



# The Room in the Tower and Other Ghost Stories

Rudyard Kipling and Others



## About the authors

### Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1814–73)

This Irish novelist was born into a well-educated Dublin family. He trained as a lawyer but never practised. Instead he started writing short stories, and his first novel, *The Cock and Anchor*, appeared in 1845. He became owner and editor of the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1849. But it was not until 1861, three years after his wife died, that his most important work began. Le Fanu was one of the best-selling writers of the 1860s–80s, writing ingenious tales of mystery and terror. Among the most famous are *The House by the Churchyard* (1863) and the remarkable collection of short stories entitled *In a Glass Darkly* (1872). Sadly the public then lost interest in Le Fanu's work. However, in the twentieth century, Le Fanu's reputation rose steadily. He is now recognized as being almost unequalled as a writer of sinister and supernatural stories.

### Edward Frederic Benson (1867–1940)

Edward Frederic Benson came from a talented literary family. He was the son of a clergyman and was born in Wellington College, Berkshire, England, where his father was the headmaster. E F Benson spent his childhood in some great houses as his father – who later became the Archbishop of Canterbury – moved upwards through the ranks of the clergy. He was a prolific writer – as were his brothers Arthur and Robert – writing over 100 books including novels, biographies and books on different subjects such as sport, politics, war and archaeology. He published his first novel *Dodo* in 1893, but today he is best known for his tales of the supernatural and for the six 'Mapp and Lucia' books, the first of which was published in 1920. E F Benson spent the last twenty years of his life

in Rye, East Sussex, England, and he was mayor of the town three times from 1934–37. He died in London in 1940.

### Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936)

The poet, novelist and short-story writer Rudyard Kipling was a major literary figure of his time, and is the most important of the three writers represented here. Kipling was born in India into a distinguished family. He was sent to England at the age of six, but he returned in 1882 and began a successful career as a journalist. During this period he published poems and stories inspired by his life in India. They include the famous *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) and *Soldiers Three* (1890).

In 1889 Rudyard Kipling came to London, where his poems made him an instant literary celebrity. Three years later he married an American woman, Caroline Balestier. Over the next ten years Kipling wrote his most famous children's stories. They include *The Jungle Book* (1894), *The Second Jungle Book* (1895), *Kim* (1901) and the *Just So Stories* (1902). All these stories were set in India.

From 1902 Kipling lived in Sussex, England. By that time he was rich and famous. However, the days of his greatest success were over. With the First World War his writing became much darker and more sombre. The stories he produced during this period, such as *A Diversity of Creatures* (1917), are now considered to be particularly fine writing. In 1907 he became the first English writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. Kipling died in 1936, and the following year his autobiographical fragment, *Something of Myself*, was published.

Kipling's output was vast and varied. For a period after his death he was unfashionable. His intense patriotism was criticized. His poetry, with its easy rhythms and style, was belittled by critics. However, he is now seen as a great chronicler of colonial life under the British Empire, and he is recognized as being a story-teller of genius. Stories such as *Kim*, *The Jungle Book* and the *Just So Stories* will continue to be read as long as there are children to read them.

## Summary

Written in the nineteenth century, these three ghost stories are guaranteed to send shivers down the reader's spine. Each story was written by a master of the ghost story genre.



## The Room in the Tower and Other Ghost Stories

*The Woman in the Black Coat*, by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, was published in 1838. It tells the story of Fanny, a young girl who goes to live in the large country house of her much older husband, Lord Glenfallen. One night she meets a blind woman in a black coat. On hearing this, Lord Glenfallen is clearly frightened. Then the blind woman appears again and threatens to kill Fanny if she does not leave the house. Fanny learns that the woman is a ghost. She was Lord Glenfallen's wife and died mysteriously. Lord Glenfallen may have killed her. Fanny leaves her husband and the house, never to return.

The second story, *Imray Came Back*, by Rudyard Kipling, takes place in India. A man called Imray suddenly disappears. A policeman, Strickland, moves into Imray's house and the narrator of the story visits him. Mysterious things start happening. Visitors appear and immediately disappear. Strickland's dog refuses to sleep in the house at night, and there are strange sounds. Then the two men attempt to kill a poisonous snake, and in doing so discover Imray's dead body. Strickland's servant confesses to the murder. The servant deliberately steps on the dying snake in order to kill himself. At last the ghost of Imray is satisfied.

