

 **Dominoes** *two*

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The Turn of the Screw

HENRY JAMES



activities

BEFORE READING

1 Match the ghost film pictures and sentences.



- a Hamlet talks to his father's ghost.
- b Casper the friendly ghost looks at the girl who has moved into his room.
- c The four Ghostbusters fight a ghost.
- d A dead man tries to speak to his girlfriend in the film *Ghost*.
- e The headless Rider from *Sleepy Hollow*.
- f Face to face with the unknown in *The Blair Witch Project*.

2 What other ghost stories do you know?

Chapter 1

Bly

We were sitting by the fire telling **ghost** stories. 'Would you like to hear a ghost story about two children?' Douglas asked. 'I've never told it to anyone. It's too horrible. It happened to my sister's **governess** a long time ago.'

The woman, Douglas explained, was twenty when she left home to look for work. She went to see a man who needed a governess for his brother's two children. He was a **gentleman** – rich, good-looking, and kind – with an expensive house in London. The children, a boy and a girl, came to live with him after their father died. But he had no wife or children himself, so he sent them to live at Bly, his house in the country, with his **housekeeper**, Mrs Grose. They also had a governess there, at first, but then she died, so the boy went away to school while the little girl stayed at Bly.



She went to see a man who needed a governess for two children.

ghost a dead person that a living person sees or hears

governess a woman who lives with and teaches children

gentleman a man from a rich family who does not need to work

housekeeper a woman who looks after a person's house

angel a very good and beautiful person; in pictures they usually have wings

The rich man now needed a new governess for the girl, and for the boy too during the school holidays. He asked my friend not to worry him by sending him any news, letters, or questions about the children. She had to decide everything for herself.

The young woman thought that this was strange, but she needed the money, and she wanted to please the gentleman. So she agreed – and went to Bly.

This is her story; she wrote it down years later and sent it to Douglas before she died.



The housekeeper, Mrs Grose, opened the door to me.

I came to Bly one fine afternoon in June. It was a large, old happy house with bright flowers outside.

The housekeeper, Mrs Grose, opened the door to me. And I met the little girl Flora soon after. She was like a beautiful

angel, with gold hair and a sweet face. I liked her at once. I was sure too that Mrs Grose – a nice, strong, country woman – would be my friend. She was happy to see me. Perhaps too happy, but I didn't stop there and then to ask myself why.

At dinner I asked about Flora's brother, Miles.

'He will be here on Friday,' said Mrs Grose.

That night they moved Flora's bed into my room, and I spent the next day with her. She was happy to show me the gardens and the house; dancing in her blue dress from one room to another, running up and down the



stairs, and taking me to the top of a big **tower**. And all the time she told me little secrets about each place that we visited.

On Wednesday evening a letter came for me from the children's **uncle**. There was another letter, still in its **envelope**, inside it. The children's uncle wrote to ask me to read this letter, which came from Miles's school, and to decide myself what to do about it without worrying him. I read it that evening, and got very little sleep that night.

'They have **expelled** Miles from his school,' I told Mrs Grose next morning.

She looked at me strangely, worried by the news.

'But what has he done, Miss?'

'They don't say. They only say he cannot go back there. Is he bad for the other boys, do you think?'

'Master Miles? But he's just ten years old!'

She was right; it was hard to believe.

'So is Miles never bad?' I asked her some time later.

'No – I can't say that. But a boy who is never bad is not a real boy for me.'

'I agree. Boys must be bad sometimes – but they must not **corrupt** others.' I said.

Mrs Grose gave a strange laugh. 'Are you afraid, Miss? Could the young master corrupt you?' she asked.



All the time she told me little secrets.

tower a tall, thin part of a building

uncle the brother of your father (or mother)

envelope a paper cover that you put on a letter before you post it

expel to make someone leave a school

corrupt to make someone bad

The next day I spoke to Mrs Grose again.
 'What was she like, the last governess?'
 'Young and beautiful, Miss – like you.'
 'He likes us young and beautiful, then,' I said, thinking of
 the rich gentleman in London.

'Oh he *did*,' replied Mrs Grose. 'He liked everyone that way
 . . . I mean, he does,' she finished.

'Who were you speaking of just then?' I asked her.

'Oh, the **Master**, of course.'

I went on thinking about the last governess.

'Did she die here?'

'No, Miss. She went home for a holiday, but she never came
 back. And then the Master told us that she was dead. And
 now,' said Mrs Grose, 'I must get back to work.'

When Miles arrived, I knew at once that the letter was a
 terrible mistake. He was a good, sweet child, just like his
 sister. I spoke to Mrs Grose immediately.

'Anyone can see he is not bad. Look at him!'

She smiled. 'Yes, Miss. So what will you do about the
 letter now?'

'Nothing,' I said.

'And what will you tell the Master?'

'Nothing.'

'And what will you say to the boy?'

'Nothing!'

'Then I'll help you, Miss,' she said, **kissing** me happily. I
 knew then that she was my friend.

And so I began lessons with Miles and Flora. The children
 were young, strong, and happy, and were always nice to me.
 But soon something happened at Bly that changed everything.

