?
To finish the lesson, we are going to talk about the crude situation that some little boys had to live in the Victorian era, comparing them to Stephen, the orphaned boy of the story. Students will be presented a video called “The Sad Truth of Child Labor in Victorian England”. This way, they can appreciate the evolution of history and how lucky they have been to live in the modern era, with modern laws which forbid children to work; the can appreciate their life conditions. (T-Ss; 6’)

Video from Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSfYBky-RM

This is a video which explains very well the historical context of working children. Furthermore, the language and grammatical structures used in it are apt for these 4th CSE students. Therefore, I thought quite interesting to show it to them. The teacher will stop the video at each text and the most interesting points will be highlighted and commented; for example, some of the jobs these children did like “chimney-sweepers”, workers on the textile industry, etc.

Teacher will then ask: small discussion (T-Ss; Ss; 2’)

- If you had been Stephen, what would you have done? Would you have preferred to live in the streets or live with your strange uncle?
- Do you find these children’s situation fair? Why?

The last minutes will be used to remind students’ homework for next day: (T-Ss; 2’)

For homework (for Monday), read the next story “The Flies”. Then, answer the questions:
- Who is telling the story?
- Who is the story about?
- When and where does the story take place?
- What happens? Short summary.

Also, I want you to underline unknown vocabulary you do not understand.

5.12.4. Session 4  (Monday)

To start with, the teacher will ask the students whether or not they have read the story and whether or not they have enjoyed it. Secondly, homework will be corrected. The teacher will also ask for a volunteer to describe the picture on page 20. (T-Ss; Ss; 8’)

Subsequently, to continue with our routine, vocabulary and verb tenses will be practiced: (T-Ss; Ss; 6’)

What’s the meaning of:

- ... the young man was “pale” and “thin” (2nd paragraph, 1st line); Pale: white, clear / Thin: slim, the opposite of fat.
- ... and were “plotting” (2nd paragraph); To plot: to plan something.
- .... where there are “piles” of old stones (2nd paragraph); Piles: a great deal, an amount.
- Mr Davis seemed “annoyed” at his young friend’s “rudeness” and he “politely” explained...; (4th paragraph); Annoyed: Irritated / Rudeness: vulgar, crude, rustic / Politely: with education.
- ... find old bones and “pots”... (same paragraph): Pots: container, urn, box, recipient.
- ... in the early morning “fog” (pg. 19, 3rd line); smoke, mist.
- ... to move on “towards” Mr Davis’s... (pg.19, 2nd paragraph); Towards: move to, in the direction of, approaching.
- ... eyes was a black “handkerchief” and... (pg. 19, 3rd paragraph); Handkerchief: a tissue, a piece of paper or clothe to wipe the nose.
- ... fat black flies, “feeding” (pg.21, 2nd paragraph); To feed: To eat.

After having practiced vocabulary, the teacher will pose the following questions to make students talk. The teacher will explain the activity:

*T- Comment these questions with your mates, find someone who thinks different from you and tell us what you think and the other’s one opinion, as for example,

- Why do you think the villagers thought that Mr Davis’s friend was his private teacher? “I think that the villagers thought he was his private teacher because, in that times, they couldn’t be boyfriends. However Ana thinks that maybe Mr Davis was rich and for this reason, he could have a private teacher”
- Do you believe in magic? What do you think these two men were really doing?
- Why do you think the horses became so nervous? Do you think that animals have a sense or can feel death?
- Do you know any other horror stories that have to do with animals?
- Why do you think that the villagers thought they couldn’t bury the bodies near the church?
- Where do you think that pool of blood came from?
- Why do you think the villagers decided to burn Mr Davis’ house?

The teacher will give them time to talk and write their answers if they want. Then, the teacher will ask some of the students to tell their answer aloud. (T-Ss; Ss; 15’)

*Now, in pairs or groups of three, I want you to write the answer for this question; the most original question will get a sweet AND one extra positive:

- Invent and describe what happened that night step by step. “Mr Davis and his friend met to eat supper...
This activity aims to introduce them into writing and using their imagination, a warming to the composition they will have to do. (T-Ss; Ss; PW-GW; 6’)

The teacher will now take the opportunity to explain their final task for Friday, which is 20% of the final mark:

*For Friday, you will have to write and present a short horror story, made by you and using your own imagination. The story must have the following points:* (T-Ss; Ss; 8’)

- Verb tenses that we have previously seen in this unit.
- Conditional structures and at least one structure using the 3rd Type Conditional.
- It must be well organized; use paragraphs.
- At least two dialogues.
- It must contain at least 100 – 120 words.
- Free-election on the topic; you can write about whatever you want.

The teacher will give an extra incentive to make students put their best foot forward in this task;

*T- I have been talking with the Head-Director and the best stories will be published for the rest of the high-school students to read them. Give your best because you are going to become famous! Remember also, that this task is the 20% of your final mark. You have got one week from now; on Friday we will do the “story telling day”; you will present and read your stories to the rest of the class and performance and enthusiasm will be appreciated. You can bring to class anything you need or tell your story as you want. I will collect your stories and bring them back corrected on Monday.*

To finish the lesson and relax a little bit, the teacher will ask the students a question:

- *Have you noticed that characters in these stories ride horses instead of cars? Cars were a Victorian era invention. Let’s see some more interesting inventions of this era (1837-1901):*

*Match these pictures with their words:* (T-Ss; Ss; IW; 3’)

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First Photographs
First Radio
Modern One-piece Toilet

Electric Telegraph
First Bicycles
First Telephone

First Electric Bulbs
First Cars
After having done the activity, the teacher will pose some questions in order to have a small debate: (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)

- Why do you think these inventions were so revolutionary?
- In your opinion, which one do you think it has been the most important one?

The last minutes of the lesson will be dedicated to the explanation of homework for next day. Following our routine, students must do the daily task: (T-Ss; 2’)

For homework (for Wednesday), I want you to read the next and last story “The Ash-Tree”. Then, answer the questions:

- **Who** is telling the story?
- **Who** is the story about?
- **When** and **where** does the story take place?
- **What** happens? Short summary.

*Also, I want you to underline unknown vocabulary you do not understand*. 
To start with, the teacher will ask the students if they have read the story or not, and whether they liked it or not. Secondly, homework will be corrected and this time, the teacher will go around the class to revise the notebooks and give extra positive marks to those who really have their homework done. We will discuss the questions in class. (T-Ss; Ss; 10’)

After correcting homework, vocabulary and verb tenses will be practiced: (T- Ss; Ss; 10’)

What’s the meaning of:

- …stand, “proud” and tall (pg.1, 1st paragraph): Proud: noble, self-respecting.
- There will be “guests” at the Hall (pg.1, 2nd paragraph): Guests: visitor.
- …uncomfortable and “guilty”… (pg.1, 3rd paragraph): Guilty: convicted.
- …his friend the “vicar”… (pg.1, 3rd paragraph): Vicar: priest.
- …there were no “wounds”… (pg.2): Wounds: cuts, injuries.
- …the vicar “rushed” to… (pg.3 1st paragraph): To rush: to run, to hurry.
- …graves in the “graveyard”… (pg.3, 3rd paragraph): Graveyard: cemetery.
- …a “crowd” came to watch. (same paragraph): Crowd: multitude.
- …no body, no bones, no “dust”. (same paragraph): Dust: dirt.
- …tried to “persuade” him… (4th paragraph): To persuade: to convince.
- …some papers “to deliver” to you. (pg.4, 2nd paragraph): To deliver: to give, to hand.
- …into the “shadowy” branches… (pg.5, 2nd paragraph): from “shadow”: Shadowy: in the dark.
- …it’s “hollow” and they… (pg.5, 4th paragraph): Hollow: empty.

Find in the text the past tenses for these verbs and translate them into Spanish:

Run ➔ Hold ➔ Ring ➔
Bring ➔ Belong ➔ Rush ➔
After doing these activities, the teacher will pose some questions in order to have a small debate in class: (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)

- Do you think that they should have hanged Mrs Mothershole? Why?

- Do you believe in the existence of witches? What do you know about them?

To continue with our lesson, we are going to watch a video about the history of witchcraft in Europe in order to acquire some interesting knowledge about the topic. The teacher will show the video *twice* and (s)he will stop it as many times as necessary for students to get the main ideas. Then, a comprehension activity will be proposed to the students. (T-Ss; Ss; 20’)

*T- Well, to learn a little more about these women, let’s see an interesting video I have found. I will play the video twice; the first round just relax and listen. Then, read the questions of the activity and listen again to the video carefully. I will stop it as many times as you need.*

Video from Youtube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9Ricq223qg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9Ricq223qg)
Comprehension activity:

- What’s the “Evil Eye”?
- What things could you be convicted for?
- Can you name some “witches’ familiars”?
- What’s the ability of “shape shifting”?
- What else could witches do?

After this activity, the teacher will pose some questions in order to have a small debate in class: (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)

- During the middle ages, any woman whose behavior was odd or strange might be considered a witch; do you find that fair?
- What would you have done if you had lived in that period?
- Now that you have watched the video and you have more information, what signals in the story might make you think of Mrs Mothersole as a witch?

To finish the lesson, the teacher will encourage the students to read the full grader reader, as there are really good stories there that we have not had time to work on. The teacher will read some prompts from the voting photocopy and will engage students to read “The Curtains”, “The Painting of –ngle Hall” or “The Two Cousins”. Then, the teacher will ask the students to give their personal opinion about the stories. (T-Ss; Ss; 5’)

To end with the lesson, the teacher will remind student about the “story telling Friday”. (T-Ss; 5’)

T – Next day, we will finish our Halloween special unit with your own horror stories. Remember that you must write a short original, horror story containing all the necessary points. We will close the curtains and bring sweets and candles; we are going to enjoy listening to our classmates stories and then, we are going to vote which ones should be published. Do your best and see you on “story telling Friday”.

