***Harry Potter and the Chambers of Secret***

***Chapter 8***

***Summary and analysis***

***Brief Summary:***

The school year is under way, with daily routines established. Winter is approaching and, with it, the onset of colds and flu-like symptoms. Madam Pomfrey is kept busy in the sanatorium, treating people with her Pepperup Potion. The winter weather is no deterrent for Oliver Wood, who is determined to win the Quidditch tournament this year; he keeps the Gryffindor team practising despite the bad weather. Harry encounters Nearly Headless Nick, the Gryffindor ghost, on his way back from a late-night practice. Nick is depressed, as his application to join the Headless Hunt has been turned down. He warns Harry not to linger in the corridor as Filch. the caretaker, is in a bad mood and would be even angrier to see the mess created by Harry's muddy footsteps. His warning is too late as Filch appears and marches Harry to his office to be punished.

While in Filch's office, Harry and Filch hear a loud thud from above. Filch blames the school Poltergeist and sets out to catch him. Harry notices an interesting package addressed to Filch and opens it, in his absence. The material enclosed is a "Kwikspell course," which intrigues Harry, making him wonder if Filch is actually a proper wizard. Filch returns before Harry can read any more, and he doesn't have time to return the package to its original position; it's obvious that he has looked at it. Filch is embarrassed but Harry denies reading it. Filch lets him go with no further action, claiming to be more concerned with the actions of Peeves the Poltergeist.

On his return to the dormitory, Harry bumps into Nick again. Nick persuaded Peeves to distract Filch, and Harry is grateful for his actions. In return, he promises to attend Sir Nick's five-hundredth deathday party, to persuade the headless ghosts of Sir Nick's ferocity.

Sir Nick's party is a very gloomy affair. Harry doesn't want to go but Hermione reminds him of his promise. The dungeon is filled with hundreds of ghosts, and it's freezing cold, with no food or heating. Harry keeps his promise and tells the headless ghost who rejected Nick how ferocious he is.

They leave shortly afterwards, and this is when Harry again hears the voice he first heard in Lockhart's office. The voice seems to be coming from the walls and is as evil as before. Harry is alarmed and makes Ron and Hermione come with him as he follows the voice. Only Harry can hear the voice, and he races ahead, worried about the implications of the voice. The voice finally becomes fainter but what they find horrifies them: a message written in foot-high letters: "The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the heir beware." Underneath this is the body of Filch's cat, Mrs. Norris, suspended by her tail, her body rigid. Harry and his friends don't have time to leave the scene and are discovered there as pupils exit the Great Hall. Draco Malfoy seems unusually animated by the scene, and repeats the warning.

***Brief Analysis:***

The main plot begins to be revealed in this chapter. The evil voice that Harry heard earlier in the novel is heard again. This time, the voice is stronger, more determined, and just as evil. Only Harry can hear the voice, but Hermione and Ron follow him in pursuit of the voice, their faith and loyalty to Harry unquestioned. Harry's magical power here is obvious, as he is able to hear a voice that his friends can't. The events at the end of the chapter hint at what may happen in the rest of the novel. As readers, we want to know more about the Chamber of Secrets mentioned in the warning. We also want to know more about the warning itself and its implications. As such, the warning at the end of this chapter is a clever plot technique used by Rowling to hook her readers and entice them to keep reading.

***Summary in Detail:***

October arrives, bringing rain. Quidditch practice continues. One evening as Harry is walking back through the castle corridors, he encounters Nearly- Headless Nick, the not-quite beheaded Gryffindor ghost. Nick is looking gloomy and Harry asks why, only to hear Nick explain that he has just been rejected from the Headless Hunt on account of his head being unable to come all the way off. The conversation ends in a flash, as they are spied by Mrs. Norris, Filch the caretaker's cat, and Nick warns Harry to hurry off, so as not to get in trouble for tracking in mud. Filch spies Harry and drags him into his office, begins to write up a punishment complaint, but is interrupted by a large crash. Filch rushes out. While he is gone Harry peers curiously into an open envelope on the desk and finds a mail-order course called "Kwikspell" for wizards who are not fully magical. He returns it before Filch returns, gleefully telling his cat that Peeves the Poltergeist will certainly be expelled for damaging a valuable cabinet. Filch stops mid-sentence when he notices that the Kwikspell envelope is so close to Harry's elbow, and he asks hysterically whether Harry read it. Harry lied that he hadn't, and Filch seems quite alarmed and lets Harry go.

