



Classic Ghost Stories; Ghostly Haunts

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New to Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

0

A complementary pair of books well worth selecting from an overcrowded shelf. The first collection is aptly named, gathering tales by O Henry, Bram Stoker, Dickens, Wilde, Kipling and a harrowingly poignant yarn about a vagrant ghost child by New England writer, Mary Wilkins Freeman. These stories lack the gore of much that passes for horror nowadays but they're very much for the older children in this age range, or those with uncommonly strong nerves to match their advanced reading skills. Wilde's 'Canterville Ghost' provides some light relief, but Kipling's 'Phantom Rickshaw', a tale of adultery and infernal retribution, is strictly X Certificate.

The second collection, a fund-raising enterprise to celebrate the centenary of the National Trust, contains the responses of 10 'grown-up children' to a request by the editor to write a ghost story around some Trust property they had visited. The results are very enjoyable, ranging from Ted Hughes' neo-pagan encounter with a vulpine familiar to Dick King-Smith's clever squib about the vengeance of a slaughtered fowl. The best of the bunch is a macabre and jocular gothic by Terence Blacker, suggesting that a diet of blood might be sustaining some of our most venerable institutions.

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