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5.12.6. Session 6  (Friday)

To start with, what we want is to create a good atmosphere. The teacher will ask the students enthusiastically if they are prepared to tremble and shake with fear... and the students will prepare the classroom; closed curtains, candle lights, background music and sweets: ready for the action. (Ss; 5’)

Subsequently, the story telling will begin; the teacher will call each student at random and they will read their stories aloud. They can use the blackboard or any material they need to answer their class-mates’ questions. Enthusiasm and performance, as well as pronunciation, rhythm and intonation, will be punctuated. We must encourage the applause after each short story. (Ss; 40’; 2’ or 3’ minutes each student)

To finish the lesson, if there is time left, we will vote the best stories, those that will be published on the high-school paper. (Ss; 10’)

The teacher will collect and correct every story.
6. Conclusion

To conclude this essay, I declare myself a steady defendant of the use of literature in the English classroom for its many benefits for learners.

When I started this project, I was not totally convinced on the topic: the use of literature in classroom. I know that I like literature and I enjoy reading books but the mere word “literature” sounds boring to students and even more nowadays, where we are surrounded by new technologies, smart-boards, computers, smart-phones, tablets, etc., and a book is not precisely the indispensable object of the 21st century teenager. But nevertheless, I finally decided that my essay should not only deal with the issue of using literature in the classroom, but also about how to transmit this inner passion for books and reading to my future students.

If teachers decide to use literature in the classroom, obviously, the student will not say “no, teacher, we do not like it”; they will accept the teacher’s decision as polite men and women they are but this essay aims to go further; this essay is about how to use literature in an engaging way, how to make students like reading, how to present literature in a simple way, as a hobby, as a way to relax and free our imagination. Literature is the perfect way of learning English without noticing the process because the process is not boring and mechanical but interesting and enjoyable. For this purpose, I decided to work on a topic which will never get old-fashioned: horror. As I explain it in this essay, from the dawn of humanity, fear is one of the primary emotions which humans are subject to. One of the best current examples in this kind of “horror exploitation” is Hollywood and the amount of movies they are producing because of this strange attraction we have for the unknown and the paranormal. So, if teenagers like these movies, why wouldn’t they like the book?

Let’s use literature then but, let’s find also the adequate moment. For example, in my case, Halloween; the perfect period to read horror stories, where students might feel more motivated to do something related to the festivity. Let’s give them short and abridged stories instead of one thick classic; let’s connect and share our most personal opinions, feelings, fears, beliefs; let’s create a friendly and comfortable atmosphere where we can learn all together, the students as well as the teacher. This is also one of the principle objectives of my essay; to behold the teacher not as the unquestionable, strict and serious figure of the past but as facilitator. In this respect, the investigation that I have carried out in the state of the art has been most productive to me, as I have discovered new methodology techniques, many aspects that can be improved by using literature apart from the most common ones, a wide variety of activities for its use and a great deal of motivation to innovate.
When writing my didactic unit, I noticed that, even though I started doubting the topic, I had at hand so many interesting resources and activities to introduce literature in the classroom that I did not know how to include them all.

In my opinion, I am sure that every little activity of which this unit is compound can (if cautiously planned) generate more meaningful knowledge than those of the standard class books. It fosters critical thinking through reading and, this thought must obviously be expressed by speaking and interacting with the others which, at the same time, is achieved because students are able to use structures and vocabulary that they have already internalized without noticing it, just reading. For me, reading has turned to be the perfect exercise to reinforce not only the basic skills but also psychological and social abilities, ethics, morals, values, cultures, different perspectives, etc.

Literature offers the opportunity to connect the reader’s experiences, emotions) with the text and, therefore, to remember it. If with this unit I can make students connect or feel identified with any story, I am sure that what they learn, they will never forget. Furthermore, If I can provide my students with some techniques for them to use in the future, to learn how to read between the lines, how to get the hidden message and different perspective of a text; if I can engage students into the world of Literature, not only horror but Literature in general, many of my most ambitious and personal objectives will be accomplished.
7. Bibliographical References


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8. Appendix

**THE LOCKED ROOM AND OTHER STORIES**

LEVEL 4
PENGUIN READERS
The Locked Room
and Other Horror Stories

M.R. James

Louise Greenwood and Carolyn Jones
drew the pictures

Level 4

Retold by Piers Sandiford
Series Editors: Andy Hopkins and Jocelyn Potter
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**Introduction**

He jumped and screamed and, as he did, the face of the thing came up towards him: no eyes, no nose, no mouth. He screamed again and rushed to the door. He felt the thing touch his back and start to tear at his shirt...

Things ... things in the night, things in the house, screaming, running, staring ... In these stories there are things that are worse than your worst dreams.

Giant black spiders living in a tree. The terrible ghost that waits outside a window. Empty clothes that walk. The strange thin woman who moves through a man's picture. The boy with the long, dirty fingernails - and a hole in his chest. The woman who screams from the bottom of a lake. And the dry dusty old man who reads - but has no eyes!

Here are nine stories like no others you have read.

Montague Rhodes James was born in 1862 in a village in Kent, in the south of England, where his father was a vicar. From an early age, he loved old books and studied history, the Bible, languages and the books of past centuries at Cambridge University. He studied, lived and worked at the University from 1882 to 1918.

He began to write ghost and horror stories after reading the stories of Irish writer Sheridan Le Fanu. From the early 1890s, he read one of his own stories to friends at Christmas every year. His great knowledge of history gave his stories an unusual amount of detail and his ghosts seem more real, and are more frightening, than those of almost any other writer.

M. R. James died in 1936.

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**Chapter 1 The Ash-Tree**

Visitors to Castringham Hall in Suffolk will find it almost unchanged from the days when our story took place. They can still see the beautiful old house with its gardens and lake. However, the one thing missing is the ash-tree, which used to stand, proud and tall, in front of the house, its branches almost touching the walls.

This story begins in 1690 with a strange, lonely old woman, Mrs Motherose, who was found guilty of being a witch. Sir Matthew Fell, the owner of Castringham Hall at that time, described how she used to climb into the ash-tree outside his bedroom every time there was a full moon. He said that she usually carried a strange knife to cut off parts of the tree and that she talked to herself. Once he followed her home, but she disappeared and when he knocked on the door of her house, she came downstairs in her night clothes looking sleepy. He and the villagers agreed that it was certain she did these things by magic and so she was hanged. Before she died, she fought and shouted, and her last strange words were: 'There will be guests at the Hall.'

After the hanging, Sir Matthew felt uncomfortable and guilty, and he told his friend the vicar about his worries. 'You did the right thing. Sir Matthew,' were the wise words of the vicar. 'I'm sure she was a dangerous woman.' Sir Matthew felt happier.

That evening, Sir Matthew and the vicar went for a walk in the gardens of Castringham Hall. It was the night of the full moon. As they were returning to the house, Sir Matthew pointed to the ash-tree in great surprise. 'What kind of animal is that running down the ash-tree? It looks very strange.'

The vicar only saw the moving animal for a moment, but he thought that it had more than four legs. He shook his head. 'I
thing and could offer no real explanation for Sir Matthew’s death.

When he heard the news, the vicar rushed to Castringham Hall and, while he was waiting to hear the doctor’s opinion, he looked at Sir Matthew’s Bible, which was lying on a table by the dead man’s bedside. He opened the book and the first words he read were from the book of Luke, chapter 8: ‘Cut it down’ were the words he read.

The servants locked Sir Matthew’s room that day and it stayed locked up for the next forty years. By that time, Sir Richard Fell, Sir Matthew’s grandson, was living at Castringham Hall. He enjoyed spending money, especially on rebuilding parts of the Hall. He also decided to make the local church bigger so that his family could have a fine new seat in the new part of the church. In order to complete this building work, some of the graves in the graveyard had to be moved. One of the graves was that of Mrs Mothersole, the old witch who began this story. The villagers were excited about the opening of her grave and a crowd came to watch. However, they and the workmen were amazed to find the grave completely empty: no body, no bones, no dust.

At about this time, Sir Richard started to sleep very badly. The wind made his fire smoke and the curtains move and, because his room faced east, the sun woke him up early in the morning. One morning he asked his servant to help him choose a better room and he made a tour of the house, finding something wrong with each room. Each one was either too cold or too noisy or it faced the wrong direction. Finally, he found himself outside his grandfather’s old room. His servant tried to persuade him not to go in:

‘It’s a bad room, sir. They say terrible things happened there, and no one has opened the door since the death of your grandfather. Also, the ash-tree is right outside the window and that’s always unlucky, sir.’
But Sir Richard was not listening. He unlocked the door and walked straight in. ‘See? Nothing unusual in here, James!’ he said and he opened the window. As he did so, he noticed how tall and dark the ash-tree was. Its branches seemed to be trying to reach into the room. But he said nothing.

At that moment, a stranger rang the bell at the front door of the Hall. The servant brought him up to the bedroom, where Sir Richard was standing, looking around him at the old paintings and old books. ‘I must apologize for interrupting you, Sir Richard,’ said the stranger, ‘but please allow me to introduce myself. My name is William Crome. My grandfather was the vicar here in your grandfather’s time. I have some papers to deliver to you.’

