

# I Go to the House of Shaws



*A man with a gun came to the window and David told him about the letter he carried.*

- Preview:**
1. Read the name of the story.
  2. Look at the picture.
  3. Read the sentence under the picture.
  4. Read the first four paragraphs of the story.
  5. Then answer the following question.

You learned from your preview that

- a. David had visited his uncle Ebenezer at the house of Shaws many times before.
- b. David did not know he belonged to the house of Shaws until Mr. Campbell told him.
- c. David was going to live with Mr. Campbell, the minister.
- d. David would go back to Essendean the very next day.

*Turn to the Comprehension Check on page 10 for the right answer.*

**Now read the story.**

Read to find out what David finds at the house of Shaws.

## I Go to the House of Shaws

I will begin the story of my adventures with a morning early in June of 1751. I closed the door of my home in Essendean, Scotland for the last time. At the age of seventeen, I stood ready to find a new home.

My mother had been dead for a number of years. My father was dead only a few months. Mr. Campbell, the minister of the town church, walked with me to the river. He handed me a letter that my father had written.

"You must take this letter to the house of Shaws near Cramond," said Mr. Campbell. "Give it to your uncle, Ebenezer Balfour."

My name being David Balfour, I was now to know my true family background. The Shaws were an old rich Scottish family. I wondered what my poor schoolmaster father had to do with the house of Shaws.

Mr. Campbell gave me a small bag. In it was a Bible and some money. He told me to behave and show a good example of my country ways.

We said a sad good-bye. Then, with a squeeze of my arm, he turned and walked quickly away. I walked on. I did not feel like a lost stray boy. I felt like a knight charging ahead to meet things I did not yet know.

At the end of two days, I stopped walking at the top of a hill. My country home was far behind me. I looked down with wonder at the great sea and the capital city of Scotland, Edinburgh.

As I went along my way, I asked people about the great

house of Shaws. At the sound of the name, each person got a strange look on his face. Finally, I met an old woman and asked her for directions. She was in a bad temper as she pointed the way. I began to wonder what strange things waited for me there.

At the top of a small hill, I sat down and stared at the house that would be my new home. It was not the great house I had hoped it would be. There was very little light inside, and no road led up to it. Many of the windows had no glass, and bats flew in and out.

I walked down and passed through the unfinished gates. The top floors of the house were open. They had never been completed. Steps to nowhere showed against the sky.

It was getting dark when I knocked on the door. I could hear that someone was in there, and I could see a fire. Still, no one answered. I wanted to run away, but my temper got the best of me. I knocked harder and began to shout.

Suddenly, I heard a man's voice above me and I looked up into the end of his gun. I told him about the letter I carried. The man left his stand at the window and came down. He opened the big piece of wood that was the door. Then he stared at me long and hard.

He was a mean, old-looking man in torn clothes. I followed him into the kitchen. There were locks on the closet doors, and his small supper was set on the table.

The man shared his poor

meal with me. Then he cried, "Give me my brother Alexander's letter!"

I was surprised when he said he was my uncle. But I was more surprised to hear he was my father's brother. Uncle Ebenezer was surely not the great knight I thought he would be. And the big house of Shaws was not a good example of what riches might buy. It was a cold, dark, empty place.

When it became late, my uncle led me up the stairs and down a dark hall to my room. He carried no light. As I walked into the dark room, he closed and locked the door behind me. I wanted to cry, but I was too tired to squeeze out the tears.

This was not the way I thought my uncle would behave. I wondered if this was an example of how my life here would be.

My room was cold and my bed was damp. I put my woolen cloth on the floor, wrapped myself up, and went to sleep.

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## COMPREHENSION CHECK

Choose the best answer.

1. This story takes place in the country of
  - a. America.
  - b. Scotland.
  - c. England.
  - d. Mexico.
  
2. When David Balfour left his home in Essendean, he was
  - a. ten years old.
  - b. fourteen years old.
  - c. seventeen years old.
  - d. seven years old.
  
3. In the beginning of the story, David was
  - a. excited about his new life.
  - b. afraid to leave his home.
  - c. angry at being one of the Shaws.
  - d. mean to Mr. Campbell.
  
4. David's father, Alexander, was
  - a. a town minister in Essendean.
  - b. a rich man in Essendean.
  - c. a king in Essendean.
  - d. a poor schoolmaster in Essendean.
  
5. When David came to the house of Shaws,
  - a. he was happy about what he found.
  - b. he was disappointed at what he saw.
  - c. he was ready to take over.
  - d. he was told that his uncle was dead.
  
6. Uncle Ebenezer
  - a. seemed to like visitors.
  - b. was glad to see David.
  - c. didn't seem to trust anyone.
  - d. treated David very well.
  
7. The house of Shaws was
  - a. filled with pretty things.
  - b. in a very poor way.
  - c. finished a long time ago.
  - d. going to be sold very soon.
  
8. Ebenezer Balfour
  - a. lived in great riches and happiness.
  - b. lived with his wife and children.
  - c. lived only to see his brother.
  - d. lived the life of a poor man.
  
9. Another name for this story could be
  - a. "The Understanding Minister."
  - b. "Life in the City of Edinburgh."
  - c. "Meeting a Fine and Loving Uncle."
  - d. "The Surprise at the End of the Journey."
  
10. This story is mainly about
  - a. an old rich man who gives away money.
  - b. a young man beginning a new life.
  - c. a minister in a town in Scotland.
  - d. a father who misses his son.

## Preview Answer:

- b. David did not know he belonged to the house of Shaws until Mr. Campbell told him.

Check your answers with the key on page 68.