In those long summer days I often went outside for a walk
 when the children were in bed. On these evening walks I
 often thought about how well I was doing my job –

master a name
 that working people
 used in the past for
 the gentleman who
 gave them a job

kiss to touch
 lovingly with your
 mouth

and about the children's uncle in London. Did he ever think of me?

shock a very bad surprise

One evening I was walking in the garden and thinking of him when I looked up. Suddenly I got a great **shock**. I saw him there – on top of the tower. Then I got a second shock. The man on the tower was not the Master. I felt cold and afraid. Everything was quiet; nothing moved. Who was this man? Why did I know nothing about him? I could think of no answer to my questions.

How many long minutes did I stand there, looking at him silently? I do not know. I did not speak; he said nothing. The birds in the garden were silent too. But all the time his eyes never left me. And then, suddenly, before I knew it, the tower was empty.

Who was this man?



a c t i v i t i e s

READING CHECK

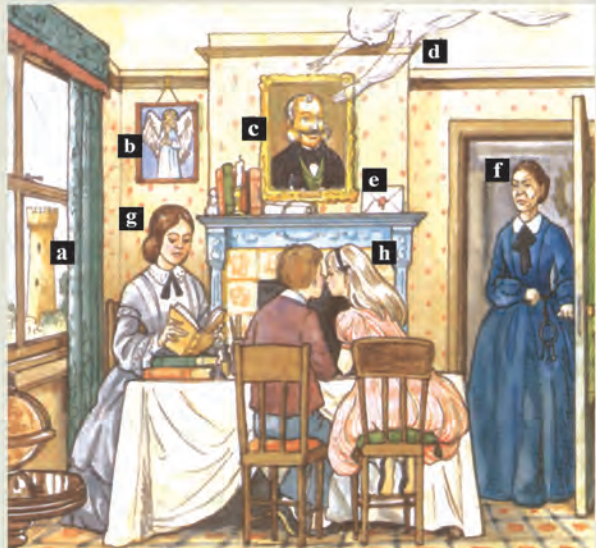
Are these sentences true or false? Tick the boxes.

	True	False
a There are three children in the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
b They live at Bly, a big country house.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c Their uncle lives with them in the country.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d The new governess has to decide everything about the children without telling their uncle.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e At first she likes everyone and is happy at Bly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f Miles leaves his school because he doesn't like it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g The first governess died at Bly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h One evening the new governess sees a strange man.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

WORD WORK

1 Match the words in the box with the things in the picture.

- governess
- gentleman
- ghost
- housekeeper
- kiss
- angel
- envelope
- tower



a c t i v i t i e s

2 Find the words in the ghosts to complete the sentences.

a Their **u**ncle lives in London.



b Mrs Grose's **m** _____ is a rich man.



c Why did they **e** _____ Miles from school?



d Did Miles **c** _____ other boys there?



e I had a **s** _____ when I saw a strange man on the tower.



GUESS WHAT

What happens in the next chapter? Tick three boxes.

- a The governess sees the strange man on the tower again.
- b She sees a strange dog in the garden.
- c She sees a strange face at a window.
- d She hears strange noises in the night.
- e She feels that there is a strange person in the garden.
- f She hears strange music in the school room.
- g She feels strangely cold in bed.

Chapter 2

Peter Quint

That evening, after seeing the man on the tower, I stayed outside for a long time. I walked in the gardens until late, afraid and full of black **thoughts**. Was there a secret at Bly – a room that people always locked, a **relative** that no one talked about?

It was dark when I came into the house. Mrs Grose met me at the door, happy to see me. She was so good and kind to me and I decided not to worry her. So I said nothing about the man on the tower, and went to bed.

For some days the man on the tower stayed in my thoughts. Who was he? Where did he come from? How did he get into the house? I found no answers to my questions. Neither Mrs Grose nor the other **servants** knew anything about him, I was sure. And so I told myself a story: 'Perhaps a traveller, interested in old houses, saw Bly, climbed the tower to see the **view**, and then went away.' That explained it.

When I was with the children, I forgot all about the man on the tower. Usually a governess is bored with her work after a while, but with Miles and Flora it was different. Working inside the house, or playing outside in the garden, I always found something new and interesting in those children. But one thing about them was still a mystery: Miles never said anything about his school, or about his teachers and friends there. I was sure now that the school letter was a mistake; Miles was a good child, a happy child.

One Sunday it rained all day, so Mrs Grose and I decided to go to church in the evening, when the rain stopped. Before we left, I went to get my **gloves** from the downstairs **dining room**. They were on a chair by the window. As I **picked them up** I had a terrible shock. There was someone outside

thought

something that you think

relative a person in your family

servant a person who works for someone rich

view what you can see when you look down from a tower, the top of a hill, or a high window

gloves things that you wear to keep your hands warm

dining room the room in a house where people eat

pick up to take something in your hand

the window. It was the man from the tower. His face was near the glass, and at first he looked hard at me. Then he began to look around the room. Suddenly I knew that he was looking for somebody – and I felt that somebody was not me!