‘Delighted to meet you,’ said Sir Richard. ‘James, please bring us some wine in the library and then move my clothes and things into this room for me. I will sleep here in future.’

While he was drinking a glass of wine with William Crome in the library, Sir Richard looked at the papers, many of which belonged to his grandfather. Among them he found the notes made by the old vicar about the day of Sir Matthew’s mysterious death.

‘Well, well,’ said Sir Richard, laughing quietly. ‘How very interesting! It seems that my grandfather’s Bible gave a piece of advice on the day he died and your grandfather thought it could be about that old ash-tree outside the bedroom window - “Cut it down’ the Good Book told him. Those were the first words your grandfather saw when he opened the Bible on the day of my grandfather’s death.’

‘Do you still have that old Bible?’ asked William Crome, ‘I’d very much like to see it.’

Sir Richard found the old Bible easily. ‘Yes, here it is. A bit dusty, I’m afraid. Let’s see what it has to tell me. I’ll open it at any page and read the first words I see, just as your grandfather did.’

He opened the book and his eyes fell on the words, ‘You shall look for me in the morning, and I shall not be here.’ Sir Richard was sure that the words were again about the ash-tree - the Bible was crying to give him some advice! He ordered some of his servants to cut it down the next day.

But Sir Richard did not live to see them cut the ash-tree down. That night, at exactly midnight, a strange and terrible animal jumped from Sir Richard’s bed, ran silently to the window and disappeared into the shadowy branches of the enormous tree. No one was there to see it but the next morning they found Sir Richard’s body, like his grandfather’s, dead and completely black.

When William Crome heard the news of his new friend’s death, the words from the Bible came back to him: ‘You shall look for me in the morning and I shall not be here.’ He immediately hurried to Castringham Hall, where he found the family and servants crowded round the ash-tree.

‘Sir Richard’s last orders were that we should cut down this tree,’ explained James and then, in a quieter voice, he went on, ‘and there’s something very strange about that tree, sir. Very strange. It’s hollow and they say something lives inside it.’

The gardener put his ladder against the tree and climbed up to look inside. As he held a light over the hole, his face suddenly looked so terrified that several of the people watching from below screamed and turned to run. The gardener himself fell off the ladder, dropping his lamp down into the hollow tree, which quickly caught fire. As the tree started to burn, the crowd saw an animal run from the tree. They screamed in horror as they saw its shape and size. It looked like an enormous spider, about the same size as a man’s head and covered all over with grey hair.

‘Look, there’s another! And another!’ someone shouted. For a long time the men watched these terrifying animals trying to escape from the fire one after another, and then they killed them with sticks.
At last, the fire burned itself out and William Crane, James the servant and some of the braver people went to look inside the blackened tree. There they found the bones of a human being. The doctors who examined it afterwards said that it was the body of a woman who died around 1690 ... the year that old Mrs Mothersole was hanged.
Chapter 2  A School Story

Two men, John and Edgar, were having dinner together one night when a conversation started on the subject of school-days. One of them, John, told the following strange story:

‘When I went to the school in September of 1879, I immediately became friendly with a Scottish boy called McLeod. It was a large school and the teachers changed quite often. One term a new teacher named Sampson came to teach at the school. He taught us Latin. He was tall and pale with a black beard and he was popular with the boys because he used to tell us all about his travels to different countries. He always carried an old gold coin in his pocket, which he found on a trip to Turkey, and one day he let us look at this coin closely. On one side of it was the head of a king - I don’t know which one - and on the other side of it were the letters G.W.S. (for Sampson’s name) and the date 24 July 1865.

We enjoyed Sampson’s classes because he often asked us to invent sentences of our own, instead of always doing the boring exercises in the grammar book. One day, he asked us for sentences using the word ‘remember’ in Latin. We all wrote our sentences in the usual way, and Sampson came round to correct each of us. My friend McLeod seemed to have some difficulty in thinking of a sentence and when the bell went for break, I saw him write something very quickly, just before Sampson reached him. So McLeod’s sentence was the last one that Sampson corrected that day. I waited outside the classroom for what seemed a long time before my friend at last came out. I guessed that he was in trouble for making a mistake. When he did come out, he was looking thoughtful.

“What happened? Was old Sampson angry?” I asked.

‘No, my sentence was all right. I think I wrote “Memento patei inter quattuor taxus”,’ said McLeod.

“Well, what does all that mean?” I asked.

“That’s the funny thing,” he explained. “I don’t really know, you see. I couldn’t think of anything to write until just before Sampson got to me. Then those words just came into my head from nowhere and — it was very strange — I could see a sort of picture of it in my head. I think it means “Remember the well among the four trees”. When Sampson read it he went quiet for a long time, then he started to ask me questions about my family and where I came from. Then he let me go.’

We soon forgot about the lesson and McLeod’s strange sentence because the next day McLeod became ill with a cold and he didn’t come to school for a week. Nothing happened for about a month, until one day when we were, again, writing Latin sentences for Sampson. This time we had to write them on pieces of paper and give them to him for correction. He started looking through them, but when he got to one piece of paper he turned white and cried out, looking very frightened. He got up and hurried out of the classroom and we sat there for a long time, wondering what to do. Finally, I got up to have a look at the papers and the first thing I noticed was that the top one was in red ink. Our school never allowed us to use red ink; it was against the rules. The sentence on the paper said ‘Si tu non veneris ad me, ego veniam ad te’, which means ‘If you don’t come to me, I will come to you’. All the boys looked at it and they all promised that the sentence was not theirs. To check, I counted the pieces of paper - there were seventeen of them ... but there were only sixteen boys in the class. Where this paper came from, no one could say. I put it in my pocket and it wasn’t until that afternoon that I took it out again: it was completely white, with no sign of the red writing on it anywhere! I know it was the same piece of paper because I could still see my fingerprints on it. Anyway, Sampson eventually came back at the
end of that lesson and told us we could go. He looked at the papers one by one, and probably thought it was his imagination playing tricks. He looked pale and worried.

The next day, Sampson was in school again and he seemed quite normal, but it was that night that the third strange thing happened. It was about midnight when I suddenly woke up; somebody was shouting at me. It was McLeod, who shared my room; he looked terrified. ‘Quick,’ he said, ‘I think a burglar is trying to get into Sampson’s room.’ I rushed to the window but could see nothing. Somehow, though, I felt that something was wrong out there and the two of us waited, watching closely.

‘Tell me exactly what you saw or heard,’ I whispered.

‘I didn’t hear anything but about five minutes before I woke you I just found myself standing here at the window,’ McLeod whispered back. ‘There was a terrible-looking man standing just outside Sampson’s window. He was very tall and very thin ... and ... he didn’t really look like a living person at all. More like a ghost. He seemed to be making a sign to Sampson to go with him. That’s all I saw before I woke you up.’

We waited a long time, watching, but we saw nothing more that night. Everything was quiet outside. We woke up feeling tired and strange in the morning. But during the day the news went round that no one could find Sampson anywhere, and he didn’t come for our Latin class that day. In fact, we never heard of or saw Sampson again. Somehow, McLeod and I knew that we should keep quiet about what he had seen that night and we never told anyone.’

‘It’s a good story, John,’ said Edgar, listening to his friend as he finished his wine, ‘a very good one. But now I really must be on my way home. I hope I don’t meet any strange, thin men on the way.’ The two men laughed, shook hands and went their different ways.

It was about a year later that Edgar, the listener to John’s story, travelled to Ireland to visit another friend who lived in an old
country house there. One evening his host was looking in a box fall of various old things for a key that he wanted. Suddenly he pulled a small object out of the box and held it up. 'Have a look at this, Edgar. What do you think it is?' he asked.

It was an old gold coin with the head of a king on the front. Edgar looked closely. 'Where did you get it?' he asked quietly.

'Well, it's quite an interesting story,' began his friend. 'A year or two ago we were working on that area of the garden over there in the corner, can you see? Among the four trees? Right in the middle of the trees, we found an old well and at the bottom of it, you'll never guess what we found.'

'Yes, I will. Was it a body, by any chance?' asked Edgar.

His friend was surprised. 'Yes, it was. In fact, we found two bodies. One of them had its arms tightly around the other. They were probably there for thirty years or more. Anyway, we pulled them out and in the pocket of one of them we found this old coin... from Turkey or somewhere, by the look of it. It's got something on the back of it, too. Can you see what it says?'

'Yes, I think I can,' said Edgar. 'It seems to be the letters G.W.S. and the date 24 July 1865.'

Chapter 3 The Curtains
(from The Diary of Mr Poynter)

Mr James Denton's greatest love in life was books, old ones most of all. His collection grew bigger and bigger every year, but he lived in his aunt's house, and she was not very happy about this.

Mr Denton was in London one day to buy furniture for the new house which he and his aunt were building, and he was on his way to a shop to choose the curtains. His way took him, quite by chance, past one of the best bookshops in London, and he could not stop himself going in, just for a quick look, as he told himself.

He was just walking round the shop, looking at all the different books, when he noticed a small collection of books on the part of England that he came from, Warwickshire. He spent the next half an hour looking through these and finally decided to buy one that really interested him, called The Diary of Mr Poynter, 1770. He paid for the book and then, looking at his watch, he realized that he had very little time before his train back to Warwickshire left, and he had to rush to the station. He just caught the train.

That night, his aunt questioned him about his trip to London and was very interested to hear about the furniture which was going to arrive soon. Her nephew described everything in detail, but still she was not satisfied. 'And what about the curtains, James?' she asked. 'Did you go to...?' Suddenly James remembered. 'Oh dear, oh dear,' he said, 'that's the one thing I missed. I am so sorry. You see, I was on my way there when, quite by chance, I passed Robins...'