*The Room in the Tower*, by E F Benson, was published in 1912. It tells the story of a young man who has a terrifying recurring dream about a room in a house. In his dream a woman, Mrs Stone, dies, and the young man sees a stone that says 'Remember the bad and dangerous Julia Stone'. By chance, the young man finds himself in the house he has so often dreamt about. He is shown to his bedroom – it is the room he has seen in his dreams. In it there is a picture of Mrs Stone. That night the young man wakes to find Mrs Stone standing over him. She bites his neck until it bleeds, but he manages to escape. The young man learns that a woman had died in that room. Her ghost visits young men in their dreams and brings them to the house. Once they are in the house, she kills them and drinks their blood.

### Background and themes

Modern horror fiction finds its roots in the tales of the sinister and supernatural which were very fashionable in the nineteenth century. One of the best-known works in this genre is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818). Other well-known and prominent works, written towards the end of the century, include Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw* (1898).

Magazines containing short stories were very popular during the nineteenth century and Christmas issues, in particular, were often devoted to ghost stories. Charles Dickens and Edgar Allen Poe were some of the greatest practitioners of the genre.

### Discussion activities

#### *The Woman in the Black Coat*, pages 1–13 Pages 1–4

##### Before reading

- Discuss:** Put the students into pairs. Have them discuss the following question:  
*Do you believe in ghosts? Say why/why not.*  
After a few minutes, open up the discussion to the whole class. Divide the board into two halves. Each pair presents its reasons. On one half write the reasons why the students believe in ghosts. On the other half write the reasons why they do not believe in ghosts. After the discussion the class has a vote on the subject.
- Discuss:** Have students look at the picture on page 3. Working in pairs, they describe the picture by answering the following questions:  
*Where are the people? Who are the people? How do they feel? What time is it?*

##### After reading

- Role play:** Have students act out the conversation between Fanny and her mother on page 4. On the board write out the dialogue from 'Do you know Lord Glengallen?' to 'You're a very lucky young woman.' as if it were a stage play. Ask a student to say the first line. Work on the pronunciation. Then have another student repeat. Do the same with two or three more students before moving on to the next line. When the whole dialogue has been rehearsed like this, have students play out the dialogue in pairs.

#### Pages 4–9

##### Before reading

- Discuss:** Put the students into small groups. Have them discuss the ages at which people get married. Ask them to answer the following questions:  
*What is the ideal age for a woman to marry? What is the ideal age for a man to marry? Why?*  
After the small group work, open up the discussion to the whole class. Each group presents its ideas. Write the important points on the board.

##### After reading

- Guess:** Have students predict what is going to happen next. Ask them to answer the following questions:  
*Who is the woman in the black coat? Why is she so unhappy? Why is Lord Glenfallen so angry? What is Fanny going to do?*



## The Room in the Tower and Other Ghost Stories

### Pages 9–13

#### After reading

- 6 **Check:** Check whether the predictions made in exercise 5 were correct.
- 7 **Write:** Working in pairs, students write a short summary of the story from the point of view of Martha.

### Imray Came Back, pages 14–28

#### Pages 14–20

#### Before reading

- 8 **Discuss:** Put the students in pairs. Write the term 'Missing Person' on the board. Make sure they understand it. Ask them to think about any real cases of a missing person that they have heard about. They should ask and answer the following questions:  
*Who was the missing person? When did it happen? Where did it happen? Was the missing person found again?*  
Then have each pair present their missing persons to the whole class.

#### After reading

- 9 **Discuss:** Ask students to look at the picture on page 17. Working in small groups, they describe the picture. Then ask them the following questions:  
*Who is the stranger outside the window? What does he/she want?*
- 10 **Read carefully:** Have individual students read out loud from page 18 'The rain started and stopped ...' to page 20 'I listened to the rain and waited for the first light of morning.' Choose one student to read the first sentence, and then choose another to read the second sentence, and so on. Work on pronunciation and intonation. Repeat the whole sequence two or three times.
- 11 **Guess:** Put students into pairs. Have each pair predict what the narrator will do after it gets light in the morning. *Will he leave the house, or will he stay?* Have each pair report their predictions to the whole class.