At once I ran out of the room, out of the house and into the garden. I ran round to the dining-room window, but when I got there, I found nobody. I looked around at the trees and the garden, but still I could see no one. I stood at the window and then looked through it into the dining-room – at that moment Mrs Grose came into the room and her white face looked back at me. 'Why was *she* afraid?' I asked myself. She ran out of the room, and I waited for her to come to me.

She soon came round the corner of the house and said, 'What is the matter? You look terrible!'

'I was so afraid,' I answered. 'I saw a man. He was here – looking into the dining-room through the window.'

'Who was he?'

'I don't know.'

*With Miles and
Flora it was
different.*



'Was he a gentleman?'

'No. He was a **monster**.'

'Have you seen him before?'

'Yes – once. On the old tower.'

'Let's go to church now,' said Mrs Grose.

'No, I can't go now,' I said. 'I can't leave the children alone with *him*.'

Mrs Grose looked at me again. 'What's he like?'

'He has very red hair, and a long white face with red **whiskers**. His eyes are small, and his mouth is big. He's tall, and he doesn't wear a hat.'

Mrs Grose's face was white, and her mouth fell open. 'But is he handsome?'

'Oh, yes. Very!' I answered.

She waited a second and then said, 'It's Peter Quint – the Master's servant. He was here for some time last year. Then he went.'

'He went? Where?' I asked.

At this question Mrs Grose made a strange, terrible face. 'Who knows where!' she cried. 'He died.'

'Died?' I nearly shouted.

'Yes. Mr Quint is dead.'

We didn't go to church that evening. **Instead** we talked.

'He was looking for someone, you say – but not you?' Suddenly, I knew the answer. 'He wants Miles.'

I knew then that only I could stop him.

'It's strange that the children never talk about Quint.' I went on. 'Why is that?'

'Flora was very young, Miss. I'm sure she doesn't remember him. But don't say anything to **Master** Miles about all this . . . Quint played a lot with him when he was here, put strange thoughts in his young head. He was a bad man, Miss. I knew it – but the master didn't. And he was clever. I was afraid to tell the Master how bad he was.'

monster a terrible person (or animal)

whiskers long hair growing on the sides of a man's face

instead in the place of something

master a name that servants used to talk about a rich boy



Quint stayed at Bly for many months, she told me. Then one cold snowy winter night he went drinking in the village, and on the way home he fell and hit his head on the hard road. They found his body the next morning.

I knew now that there was something **evil** at Bly, and that it was my job to **protect** the children from it.

One afternoon Miles stayed inside reading a book and Flora and I went out by the **lake**. I sat on the **grass**, mending one of my gloves, while Flora played. Suddenly I felt sure that we were not alone – there was a third person there, on the other side of the lake. I looked at Flora. A moment ago she was by the water, but now she was standing with her back to the lake. She was very quiet – and I was sure she knew that there was somebody there. Slowly I looked up across the lake to see who it was.

I felt sure that we were not alone.

evil very bad

protect to keep someone from danger

lake a large piece of water with land around it

grass it is green; gardens and fields have lots of it on the ground

a c t i v i t i e s

READING CHECK

Put these sentences in the correct order. Number them 1–9.

- a The governess is happy teaching Miles and Flora and forgets the man.
- b Mrs Grose explains that Quint was a bad man and is now dead.
- c The governess feels sure there is someone else in the garden with them.
- d The governess decides to stop something bad happening to Miles and Flora.
- e The governess sees the man from the tower again through a window.
- f The governess tries to learn more about the man on the tower.
- g The governess describes the man to Mrs Grose.
- h The governess and Flora go into the garden.
- i Mrs Grose tells the governess the man was Peter Quint.

WORD WORK

1 Match the words with the correct pictures.



a servants ~~gloves~~



b whiskers



c lake



d grass



e gloves



f dining room

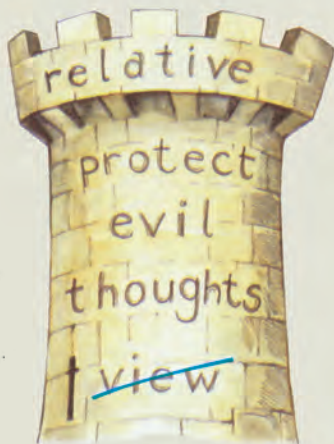


g monster

activities

2 Use the words in the tower to complete the sentences.

- a There is a very good view from the tower.
- b There was something really bad at Bly – something
- c She wanted to help the children – to them from danger.
- d Their uncle in London was their only
- e Her head was full of dark



GUESS WHAT

Which ghost does the governess see next? Tick one picture.



The Turn of the Screw

A young woman arrives at a large country house. Her job is to look after the two children who live there, but she soon discovers that there is something very strange about both the house and the children. The longer she stays, the more she feels that the two children are in danger – or is it that the children are the danger, and the person in danger is herself?

Text adaptation by Christine Lindop

Cover image is taken from the television production of The Turn of the Screw and features Joe Sowerbutts as Miles and Jodhi May as the governess. Courtesy of United Productions in association with Martin Pope Productions and WGBH Boston

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