'Not Robins the bookshop, I hope,' cried his aunt. 'Don't
tell me you’ve bought more horrible old books, James.

“Well, only one,” he said, feeling a bit guilty, “and it’s a very interesting one, a diary of someone who used to live not far from here ...” But he could see that his aunt was not really listening.

“You can’t go to London again before next Thursday,” she was saying, “and really, James, until we decide on the curtains, there’s nothing more we can do.”

Luckily, she decided to go to bed soon after that and James was left alone with his new book, which he read until the early hours of the morning. He found this diary, with its stories of everyday life at dux tune, very interesting. The next day was Sunday. After church, James and his aunt sat in the living-room together.

“Is this the old book that made you forget my curtains?” asked his aunt, picking it up. “Well, it doesn’t look very good ... The Diary of Mr Poyniter. Huh!” But she opened the book and looked at a few pages. Suddenly, much to his surprise, she began to show some interest. “Look at this, James,” she said. “Isn’t it lovely?” It was a small piece of paper, pinned to one of the pages of the diary. On it was a beautiful drawing, made up of curving lines, which somehow caught the eye. “Well, why don’t we get it copied for the curtains if you like it so much?” he suggested, hoping that she would forgive him for his bad memory of the day before in London. His aunt agreed and the very next day, James took the piece of paper to a company in the nearest town, who agreed to copy it and make it into curtains.

About a month later, James was called in to inspect the work and was extremely pleased with the result. “Was it a difficult job?” he asked the manager.

“Not too difficult, sir. But, to tell you the truth, the artist who did the work was very unhappy about it - he said there was something bad in the drawing, sir.” James was thoughtful but still he chose the colours for the curtains and then returned home.

Few weeks later, the curtains were ready and a man came to hang them in several rooms of the new house, one of which was James’s bedroom. That night he found that he could not stop looking at them and, although it was a still night, he was almost sure that the curtains were moving and that someone was watching him from behind them. He told himself that this was impossible and not to be so stupid. He explained to himself that the effect was caused by the curving lines on the curtains, which looked just like long, curling black hair.

The next day, a friend of James’s came to stay and after dinner they sat up late, talking and laughing. At last they decided to go to bed and James showed his friend to the guest room, which was just along from his own. James, though, did not want to go to bed immediately and sat in the chair by the
fire in his room, reading. He fell asleep for a few minutes and, when he woke, he realized that something was in the room with him. Putting out his hand, he felt something covered in hair and thought it was his dog, who always followed him everywhere. 'How did you get in here? I thought I left you downstairs,' he said, looking down. To his horror, he found it was not his little dog, but something almost human. He jumped and screamed and, as he did, the face of the thing came up towards him: no eyes, no nose, no mouth. Only hair. He screamed again and rushed to the door, but was so frightened that he could not get it open. He felt the thing touch his back and start to tear at his shirt. At last the door flew open and he rushed to his friend's room, terrified and breathing hard.

The next morning, early, James went away to the seaside for a few days to try to forget about his horrible experience. He took with him The Diary of Mr Poynter. He wanted to read it again carefully to find out anything he could about the pattern pinned on to the page. When he turned to that part of the book he found that there were several pieces of paper stuck one on top of the other. He carefully pulled off the first two and found this story, written by Mr Poynter in 1707. 'Old Mr Casbury of Aco,ington told me this day of young Sir Everard Charlett, at that time a student of University College. The young man drank too much and broke the law many times, but because he was from an important family, the university never did anything about it. He used to wear his hair very long and curling down his neck and he wore unusual, colourful clothes. His behaviour made his father very unhappy. One day, they found young Sir Everard dead in his room, with all his hair pulled out. No one could explain why or how he died, but the strangest thing was that, the day after he died, the body disappeared completely, leaving only a pile of long, curling black hair on the floor of his room. His father kept some of this hair

and had drawings made of it, part of which I have pinned to this page.'

This is the strange story behind the curtains. Before he returned home, James Denton ordered his servants to take them all down and burn them.
Chapter 4 The Flies
(from An Evening’s Entertainment)

If you go to the end of the road, past Collin’s house, on the left you will see a field with some old fruit trees in it. A little house used to be there where a man called Davis lived. He was a very quiet man who seemed to have enough money to live on. He didn’t work on the farms, but he always went to town on market days. One day, a young man came back from market with him.

The young man was pale and thin, and he didn’t speak very much. He lived with Mr Davis and nobody knew if he helped with the housework, or if Mr Davis was his teacher. But people talked and wondered why they were always walking together, early and late, up in the hills and down in the woods. They suspected that the two men were playing with magic and were plotting something terrible. Once a month, when the moon was full, they went up to a place on the hill where there are piles of old stones and rocks and they stayed up there all night. Someone once asked Mr Davis why he went to such a dark, lonely place in the middle of the night. Mr Davis smiled and replied, ‘I love old places. They remind me of the past. And the air is beautiful on a summer’s night. You can see all the countryside for miles around in the moonlight.’

But Mr Davis’s young friend interrupted rudely: ‘We don’t want other people near us. We just want to talk to each other.’

Mr Davis seemed annoyed at his young friend’s rudeness and he politely explained, ‘People say that there are bodies under those old stones, the bodies of dead soldiers. I know farmers sometimes find old bones and pots when they are working in the fields around here. I’d like to know more about how those people lived and who their gods were. I think they probably practised magic.’

Then, one morning in September, something terrible happened. A farm worker had to go up to the top of the hill, to the woods, very early, when it was still dark. In the distance he saw a shape that looked like a man in the early morning fog. As he came nearer, he saw that it was a man. It was Mr Davis’s friend, dead, hanging from a tree. Near his feet was a knife, covered in blood. The poor farm worker was terrified and ran back down the hill to the village. He woke up some of the villagers to tell them about the terrible sight and some men went back up the hill with a horse to bring down the body. They also immediately sent a young boy to Mr Davis’s house, to see if he was at home, because, of course, they suspected that he was the murderer. When they cut down the young man’s body from the tree, they were surprised to see the clothes he was wearing were all black, like the clothes that veiers used to wear many centuries ago.

When the men’s horse came near the tree and the dead young man, it screamed and tried to run away, but the men were able to hold it and they finally got back to the village with the body across the terrified horse’s back. In the village they found the young boy standing in the main street, with several women standing around him. He was as white as paper and would not say a word. When the men tried to move on towards Mr Davis’s house, the horse again became very frightened. It stopped in the road and would not move. Then suddenly it turned and tried to run, and the body of the dead young man fell off its back on to the road. The horse could smell blood. They carried the young man’s body to Mr Davis’s house and when they opened the door, they saw what the poor young boy had seen.

There, on the long kitchen table, was the body of Mr Davis. Tied round his eyes was a black handkerchief and his hands were tied behind his back. His chest was cut open from top to bottom and his heart was gone. It was an awful sight. The men ran outside for some fresh air - the smell of death in that room was so terrible. Later, they put the young man’s body next to Mr Davis’s and they
looked carefully round the house. Why were these two men dead? How did they die? In one of the cupboards they found a small green bottle of strong medicine often used to put people to sleep.

‘I think that young man gave Mr Davis some of this stuff to put him to sleep,’ one man suggested, looking at the bottle, ‘and then killed him. Goodness knows why. Perhaps he needed Davis’s heart for his magic. Then later, perhaps, he was sorry about murdering his friend and went up the hill and killed himself.’

Well, the villagers decided that the two dead men could not lie in the graveyard near the church. ‘They never came to church and they didn’t believe in God,’ they said. ‘They believed in unnatural things, in magic.’

So twelve men covered the two bodies in black and took them to a place outside the village. There they dug a big hole, threw the bodies into it and covered them with stones. People say that horses don’t like going near that place even today, and there is a strange kind of light there.

One day, some time later, some people walking along the road found a pool of blood across it. In the blood there were fat black flies, feeding. One man went to get some water and they washed the blood away, but the flies flew up into the air like a dark cloud, and flew towards Mr Davis’s house. The villagers decided that no one should live in that house any more, so they set fire to it. The house burnt down completely, but for a long time people said that they often saw Mr Davis and the young man, standing at night when the moon was full, in the road near the burnt house on the hill.

Only the flies live there now. Perhaps it is only the flies who know why those two men played with magic and why they died the way they did.
Chapter 5  The Locked Room
(from Rats)

It happened in Suffolk, near the coast. There is a tall, red house there, built in about 1770, perhaps. It has a small, untidy garden behind it and from the front windows you can see the sea. Tall, dark trees stand around this lonely house. Near the front door there is a sign which shows that this was once a public house, where travellers could stop to eat and sleep.

One fine spring day, a young Cambridge University student called Thomson arrived at this house. He wanted to spend some time in a quiet and pleasant place where he could read and study. No one else was staying there at the time and Mr and Mrs Betts, who managed the house, welcomed him and made him feel very comfortable. They gave him a large room on the first floor with a good view from the window. He spent his days very calmly and quietly. Every morning he worked, he walked in the country in the afternoon, and he usually had a drink with some of the local people in the bar in the evening before going to bed. He was very happy to continue his life like this for as long as possible. He planned to stay for a whole month.

One afternoon, Thomson walked along a different road from the usual one and in the distance he saw a large white object. He walked towards it and discovered that it was a large square stone with a square hole in the middle. He examined the stone, then he looked at the view for a moment - the sea, the churches in the distance, the windows of one or two houses shining here and there in the sun - and he continued his walk.