Outside, Nick explains that he had told Peeves to cause a distraction, and Harry is quite grateful and asks if there is anything he can do to help with the rejection from the Headless Hunt. Nick replies joyfully that he could attend his 500th Deathday party, taking place on Halloween, and during it mention to the other headless ghosts how terribly impressive and frightening all the students find Nick. Harry agrees to come, and he invites Ron and Hermione. On Halloween, the three head to the dungeons where they hear awful, scratchy music, they smell rotting food, and they glimpse hundreds of see-through figures. Nick welcomes them and they take a look around, watching the ghosts dance and walk through the table of rotting food, trying to taste it. Hermione spies a ghost from the girls' bathroom, Moaning Myrtle, and quickly leads her friends away, hoping not to get into a conversation with her.

Peeves approaches at this point, mentions having heard the three speaking of Myrtle, and calls Myrtle over. Hermione says hastily that they were just saying how nice she looked tonight, but Myrtle moans that they were making fun of her, and she proceeds to list all the attributes they might have mocked: fat, ugly, moping. Peeves notes that she had forgotten pimply, and Myrtle flees tearfully from the party. Nick arrives at this point, introduces them to the (headless) head of the Headless Hunt, and the three living students are past ready to leave. They hurry off during Nick's speech, and in the passageway Harry hears an eerie murderous voice saying that it is time to kill. He tears off in the direction from which it comes, his friends close at his heels, and they arrive in a deserted corridor and see scrawled on a wall, "The chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the Heir, Beware." Then from the ceiling they see a stiff, hanging cat-Mrs. Norris. Suddenly the halls rumble and fill with people coming out of the feast, and Draco Malfoy calls out, grinning and delighted, "You'll be next, Mudbloods!"

***Analysis in Detail:***

Not only is there life after death in the wizard world, but life's problems don't end after death. Peeves still acts bitter, mischievous and vengeful. Nick is excluded from the Headless Hunt and feels dejected. Myrtle is still self- conscious and miserable. None of these ghosts are particularly happy, but they get along. This landscape of the afterworld mirrors the other human landscapes in these novels. Whether a community is made up of Muggles, wizards, ghosts, students or teachers, it possesses all the interactions and triumphs and disappointments of the world that we experience. Nobody is exempt from life as we live it, but everybody has his or her own different tools while moving through it.

In this chapter, we are introduced to a new anomaly in the wizard world. We have learned of Mudbloods, wizards being born to non-wizards, but only when Harry reads Filch's letter do we learn of non-wizards born to wizards. Filch is one of these, and he is clearly quite self-conscious about that fact, growing flustered and self-conscious to the point that he even lets Harry go unpunished.

When Harry heard the voice a second time, his reaction is to run toward it-an instinctive quality that enables him to "live up to"-or rather, in a scale of fairness-deserve the fame given him at birth. When a frightening situation presents itself, Harry does not rest until he is certain that everybody is safe. He does not run away from the voice but toward it, hoping that he can stop the possessor of the voice from doing what it threatens to do. This is why Harry Potter succeeds, as we learn more further in the story. He does not survive situations without assistance-rather, he survives each one only with great assistance from friends and teachers.

***Critical Study:***

October arrives, and with it a spate of colds. Percy notices that his sister Ginny is looking pale, and so makes her take Madam Pomfrey’s Pepperup potion. One stormy Saturday afternoon a few days before Halloween, as Harry is returning from Quidditch practice, muddy and dripping wet, he comes across [Nearly Headless Nick](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#nearly-headless-nick). Both Harry and Nick are preoccupied with their troubles. Harry is worried about a report from Fred and George that the Slytherins' new broomsticks are extremely fast. Nick is upset because [Sir Patrick Delaney-Podmore](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#sir-patrick-delaney-podmore) has disqualified him from the Headless Hunt. They are interrupted by [Mrs. Norris](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#mrs-norris), the cat who spies on students for [Argus Filch](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#argus-filch), Hogwarts’ caretaker. Nick warns Harry that Filch is in a bad mood since he’s had to clean up students’ mess of frog brains all morning. Before Harry can flee, Filch appears, sees the mud that Harry has tracked in, and demands that Harry follow him to his office.

