

**Dial-a-Ghost by Eva Ibbotson
(Penguin, 1996)**

An orphan, Oliver Smith, inherits his distant family's grand mansion, Helton Hall. The ten year old finds out he is not alone in the world. He has his cousins, the Snodde-Brittles. But they are greedy and mean cousins. They just want to get their hands on Helton Hall. And they have a plan to do so. They hire the Dial-a-Ghost placing agency to hire shrieker ghosts so Oliver will be scared out of the mansion. Only, things don't go exactly as planned for the Snodde-Brittles. Their shriekers end up at a convent and Oliver receives a pleasant group of ghosts who don't much care for the Snodde-Brittles.



Discussion questions

1. Why do you think Oliver wanted to stay at the orphanage? How does he feel when finds out that he is now the owner of Helton Hall?
2. The presence of ghosts is an accepted fact in this book. Some characters in the book can see ghosts and some can't. Why do you think Miss Pringle and Mrs. Mannering could set up a ghost agency? What about Dr. O'Hara who comes to examine Oliver?
3. Why do you think Fulton Snodde-Brittle can't see ghosts? P. 150 Why did Dr. Fetlock ask Fulton Snodde-Bittle if he was a spook seer? Play on words seer?
4. This book has some nasty descriptions of particularly gruesome ghosts – what did you think of the author's description of Sir Pelham and Sabrina de Bones?
5. Why did the Wilkinsons have to team up with the Snodde-Brittles in order to vanquish Fulton and Frieda?
6. What ultimately caused Fulton and Frieda Snodde-Brittle to run away? Do you feel the Snodde-Brittles got what they deserved? What about Dr. Fetlock?
7. Why do you think Oliver decides to set up his home as a research center to study ghosts?
8. Trixie is the one member of the Wilkinson family that didn't become a ghost – what do you think happened to her? Why do you think she didn't become a ghost?
9. What did you think of the names of the characters in the book? Did you think parts of the book funny – do you have a favorite part or character?

Caroline Ward,
Coordinator, Youth Services, The Ferguson Library