

# The Girl at the Window

## Aims

- To introduce the idea of a ghost or spirit.
- To give students the background to the story.

1 Tell students that the story is called *The Girl at the Window*. Ask them what kind of story they think it might be. Elicit ideas from the whole class and ask them why they think as they do.

Tell students that it is a ghost story. Ask them if they know any ghost stories. Perhaps they have read Oscar Wilde's *The Canterville Ghost* or Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, or seen the Patrick Swayze / Demi Moore film *Ghost*. (You could try to get someone to tell a ghost story.)

Ask students what the ghosts in these stories do to the people who live in the houses they haunt.

**Possible answers:** they frighten them so that they leave; they try to help them in some way; they are helped to find peace by someone living.

Ask students what they think about ghosts. Do they believe the spirit of someone can live on in a place after the person has died?

2 Tell students that *The Girl in the Window* is a ghost story about a woman called Grace. Ask them to read Extracts 1 to find out more about Grace. Elicit the facts of her story and ask the students why they think Tommy didn't marry her.

**Suggested answers:** Grace and Tommy were in love; Tommy went away to fight; he was probably killed in the war against Napoleon; Grace was pregnant, but they took her baby, Mary, away from her because there was no father; Grace is still waiting for Tommy to come home and Mary to come back; her ghost stays in the house while other people live and die there.

Ask the students what they think of this story. Do they like it? Why? If not, why not?

3 Tell students that while Grace was waiting for Tommy at the window, someone painted a picture of her, which stayed in the house. Ask what they think happened to Grace and what is going to happen in the second part of the story in 2001.

4 Ask students to read Extracts 2 to find out about Sue. Where is she? How do they know? Who are Sammy and Pete? What else can they find out about her situation?

**Answers:** Sue and Pete have a baby girl called Sammy; Sue has left Pete, taking Sammy to the house where Grace lived; Sue is phoning her mother to tell her; Sammy likes the picture; the picture is the painting of Grace.

Ask students to make notes about any similarities and differences they find between Grace's situation in 1815 and Sue's in 2001. Ask them to compare their ideas with a partner, then call them back from the whole class.

**Possible answers:** Grace and Sue both had a baby but were not married to the father. Grace's baby was taken away from her, while Sue kept hers; Grace stayed in the same place waiting for her baby and the father, while Sue moved away and didn't want the father to find her and the baby.

5 Ask students to read Extracts 3. What do they find out about Grace, the picture, the room and the house? Ask them how Grace behaves differently towards Sue and Sammy, and why.

**Answers:** Grace is still in the house, in the picture; she thinks of it as her house and her room; she makes the room cold so that people don't like it and they leave; she feels happy then. However, she wants to make Sammy hers, so she doesn't make the room cold; this is probably because she lost her own baby, Mary, and she wants another baby.

6 Ask students to read Extracts 3a again, and then Extracts 4. Ask them what is wrong with the house. Who is Sue telephoning and why?

**Answers:** the house is old and needs work doing on it; Sue is telephoning Mr Price – perhaps he is a builder, decorator or electrician; Mr Price has started doing some work but has stopped because he is busy; the wiring is dangerous; Sue is worried because of the baby.

Ask them to read Extract 4 again, and, in pairs, continue the telephone conversation between Sue and Mr Price. Ask them to write their dialogue down and perform it for others.

7 Ask students to look at the titles of the other chapters (4 Something's happening!, 5 Sammy is my baby, 6 Fire!, 7 I can leave now, 8 We're waiting for you) and decide in pairs what they think is going to happen to the house, the baby, Grace and Sue. Call back suggestions from the whole class.

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## Extracts 1

### Grace: 1815

- a Tommy's going away. He's sixteen and he's a soldier. He's going to fight Napoleon.
- b My name is Grace and I live in Norfolk. I'm sitting at the window and I'm waiting. Waiting for Tommy... My baby's inside me... I know she's a girl. We're waiting for Tommy.
- c It's nine months and the women are here. Mary is coming.
- d The women say, 'This is a beautiful baby. We're going to find a good home for her... You're a bad girl, Grace... The baby doesn't have a father.'
- e 'Tommy's coming home. He's going to marry me. Mary! MARY! Where's my baby? I want my baby!'
- f This is my house. I'm waiting for my baby. People come and people go. People live here and people die here. But I'm always here. I'm waiting for my baby.

## Extracts 2

### Sue: 2001

- a 'Hello, Mum. It's Sue... I've got a new home. It's a small house... it's really beautiful... Sammy likes it. She's smiling.'
- b I'm not living with Pete now... Pete doesn't know I'm here... I'm happy without him.
- c There's a picture in this room... There's a girl at a window... it's a really old picture... Sammy loves looking at the picture...

## Extracts 3

### Grace

- a I'm the girl in the picture and this is my house... I'm always here. Sometimes people come here. They come into this room and they say, 'It's a nice house, but it's very old. It needs work.' I don't want them to come here.
- b People come to the house and they come into my room. *Whoooooo*. I blow and then the room's very cold... Then they go away. And I'm happy.
- c Today a man came to the house with a girl... she's seventeen or eighteen. Her baby's very small. I think, 'This is going to be my baby.' I don't blow *whoooooo*.

## Extracts 4

### Sue

'No, Mr Price, I want someone today... I know you have a lot of work... But you can't start something and then stop it. The wiring is bad – really bad. And I have a baby in the house...'