Filch decides to make an example of Harry, saying, “it’s only a bit of mud to you, boy, but to me it’s an extra hour of scrubbing!” Just as Filch is about to hand down Harry’s sentence, Peeves the school poltergeist bangs on the ceiling. While Harry waits for Filch to return from chasing Peeves, he notices a large fancy envelope on Filch’s desk. He picks it up and reads, “Kwikspell: A Correspondence Course in Beginner’s Magic.” Intrigued, he reads the parchment inside. When Filch returns, he notices that the letter isn’t where he left it. Sputtering, Filch asks Harry if he read it. Harry lies “No” quickly. Harry is alarmed at Filch’s appearance, assuming that he is furious. Filch, flustered, stutters through shock that Harry read his private correspondence, then claims that it’s not his, it’s a friend’s. Then he lets Harry go, telling him not to breathe a word.

Harry finds out that Nearly Headless Nick persuaded Peeves to crash a valuable cabinet over Filch’s office as a distraction. Grateful, Harry tells Nick that he wishes he could do something to help him with his Headless Hunt problem. Excited, Nick replies that there is something Harry can do: attend his deathday party on Halloween, and mention to Sir Patrick how frightening and impressive Harry finds Nick. He invites Hermione and Ron too. Harry agrees to come to the party. After changing his clothes, Harry joins Hermione and Ron in the common room. Hermione is excited about the deathday party. Ron, grumpy with his homework, thinks a deathday party sounds depressing. While it rains outside, the students are cozy in front of a glowing fire. Fred and George try to feed a firework to a fire-dwelling salamander. Harry is about to tell Ron and Hermione about Filch and the Kwikspell course, when he is distracted by the spectacle of Percy bellowing at Fred and George while the sparking salamander whirls around the room, fireworks exploding from its mouth before it finally escapes into the fire.

When Halloween arrives, Harry regrets his promise to go to the deathday party, because he will miss the Halloween feast. The Great Hall has been decorated with live bats; Hagrid’s huge pumpkins have been turned into lanterns; and rumor has it there will be dancing skeletons. Hermione insists that Harry keep his promise, so they go down to the dungeon. The dungeon is filled with hundreds of ghosts, mostly dancing to musical saws played by an orchestra. Hermione tries to avoid [Moaning Myrtle](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#moaning-myrtle), a ghost who haunts one of the toilets in the girls' bathroom on the first floor. She explains that Myrtle keeps having tantrums and flooding the bathroom, so it’s been out of order all year. They approach the food table eagerly, but are horrified to find rotten food. Harry watches a ghost walk through the table with his mouth held open, saying he can almost taste the food. [Peeves the Poltergeist](https://www.gradesaver.com/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/study-guide/character-list#peeves-the-poltergeist) instigates Moaning Myrtle to think that Hermione was making fun of her. Myrtle flees from the dungeon sobbing.

Nearly Headless Nick starts to make a speech, when a dozen ghost horses, each ridden by a headless horseman, burst through the dungeon wall, to applause. Sir Patrick is at the front of the pack, holding his head under his arm, with which he blows a horn. He makes a show of holding his head over the crowd, causing laughter, then strides over to Nick, who welcomes him stiffly. When Sir Patrick spots Harry, Ron, and Hermione, he gives a huge, fake jump of astonishment, causing his head to fall off again, and the crowd to laugh again. When Nick is unamused, Sir Patrick points out that he’s still upset that they won’t let him join the hunt, “But I mean to say—look at the fellow—.” Nick gives Harry a meaningful look, so Harry says that Nick is very frightening. Sir Patrick replies, “I bet he asked you to say that.” Nick tries again to make his speech, but he loses the crowd’s attention as they turn to watch Sir Patrick and the rest of the Headless Hunt play a game of Head Hockey.