That evening in the bar, he asked why the white stone was there. ‘It’s been there for a very long time, since before any of us were born, in fact,’ said Mr Betts.

‘People used to say that it brought bad luck ... that it was unlucky for fishing,’ said another man.

‘Why?’ asked Thomson, but the people in the bar became silent and clearly didn’t want to talk about the stone any more. Thomson was puzzled.

A few days later, he decided to stay at home to study in the afternoon. He didn’t feel like going out for a walk, but at about three o’clock he needed a break. He decided to spend five minutes looking at the other rooms on his floor of the house - he was interested to know what they were like. He got up and went quietly out of his room, into the corridor. Nobody else was at home. ‘They are all probably at market today,’ he thought. The house was still and silent, except for the flies. The sun was shining and it was very hot. He went into the three rooms near his own bedroom; each one was pretty and clean. Then he tried the door of the south-west room, but found that it was locked. This made Thomson want to know why it was locked and what was inside it, and he took the keys of all the other doors on the floor to try to open it. He finally succeeded, the door opened, he went in and looked around him.

The room had two windows looking south and west, so it was very bright and hot. There were no carpets and no pictures, only a bed, alone in the corner. It was not a very interesting room, but suddenly ... Thomson turned and ran out of the room, closing the door behind him noisily.

‘Someone was in there, in the bed!’ he almost shouted. There were covers over the whole body on the bed, but it was not dead, because it moved. He was not dreaming. Thomson knew this was the middle of a bright, sunny day, after all. He didn’t know what to do.

First, of course, he had to lock the door again but, before he did this, he listened. Everything was silent inside the room. He put the key into the lock and turned it as quietly as he could, but
he still made some noise. Suddenly he stopped: someone was
walking towards the door! He turned and ran along the corridor
to his room, closed the door and locked it behind him as fast as
he could. He waited and listened. ‘Perhaps this person can walk
through doors and walls?’ he whispered to himself. Nothing
happened.

‘Now what?’ he thought. His first idea was to leave the
house as soon as he could, but if he changed his plans, Mr and
Mrs Betts would know that something was wrong. Also, if they
already knew about the person in the locked room but they
still lived in the house, then there was surely nothing for him
to be afraid of. Maybe it would be better to stay and say
nothing. This was the easiest thing to do. Thomson stayed there
for another week and, although he never went near the door
again, he often stopped in the corridor and listened, but there
was only silence. He didn’t ask anyone in the village about the
locked room because he was too afraid, but near the end of
the week he started to think more and more about the person
in the locked room and he eventually decided to find out more
before he left. He made a plan: he would leave on the four
o’clock train the next day and, while the horse waited outside
with his bags, he would go upstairs and take one last, quick
look into the room.

This is what happened. He paid Mr Betts, put the bags on
the horse, thanked Mrs Betts and said, ‘I’ll just take a last look
upstairs to be sure that I have all my things.’ He then ran up the
stairs and opened the door to the room as quietly as possible.
He almost laughed. ‘It’s not a real person at all. How silly of me!
It’s just a pile of old clothes,’ he thought. He turned to go, but
suddenly something moved behind him. He turned quickly and
saw the pile of old clothes walking towards him, with a knife
stuck into the front of its jacket and dried blood all down
its shirt. He pulled open the door and rushed out of the room.
and down the stairs. Then he fell and everything went black.

When he opened his eyes, Mr. Betts was standing over him with a strong drink in a glass. He looked annoyed. ‘You shouldn’t have done that, Mr. Thomson, sir. It was a stupid thing to do after we’ve been so good to you. Why did you want to look in that room? Nobody will want to stay in this house any more if you tell people what you’ve seen,’ he said.

‘I’m sorry. I just wanted to know, that’s all,’ said Thomson. ‘I won’t tell anyone, I promise.’ So, before he left, Mr. and Mrs. Betts told him what they knew.

‘People say that a rich gentleman lived here a long time ago. One evening, he was out walking in the village, when a group of men attacked him. They wanted to steal his money. They held him down on that big, white stone which you saw when you were out walking the other day and they killed him with a knife. Then they threw his body into the sea. Later some people from the village moved the stone away from the village; they said the fish along this part of the coast would not come anywhere near it. The fishermen were not catching anything, you see. The people who lived in this house before us told us to lock that bedroom but to leave the bed in it. Because the gentleman’s ghost might want to come back and sleep in the house again. You’re the first person to see him since we’ve been here. He’s never been a problem to us. But please don’t tell anyone,’ they repeated. ‘We don’t want people talking about ghosts in this house.’

For many years, Thomson didn’t say a word to anyone about what happened in the Betts’s house in Suffolks, and I only know his story because, years later, when he came to stay with my family, I was the person who showed him to his bedroom. When we reached the bedroom door, he opened it very loudly and stopped outside. He stood there for a minute and carefully inspected every corner of the room before he went in. Then he remembered that I was standing there and said, ‘Oh, I’m sorry, my dear, but something very odd happened to me once.’

And he told me the story I have just told you.
Chapter 6  The Painting of—ngle Hall
(from The Mezzotint)

Mr S. Williams was a collector of paintings, and his special interest was pictures of old English country houses, English churches and country towns. One day, he received a price list from Mr Britnall's shop, where he often bought paintings. With the list was a note from Mr Britnall himself, saying that he thought painting number 978 might interest Mr Williams. Although the price seemed rather high, the description of number 978 made Mr Williams keen to see it. He decided to order it at once.

The painting arrived a few days later and Mr Williams tore off the paper, feeling quite excited. What he found was an ordinary picture of a large country house from the century before. The house had three rows of windows, there were tall trees on either side and a garden in front. The letters A.W.F. were in a corner of the painting, probably for the name of the artist. On the back of the picture was a piece of paper, torn in half, with the words '—ngle Hall, —sex' on it. He could not see anything very special about the picture and could not understand why Mr Britnall thought he would like it or why the price was so high. He decided to send it back to the shop the next day.

That evening, a good friend, John Garwood, came to Williams's house and noticed the painting. 'A new one, eh, Williams? Mmm ... I rather like it. The light is very good and I rather like this person at the front,' he said.

'Ah person?' said Williams, coming closer. 'Oh yes, so there is! I didn't notice it before.' Only the head of the person could be seen. It was impossible to say whether it was a man or a woman, but it was standing under the dark trees at one side of the picture, looking at the house. 'And I suppose the light is quite good,' Williams went on. 'I still feel it's a bit expensive, though. I was going to send it back tomorrow.'

Soon afterwards, the two men went out to dinner with some of their friends from the university and later Williams invited some of them back to his house for a drink. One of them, who was also interested in art, noticed the new painting. 'Quite interesting,' he said, 'but don't you find it rather horrible, Williams? The light is good, but that person standing in front of the house is rather frightening.'

Williams was too busy pouring drinks to look at the painting just then, but later, on his way to bed, he looked at it again and was amazed to see that the person in the picture was now right in front of the house, not to one side under the trees. The person seemed to be on their hands and knees, moving towards the house. He or she looked extremely thin and was dressed all in black, except for a white cross on the back.

'Am I going mad?' Williams asked himself. He decided to lock the picture in a cupboard but did not want to go straight to bed. 'I'll write down everything that has happened to the picture since it arrived here. Then in the morning I won't think this is all a dream,' he thought to himself. And that is what he did. He found it very difficult to sleep that night, and the next morning he decided to ask another friend, Nisbet to come and look at the painting.

'I want you to tell me exactly what you see in the picture, in detail,' he said to Nisbet, showing him the painting. 'I'll explain why afterwards.'

'Well, I can see a country house - English, I think - by moonlight...' began Nisbet.

'Moonlight?' interrupted Williams. 'Are you sure? There was no moon there when I first got it.'

Nisbet looked at his friend strangely. 'Shall I continue? The house has one - two -three rows of windows...'
night before, which Nisbet read but did not believe.

'This is the strangest thing I've ever heard or seen,' said Nisbet. 'The first thing we must do is take a photograph of the painting before it changes again. Then we should try to find out where this place is in England. I feel there is something strange and terrible happening there.'

'Yes, and I also want to ask John Garwood to write a description of what he saw when he looked at the painting last night. We could only just see the person then, under the trees over on this side of the house,' said Williams, pointing at one side of the picture.

John Garwood came over immediately and, while he was writing his description, Nisbet photographed the painting. Then the three friends decided to go for a walk. 'Perhaps it will help us to think more clearly,' said Nisbet.

They returned to Williams's house at about five o'clock in the afternoon and were surprised to find Williams's servant, Robert, sitting and staring at the painting. When the three men entered, he jumped to his feet in embarrassment.

'I must apologize for sitting in your chair, sir,' he said to Williams. 'But I couldn't stop looking at this picture.'

'Please don't apologize, Robert. What do you think of the painting? I'm interested to hear your opinion,' said Williams.

'Well, sir. It's not the sort of painting I would let my young daughter look at. She’s very easily frightened and I think this strange, thin person carrying a baby would give her bad dreams.' The three men said nothing. They waited for Robert to go. As soon as the door closed, they rushed to the painting. Robert was right. The strange, bony person was now back in the picture, walking away from the house and, in its long, thin arms was a baby.

For two hours the three men sat and watched the picture, but it did not change again. They went to have dinner. After dinner
The strange, bony person was now back in the picture, walking away from the house and, in its long, thin arms was a baby.

they came back again and by now the person was gone and the house looked quiet and calm again in the moonlight.