### Pages 20–24

#### After reading

- 12 **Guess:** Put students into small groups. Have them look at the picture on page 23 and answer the following questions:  
*What do you think happened to Imray? Why is he dead? Why do you think this? What do you think will happen next? How will the story end?*

### Pages 24–28

#### After reading

- 13 **Check:** Students check to find out whether their predictions in exercise 12 were correct.
- 14 **Discuss:** Put the students into small groups. Tell each group that they are one of the characters in the story – Strickland, Tiejens the dog, or Bahadur Khan. After ten minutes each group tells the story to the rest of the class from the point of view of that character. Use

the board to write useful vocabulary in preparation for exercise 15 below.

- 15 **Write:** As a homework exercise, each student writes up the story as told in exercise 14.

### The Room in the Tower, pages 28–35

#### Before reading

- 16 **Discuss:** Pre-teach the vocabulary item 'recurring dream'. Have students work in pairs to exchange views about dreams. Have them ask and answer the following questions:  
*Do you always remember your dreams? Do you think dreams ever come true? Have you ever had a recurring dream?*  
Have them describe a memorable dream to each other.

#### After reading

- 17 **Role play:** Put the students into pairs. Tell them to read carefully the last paragraph of the story, where the very old woman is telling the narrator about Julia Stone. Then tell them to imagine the rest of the conversation that the narrator has with the old woman. The pairs then act out the conversation to the whole class. The students can then vote on the best conversation.
- 18 **Discuss:** Ask students what they think about the character of John Clinton. Put them in small groups. To help them, tell them to answer the following questions:  
*Is John a good person or a bad person? Is it strange that he did not know about the story of Mrs Stone? Is the narrator right to trust him?*
- 19 **Discuss:** Working with the whole class, ask students to think of words and expressions to describe each of the stories. Write their suggestions on the board. If they have difficulty thinking of words, make some suggestions such as 'exciting', 'thrilling', 'scary', 'clever', 'boring', 'surprising', 'obvious' etc. Then ask students to work individually and to write down which of the three stories they liked best. Ask them to write down at least three reasons for their choice. Then put the students into small groups and have them share their views. Each member of the group presents their favourite story and gives their reasons for liking it. After the debate have the whole class vote on which was their favourite story.
- 20 **Discuss:** Put the students into small groups and ask them to imagine one of the stories is to be made into a feature film. They must decide which story would make the most successful film. They must decide who will direct the film and who will be the actors. Each group presents its project to the whole class.
- 21 **Write:** For homework, students write up the film project in exercise 20.

#### Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to [www.penguinreaders.com](http://www.penguinreaders.com).

Rudyard Kipling, winner of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1907, has long been considered an important and vibrant, even controversial, storyteller and poet. *The Wish House and Other Stories* is a collection of Kipling's finest works, including the stories "In the House of Suddhoo," "The Disturber of Traffic," and "The Eye of Allah," the poems "The Runners," "The Return of the Children," and "The Last Ode," and his famous story about Afghanistan, "The Man Who Would Be King." Fascinating, funny, tragic, immensely readable, and witty, these stories provide an invaluable insight into life in India during the British Raj, introducing us to the work of one of the most beloved writers of the 20th century. Rudyard Kipling was an English author Rudyard Kipling is one of the best-known of the late Victorian poets and story-tellers. Although he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907, his political views, which grew more toxic as he aged, have long made him critically unpopular. Kipling wrote many other works during the periods that he produced his children's classics. He was actively involved in the Boer War in South Africa as a war correspondent, and in 1917 he was assigned the post of "Honorary Literary Advisor" to the Imperial War Graves Commission—the same year that his son John, who had been missing in action for two years, was confirmed dead. This is a bibliography of works by Rudyard Kipling, including books, short stories, poems, and collections of his works. (These are short story collections except as noted. Listed by year of publication.) *The City of Dreadful Night* (1885), short story "later published as *The City of the Dreadful Night* in Little Blue Book No. 357. *Departmental Ditties* (1886), poetry. *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888). *Soldiers Three* (1888). *The Story of the Gadsbys* (1888). *In Black and White* (1888). By Rudyard Kipling. Contents. Volume I departmental ditties and other verses. General summary. Army headquarters. Through the toil of other men. Ere they hewed the Sphinx's visage Favoritism governed kissage, Even as it does in this age. Who shall doubt the secret hid Under Cheops' pyramid Was that the contractor did.