They decided to read through books on Essex and Sussex to find—ngley Hall. It was hard work, but many hours later, in a Guide to Essex, Williams found the following information:

“The village of Anningley has an interesting twelfth-century church and next to the church, in a beautiful park, stands Anningley Hall, which used to be the country home of the Francis family. No members of this family are now living; the last baby boy of the family disappeared mysteriously in the middle of a September night in 1802. Nobody could discover who took the baby but people suspected that it was a member of the Gawdy family. Some time before the baby disappeared, Tom Gawdy was caught stealing by Sir John Francis, the father of the child, and Gawdy was hanged for his crime. People say that the Gawdy family wanted revenge and that they took it by stealing the last child of the Francis family.”

‘Well, it does seem that they got their revenge, if the story of our painting is true, doesn’t it?’ said Williams.

The painting has not changed again since then. It now hangs in the museum at Anningley, in Essex.
Chapter 7  Lost Hearts

In September of the year 1811, a little boy arrived at the door of Aswarby Hall in the middle of Lincolnshire. He rang the bell and looked around him at the tall, square eighteenth-century house. An evening light fell on the building, making the windows shine like fires. In front of the hall there was a park full of trees, and a church with a clock. It all seemed very pleasant to the boy as he waited for someone to open the door.

The boy's parents were dead and his elderly cousin, Mr Abney, warned him to go and live at Aswarby. People who knew Mr Abney were surprised at his offer because they thought he was a man who loved books more than people and who preferred to live alone.

Mr Abney opened the door and seemed very happy to see his young cousin. Stephen Elliot. He immediately started to ask questions: 'How old are you, my boy? How are you? And how old are you? I mean, I hope you are not too tired to eat your supper?''

'No, thank you, sir,' said Stephen. 'I am quite well."

'Good,' said Mr Abney. 'And how old are you, my boy?' It seemed strange that he asked the question twice in the first two minutes of their conversation.

'I'm twelve years old next birthday,' said Stephen.

'And when is your birthday, my dear boy? Eleventh of September, eh? That's good, that's very good. I like to write these things down in my book. Are you sure you will be twelve?'

'Yes, sir, quite sure.'

'Well, take him to Mrs Bunch's room, Parkes,' Mr Abney said to his servant, 'and let him have his supper.'

Mrs Bunch was the friendliest person at Aswarby. Stephen felt

Mr Abney opened the door and seemed very happy to see his young cousin, Stephen Elliot.
comfortable with her and they became good friends in a quarter of an hour. She was fifty-five years old and knew everything about the house and its neighbourhood. She was quite willing to share this information with Stephen and there were certainly many things about Aswarby Hall and gardens that the boy wanted to ask her.

One November evening, Stephen was sitting by the fire in Mrs Bunch’s room, thinking about his new home. ‘Is Mr Abney a good man?’ he suddenly asked.

‘Good? My child!’ said Mrs Bunch, ‘He’s the kindest man I’ve ever known! Haven’t I told you about the little boy he brought here from the street seven years ago, and the little girl two years after I started working here?’

‘No, please tell me about them, Mrs Bunch,’ said Stephen.

‘Well,’ she began, ‘I don’t remember much about the little girl. Mr Abney brought her back from his walk one day and told Mrs Ellis to take care of her. The poor child had no family. She lived with us for about three weeks and then one morning she got up while everyone was still asleep and left the house. I’ve never seen her again. Mr Abney looked everywhere but she never came back. She was a very silent child but she helped me a lot and I loved her very much.’

‘And what about the little boy?’ asked Stephen.

‘Ah, that poor boy!’ said Mrs Bunch. ‘He came here one winter day playing his music, and Mr Abney asked him lots of questions, such as “Where do you come from? How old are you? Where are your family?” He was very kind to the boy, but the same thing happened - he just disappeared.’ That night Stephen had a strange dream. Near his bedroom at the top of the house there was an old bathroom, which nobody used. The top of the door was made of glass and it was possible to look in and see

the bath. In his dream, Stephen looked through the glass and saw a body in the bath, a very thin, dusty body with a sad smile and the hands pressed over the heart. As Stephen looked, a terrible cry came from the lips, and the arms began to move. Stephen was extremely frightened and woke up suddenly. He found that he really was standing on the cold floor near the bathroom. Bravely, he looked through the glass again to see if the body was really there, it was not. He went back to bed.

When they heard about Stephen’s experience, Mrs Bunch and Mr Abney were very interested and Mrs Bunch put a new curtain over the glass door of the bathroom. Mr Abney said he would write about Stephen’s dream in his book.

It was nearly spring when two more strange things happened. The first was that Stephen passed another very uneasy night and the next day he saw Mrs Bunch mending his night-shirt. She seemed rather angry with him, and asked ‘How did you manage to tear your night-shirt so badly? It’ll take me a long time to mend it.’ Stephen looked and saw that there were some cuts in the shirt, a few inches long.

‘I don’t remember how it happened,’ he said. ‘I don’t remember anything. But they’re just the same as the scratches on the outside of my bedroom door.’

Mrs Bunch looked at him, her mouth open, and then ran upstairs to see. ‘Well,’ she said when she returned, ‘It’s very strange. I wonder how those scratches appeared ... They’re too high for a dog, a cat or a rat to make. Don’t say anything to Mr Abney, but remember to lock your door when you go to bed tonight.’

‘Oh, I always do,’ replied Stephen.

The next evening, the second strange thing happened. Mr Parkes, the servant, visited Stephen and Mrs Bunch in Mrs
Bunch's room. He did not often come to see them there. When he came in, he didn't at first notice that Stephen was there. He seemed very nervous and uneasy. 'Mr Abney will have to get his own wine if he wants a drink in the evenings,' he said. 'If I can't go down and get it in the daytime, I won't go at all. There's something very strange down there under the house, you know - maybe it's the wind or maybe it's mice, but I don't think so ... and I don't like it.'

'Don't talk like that,' answered Mrs Bunch. 'You'll frighten young Stephen.'

Mr Parkes suddenly noticed Stephen for the first time and quickly said, with a nervous laugh, 'Oh, I was only joking, you know.'

But Stephen knew that it wasn't a joke, and he was worried. He asked a lot of questions but Mr Parkes refused to tell him any more about the noises under the house.

It was now March 24, 1812, a strange day, windy and noisy. Stephen stood in the garden and tell as if it was full of ghosts, people he couldn't see who were flying in the wind and trying to contact living people in the real world. After lunch that day, Mr Abney said, 'Stephen, my boy, will you come to my library late tonight at eleven o'clock? I will be busy until then but I want to show you something about your future life. Don't tell Mrs Bunch or anyone else in the house. Just go to your room at the usual time.' Stephen was excited. He could sit up until eleven o'clock! He looked in at the library door when he was on his way upstairs that evening and he saw on the table a silver cup filled with red wine, and an old piece of paper with words on it.

At about ten o'clock, Stephen was standing at the open window of his bedroom, looking out over the night-time countryside. The wind was not so strong now and there was a full moon. Suddenly he heard some strange cries. 'Perhaps someone lost in the night?' he thought. 'Or water birds down on the lake in the park?' The noises grew louder and came nearer the house. Then they stopped. But just as Stephen was about to close his window and continue reading his book, he saw two children standing outside under the dark trees, a boy and a girl. They stood together, looking up at his window. The girl reminded him of the girl in his dream about the bath. And the sight of the boy made him feel afraid. The girl was smiling, holding her hands over her heart. The boy, with his untidy black hair and old clothes, stretched his hands out helplessly in front of him. His fingernails were very long and dirty. As the boy stood there with his arms held out, Stephen suddenly saw something which made his hair stand on end. He could not believe his eyes. There, on the left side of the boy's chest, was a large black hole. Again Stephen heard the children's terrible, sad cries; then they disappeared. Although he was badly frightened, Stephen decided to go to Mr Abney's library. It was now nearly eleven o'clock. He walked very fast through the dark old house, quiet at this time of night with all the servants in bed. But when he arrived at the library, the door would not open. It was not locked and the key was on the outside, but when he knocked there was no answer. He listened carefully and he heard Mr Abney speaking ... no, crying out. But why? Perhaps he too could see the strange children? Then, suddenly, everything was quiet and the library door opened by itself. Mr Abney was in his chair, his head thrown back and his eyes wide, with a look of terrible fear and pain on his face. On the left side of his chest was a large hole and Stephen could see his heart. But there was no blood on his hands and the long knife on the table was completely clean. The window of the library was open and the wind blew the curtains in a terrible dance. An old book was open on the table and this is what Stephen read:

Thousands of years ago, people discovered that you could
control the world, fly, disappear or become someone or something else ... all by magic. But to be able to use this magic,
it is necessary first to take out the hearts of three young people,
under twenty-one years of age. I have spent almost twenty years
carefully choosing three young people who I could kill without
anybody noticing. First was Phoebe Stanley on March 24, 1791.
Second was an Italian boy, Giovanni Paoli, on March 23, 1805.
And tonight, on March 24, 1812, the last child to die for me will
be my cousin, Stephen Elliot. No one will ever find the bodies of
these children. I have hidden the first two in my wine cellar,
under the floor, and I will do the same with the third child
tonight. The ghosts of these children may come back, the books
tell me, crying horribly. They may try to take the heart of the
man who killed them but this will not happen to me, I am sure.'
Stephen finished reading and looked at the body of his elderly
cousin. Quietly, he left the room and closed the door.

* *

For many years people wondered about Mr Abney’s death. ‘It
must have been a wild cat that came in through the open
window and killed the poor man,’ they said. But Stephen knew
the truth.

Stephen suddenly saw something which made his hair stand on end.
There, on the left side of the boy’s chest, was a large black hole.
Chapter 8 Martin’s Lake
(from Martin’s Close)

I was slaying with a good friend of mine in the West Country. I arrived on the Friday night and my friend was keen to show me the village on the Saturday morning. ‘I’ll take you around and show you everything. Then I want you to meet a friend of mine, John Hill. He’s about seventy years old and knows all the history of the village. Oh, and make sure you ask him about Martin’s Lake.’

‘Why? Is it a good place for fishing?’ I asked.

He laughed. ‘Well, no. There’s no water in it now ... but let old John tell you the story. I’m sure you’ll enjoy it,’ said my friend.

The next day, after a tour of the village, we went to old John Hill’s house for tea. We persuaded the old man to tell us the story of the lake:

‘It was the Christmas of 1683 and a young gentleman, George Martin, returned from Cambridge University to the village. He was a popular young man and used to ride his horse long distances to visit his friends in the neighbourhood. One night it was snowing hard, so, instead of riding all the way to his house outside the village, he decided to stay at the small hotel here. As it was Christmas, there was music and dancing in the hotel and all the young men and women were dancing together, except one. Her name was Ann Clark, and she worked at the hotel. She was an innocent young girl, not very intelligent. In fact, people used to laugh at her behind her back and, of course, none of the young men wanted to dance with her. But George Martin, the young gentleman, took pity on her and asked her to dance. The band were playing an old song called ‘Lady, will you walk, will you talk with me?’ Everyone saw how happy the poor girl was to have someone to dance with. Her face lit up with a smile.

After that night, the young gentleman came to the hotel every week. When he arrived on his horse, he used to sing that song and Ann Clark used to rush out to meet him as soon as she heard it. The two often went for walks together by the lake and some people say they saw them kiss.

This went on for a few months until George Martin’s parents found a wife for him. She was a beautiful, rich young woman, and from a very good family. Everyone said how lucky George Martin was, but then it all went wrong. The young woman heard about Ann Clark and was angry that a gentleman like him went about with an ordinary country girl. She refused to marry him.

He, of course, regretted ever meeting Ann and was very angry to lose such a beautiful young wife. People say that the next time he saw Ann, they argued and he hit her. A week later, they were seen together again. He said a few words to her and then rode off. They say she looked very happy all that day but, not long after, she disappeared completely. No one could find her anywhere.

Some weeks later, George Martin came into the hotel again, went into the bar and asked for a drink. A young woman called Sarah, a friend of Ann Clark’s, served him. ‘Are you looking for Ann, sir?’ she asked. ‘Because no one has seen her for weeks,’ he answered angrily that, no, he was not looking for her and he sat alone, drinking his beer. Sarah started to wash some glasses and, without thinking, began to sing the song. ‘Lady, will you walk, will you talk with me?’ The young gentleman’s face turned pale and he told her to stop singing immediately. She stopped immediately, of course, but then suddenly, she heard Ann’s voice outside the door, continuing the song. ‘It’s
Ann! She's back!” Sarah cried and ran towards the door.

‘Stop!’ shouted George Martin, but it was too late. The door opened and a strong, cold wind blew out all the lamps, leaving the room completely dark. Sarah heard someone walk across the floor, and the door of the big cupboard opened and shut. When she lit the lamps again, she saw something that looked like the bottom of a woman's dress caught under the cupboard door. Sarah was frightened and asked one of the men in the bar to open the cupboard. As the man pulled open the cupboard door, George Martin screamed and ran out of the bar into the street. Out of the cupboard came a small human shape, dressed in clothes that looked wet. No one saw its face, but everyone felt a freezing wind as it passed through the bar and into the darkness outside.

The next person to see George Martin was a young boy, who was coming home from fishing at the lake. He said he saw the young gentleman running towards the water, looking very frightened. He broke a branch off a tree and started to feel around in the water with it. After some minutes, the branch hit something and a strange sound like a scream came from deep in the lake. George Martin covered his ears with his hands and started to scream also. As he did, the boy saw a human shape come out of the water and chase the young gentleman away into the trees.

The boy ran and called the police. They found the body of Ann Clark at the bottom of the lake and under a tree was George Martin's knife, covered in blood. He was guilty of murder, of course, and they hanged him five weeks later. After that, everyone knew it as Martin's Lake, although it's dry now. And, do you know,’ said old John Hill, ‘that even now no one will sing that song in this village. People say it's unlucky.
Chapter 9  The Two Cousins
(from The Tractate Middoth)

One autumn afternoon, an elderly man entered a library, showing a card with his name on it - Mr John Eldred - and asked if he could borrow a book. 'The name of the book I want is The Tractate Middoth - it’s number 11334, I believe,' he said. 'But I don’t know this library at all. Would someone be able to go and find it for me?'

A young man who worked there, Mr Garrett, was passing and he answered, 'Of course, I'll go and find it for you immediately, sir.' Mr Eldred sat down on a chair near the door to wait.

When Mr Garrett returned he had to apologize for failing to find the book. 'I'm very sorry, Mr Eldred, but someone has already borrowed that book.'

'Are you sure?' replied Mr Eldred.

'Yes, sir,' said Garrett, 'but if you wait a moment you'll probably meet the man who has taken it as he leaves the library. I didn't see him very well but I think he was an elderly man, quite short, wearing a black coat.'

'It's all right,' said Mr Eldred, 'I won't wait now, thank you. I have to go. But I'll come back again tomorrow and perhaps you can find out who has the book?'

'Of course,' replied Garrett, and Eldred left the library quickly.

Garrett thought, 'I'll just go back to that room and see if I can find the old man. I'll ask him if he can wait a few days for the book and then I'll give it to Mr Eldred tomorrow.' So he went back to the same room and, when he got there, the book - The Tractate Middoth - was back in the right place.

Garrett felt very bad. 'Mr Eldred hasn't got the book he wants, he said to himself, 'because I didn't see it. I'll wait for him tomorrow and give him the book myself.'

The next morning, he was waiting for Mr Eldred. 'I'm very sorry,' he said when Eldred came in, 'but I was sure that the old man took the book away with him. If you'll wait for a moment, I'll run and get it for you now.' Again Eldred sat down and waited, but this time his wait was very long. After twenty minutes he asked the woman behind the front desk if it was very far to the part of the library where Garrett was looking for the book.

'No, not far at all, sir,' she answered. 'It's odd that he's taking such a long time,' and she went to look for Garrett. She came back a few minutes later, looking rather worried. 'I'm very sorry, sir, but something has happened to Mr Garrett,' she said. 'He suddenly became ill while he was looking for your book and we have had to send him home.'

Mr Eldred was surprised but he answered politely, 'I'm so sorry that Mr Garrett became ill while he was trying to help me. I'd very much like to go to his house to ask how he is. Could you give me his address?'

The woman gave him the address and, before he left, Eldred asked her one last question. 'Did you see an elderly man in a black coat, leaving the library soon after I was here yesterday afternoon?'

'No, I didn't,' replied the woman. 'There were only two or three other men in here yesterday afternoon and they were all quite young, I think.'

Mr Eldred then left for Mr Garrett's house. He found him in a chair by the fire, looking pale and ill. 'I'm so sorry for all the trouble I have caused you,' Garrett said.

'Don't worry about it,' said Eldred. 'But what happened in that room? Did you fall? Did you see something?'

'Well, yes, I did fall and it was because I saw something,' answered Garrett. 'It was just as I went into the room where we keep that book you want ...'
"No, no," said Eldred hurriedly. "Don't tell me now. You will make yourself ill again."

"But I'd like to tell someone," answered Garrett.

"Not now, young man, not now," said Eldred, standing up quickly. "I'm afraid I must go now," and he moved towards the door. Garrett gave him the exact number of the book, *The Tractate Middoth*, so that he could go to the library and find it himself the next day. But Eldred did not appear at the library again.

Garrett had another visitor later that day - George Earle, who worked with him. George said, "I'm sure there is something odd going on at the library, you know. When we found you on the floor there was a terrible, strong smell in that room. It can't be good for people to work with a smell like that."

Garrett replied, "That smell isn't always there. I've only noticed it during the last few days. And it wasn't the smell that made me ill. It was something I saw ... let me tell you about it. I went into that room this morning to get a book for a man who was waiting downstairs, a Mr Eldred. The afternoon before, I saw a short, old man in black take the same book out, but when I looked again the book was there, back in its place. So this morning, I went back to get it for Mr Eldred, but the same old man in black was there again. I looked more closely at him this time and saw that his skin was dry and brown and dusty. He had no hair at all. Horrible, he was: really ugly. He was reading a book near the one I wanted and when he turned round I saw his face ... and he had no eyes! It was a terrible shock. Everything suddenly seemed to go black inside my head and I fell. I can't tell you anything more."

Before Garrett returned to work, his boss at the library told him to take a week off, go away somewhere and get some fresh air, to try to forget his experience. So he went to the station, carrying his luggage, and waited for a train to Burnstow-on-Sea. As the train arrived, only one car seemed to have any places in it,
but as he walked towards it, the head of the old man with no eyes suddenly appeared again at the window of the train. Garrett felt sick. He ran to the next car and jumped into it just as the train started to move. The next thing he knew was that a woman and her daughter were kindly helping him to sit down. They seemed rather worried about him. Mrs Simpson and her daughter were also travelling to Burnstow-on-Sea. They had an apartment there and during the journey they invited Garrett to stay with them. They soon became friends and spent a lot of time together. On the third evening of his stay, when Garrett was telling them about his work at the library, the daughter suggested that Garrett might be able to help them with a problem they had.

“Yes, said her mother. ‘We’ll tell Mr Garrett our story and perhaps he’ll be able to help us.’

‘I’ll certainly try,’ answered Garrett.

‘Well, began Mrs Simpson, I had an old uncle called Dr Rant, and when he died he left directions that we should put his body in a special underground room under a field near his house, and that he should wear his ordinary clothes. Since then, many of the country people around there say that they have seen him in his old black coat. Anyway, he’s been dead for twenty years now. He had no wife or family - just me, his niece, and my cousin John. He had a lot of money and a big house and John and I hoped to receive half each when he died. But the day before he died, I was sitting near his bed when he suddenly opened his eyes and said, “Mary, I’ve left everything to John in my will, you know. You won’t get anything when I die.” This was a shock to me, because my husband and I were not rich and we needed the money, but I said nothing because I felt that he wanted to say something more. I was right. He continued, “But, Mary, I don’t like John and I think my will is wrong. I’ve decided that you should have everything ... but first you’ll have to find the letter in which I have written my new will and I’m not going to tell you where it is. But I will tell you one thing - I’ve left it in a book, Mary, and the book is not in this house. It’s in a place where John can go and find it any time. So, I’ll tell you something more that John doesn’t know. When I’m dead you’ll find an envelope in my desk with your name on it and inside it you’ll find something that will help you.” Well, a few hours later, he died and I wrote to my cousin John Eldred, but of course, he has never replied. Meanwhile, we have to continue living in our small apartment here at Burnstow-on-Sea.’

‘Did you say John Eldred?’ asked Garrett, amazed. ‘I saw a man called John Eldred just a few days ago. A thin, elderly man.’

‘Yes, that sounds like him. Where did you see him?’ asked Mrs Simpson.

‘In a public place,’ said Garrett. ‘I don’t know if I should tell you where. But what about the envelope?’

‘Here it is,” answered Mrs Simpson. And she took out a small piece of paper with just five numbers on it - 11334. Garrett thought for a moment and then asked, “Do you think Mr Eldred knows exactly where the book is which contains your uncle’s letter?”

‘Well, I don’t know. People say he’s always going to library and bookshops, so he must know its name, but probably not where it is,” answered Mrs Simpson.

Garrett was silent as he thought about the problem.

The next day, Garrett left Burnstow-on-Sea and travelled home by train. He couldn’t remember if the book Mr Eldred wanted so badly had the same library number as the one on Mrs Simpson’s piece of paper, but he knew there were three possibilities: 1.1334, 11.33.4 or 11.3.34. As soon as the train arrived he went to the library to look. 11.33.4 was in the right place, but 11.3.34 was not there. He ran to the front desk and asked the woman there, ‘Has anyone taken out book number 11.3.34?’
“How would I know? Do you think I can remember all the numbers of books people take out?” the woman replied.

“Well, has Mr Eldred been back here - you know, the old man who was here the day I became ill?”

“No, he hasn’t been back here himself, but he did send me some money and asked me to send him a book. I couldn’t refuse, of course. What would you do if someone sent you money and asked you to do such a thing?”

“I suppose I would do the same. Could you show me the ticket Mr Eldred sent and give me his address, please?”

“Here’s the ticket,” said the woman. “The book is number 11.3.34. Isn’t that the number you just said you wanted? I’m afraid I didn’t keep the address.”

“When did you send the book?” asked Garrett.

“At half past ten this morning.”

“Good, it’s only one o’clock now,” he thought. But how could he get the address? He thought quickly and then remembered that John Eldred was living in his uncle’s house, the house that Mrs Simpson and her daughter knew was really theirs. “And if the dead uncle gave the book with that letter inside it to this library, then it must be on our list. And I know that he died about twenty years ago,” thought Garrett So, he found the list and turned back to 1870. There it was: 14 August 1875, The Tractate Middoth. Given by Doctor J. Rant of Brefield House.

Garrett looked for Brefield House on a map. It was about a two-hour train journey away, he found. He left immediately for the station and caught the train, thinking all the time about what he was going to say to Mr Eldred about the book and about why he wanted to take it back with him. When he arrived at Brefield Station, he started walking quickly towards the house, hoping that he would arrive there before the book did.

Suddenly, Garrett saw a taxi with two men in it, just leaving the station, going in the same direction as he was. He recognized

He was just about to tear a page from the book when suddenly something small and dark ran out from behind a tree.

John Eldred and thought to himself, “He’s been to the station to collect the book which the library sent him this morning.” He stopped and looked towards the taxi. Eldred was getting out of it and the driver was moving away slowly up the road. Eldred followed it on foot. As he walked, something fell from his pocket; a box of matches. He continued walking.

It was getting dark; the light was going now. Eldred was walking slowly but Garrett could see that he was turning the pages of the book, looking for something. He then stopped and felt in all his pockets; he looked annoyed when he found that the box of matches was not there. He was just about to tear a page from the book when suddenly something small and dark ran out from behind a tree. Two strong black arms caught him round the head and neck. There was no sound; Eldred fought wildly but
silently with his arms and legs. Then it was over. Eldred lay there alone on the road. Garrett shouted and started to run towards the body. Another man who was working in a field near the road, ran over to help, but Eldred was already dead.

Later, the police and the lawyers asked Garrett many questions but he could only repeat, 'Someone attacked Mr Eldred just as he was going to tear a page from his book.'

They soon found, of course, that on the same page there was a lot of writing by old Doctor Rani, which said that his house and all his money really belonged to Mrs Mary Simpson and not to John Eldred. And it is not very difficult to imagine how William Garrett was soon able to leave his job at the library to become the next owner of Bretfield House, with his wife, Mrs Simpson’s daughter.

ACTIVITIES

Chapter 1-3

Before you read
1 Find these words in your dictionary. They are all in the story.
   ash-tree behaviour Bible chapter grave graveyard
   horror host pattern terrified vicar well witch

Which word or words answer these questions? (You will have to use one word twice.)

a Which four words might you find in or near a church?
b Which word appears thousands of times in a library?
c Which two words are about feelings?
d Something which is repeated many times is a........
e Which two words are very different types of people?
f Which word might you read in a child’s school report?
g Which word might you see in a wood?
h Which word is a person giving a party?
i Which word means a place where you can get water from?

2 The stories in this book are all horror stories. The first one is called The Ash-Tree’. How do you think a tree could be frightening?

3 The kind of school where pupils live all the time is called a boarding school. Do you think these schools are a good idea? Why or why not?

4 The Curtain’ is part of a longer story called The Diary of My Poynter. What connection do you think there might be between a dirty and something as ordinary as curtains?

After you read

5 In The Ash-Tree’, how do Sir Matthew and Sir Richard die and where are they found?

6 At the end of ‘A School Story’ two dead bodies are found in the well. Who are they?

7 In The Curtains’, James thinks his little dog has followed him into the bedroom, but he is wrong. What is it?
Chapters 4-6

Before you read
8 Check the word corridor in your dictionary. For writers this can often be a convenient place in a story - why?
9 Horror stories are often about animals and insects. List horror films you have seen and horror stories you have read.
10 Why is the idea of a locked room so interesting? What do you think might be inside the room in this story?
11 Paintings of people can be frightening but how do you think a painting of a house might frighten you?

After you read
12 In The Flies', why do the people in the village decide that the bodies of Mr Davis and his friend can't lie in the graveyard of the church?
13 In The Locked Room', who says:
   a ‘People used to say that it brought bad luck …'
   b ‘Someone was there, in the bed!
   c ‘It was a stupid thing to do after we've been so good to you.'
14 a How many times does the picture change in The Painting of - rigley Hall
   b How is the painting different at the end of the story to when Williams first sees it?

Chapters 7-9

Before you read
15 Look up the word truth in your dictionary. Telling a .............. is the opposite of telling the truth. Now write a sentence including both words.
16 Check the meaning of the noun will in your dictionary. A will is always private until something happens. What must happen before other people can read it?
17 Why do you think a lake might be named after a person?

After you read
18 In the story Lost Hearts', what does Stephen see in his dream?
19 In the story of 'Martin's Lake' two people sing the same song. 'Lady will you walk, will you walk with me?' Who are they?
20 In The Two Cousins', who says:
   a ‘Did you see an elderly man in a black coat, leaving the library soon after I was here yesterday afternoon?'
   b ‘It can't be good for people to work with a smell like that.'
   c ‘People say he's always going to libraries and bookshops, so he must know its name, but probably not where it is.'

Writing
21 Write about the story you enjoyed most, describing what it is about and why you liked it.
22 Look at the picture on page 35. Describe the two characters in the picture.
23 All these stories happened a long time ago. Which one do you think could easily be written again, in the present? What changes would you make to it?
24 In 'A School Story', John tells Edgar a story about a gold coin that belonged to his Latin teacher, when John was a boy. A year after he hears this story, Edgar sees the same coin. Write Edgar's letter to John explaining how and where he has seen the coin.
25 When Sir Richard Fell decides to rebuild the local church in 'The Ash-Tree', some of the graves have to be moved. One is the grave of Mrs Motherson, who was hanged forty years earlier as a witch. Imagine you are one of the villagers watching as Mrs Motherson's grave is opened. Explain what you see and how you feel.
26 Which story do you find the most frightening? Why? What do you think makes a good ghost or horror story?
A tree full of enormous spiders; curtains like a dead man's hair; a man with no eyes and a boy without a heart. Such things and others expect you in these tales of horror writer M.R. James.

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