The three living guests of the party are cold and hungry, so they leave, hoping to catch the end of the feast. As they hurry up a passageway towards the steps to the entrance hall, Harry again hears the murderous voice that he first heard in Lockhart’s office, saying “...rip...tear...kill...so hungry...for so long...kill...time to kill…” It grows fainter, sounding like it is moving upward. He runs up the stairs into the entrance hall, and then up another flight to the first floor, following the voice. Ron and Hermione follow, confused. Harry hears “...I smell blood...I SMELL BLOOD!” He shouts at his friends that it’s going to kill someone, and runs up the next flight of stairs three at a time. He hurtles around the third floor, with Ron and Hermione following, until they reach the last deserted passage. There they discover foot-high words written on the wall: “THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED. ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE.” They see something hanging under the words. When they edge nearer to see it, Harry almost slips on a large puddle of water on the floor, but his friends catch him. Mrs. Norris is hanging by her tail, stiff and eyes wide. Ron says they should get out of there. Harry wonders if they should help. Ron argues that they don’t want to be found there. But it’s too late. The feast ends, and the students arrive in the corridor from both ends. They fall silent when they see Mrs. Norris. Harry, Ron, and Hermione stand alone in the middle of the corridor. Then Draco Malfoy shouts through the quiet: “Enemies of the Heir, beware! You’ll be next, Mudbloods!” and grins at the sight of the hanging cat.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

A few days before Halloween, [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) walks back to his dormitory after a rain-soaked Quidditch practice. He spots [Nearly Headless Nick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/nearly-headless-nick), the ghost of Gryffindor Tower, whom he notices seems very upset. Nick explains that other ghosts won’t let him into a club called the Headless Hunt because his head is still slightly attached to his body. Harry tries to comfort Nick.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Ghosts are often avoided by students or sometimes even made fun of. This is particularly true of Nearly Headless Nick, whose near-headlessness makes him a kind of oddity to the students. Harry, on the other hand, treats Nick kindly, understanding that he is a being with feelings.

***Summary Part 2:***

At that moment, [Filch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/argus-filch) walks down the hall and notices the mud that [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) has tracked in. He leads Harry into his office and starts filling out a form stating Harry’s crime. At that moment, however, a loud bang comes from the ceiling of the office. Filch runs out of the room, calling after [Peeves](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) the poltergeist, whom he assumes is the sources of the bang.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Like many other figures of authority at Hogwarts and in the wizarding world more generally, Filch frequently abuses his power in order to appear more menacing to the students than he actually is. In Harry’s case, this strategy actually backfires, because if he can get into trouble for things like a little mud, he has no issue with breaking the rules and getting into trouble for larger offenses.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) remains in a chair near [Filch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/argus-filch)’s desk and spots a letter on the desk. Harry reads the letter: it is an advertisement for Kwiskpell, which seems to be a course to learn simple spells. Harry wonders if this means that Filch isn’t a “proper wizard.” When Filch returns, he notices immediately that the letter has moved. Harry lies and says he didn’t read it, and Filch doesn’t know what to do, half-furious and half-embarrassed. He sends Harry back to his dormitory.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Rowling introduces yet another form of prejudice in the wizarding world, perhaps an even stronger one than the prejudice against Muggle-borns. Filch is (as Harry will soon learn) a Squib—a person of wizard heritage but with no magical ability. Squibs are often mistreated and discriminated against by the majority of the wizarding world.

***Summary Part 4:***

When [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) leaves [Filch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/argus-filch)’s office, [Nearly Headless Nick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/nearly-headless-nick) catches him again. He asks Harry if his distraction worked: he convinced [Peeves](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters) to crash a large cabinet right over Filch’s office. Harry thanks him, and wonders how he could help Nick with the Headless Hunt. Nick invites him to his five hundredth deathday party on Halloween: he says it would be an honor to have Harry attend, and wonders if Harry could tell the members of the Headless Hunt that he finds Nick very frightening. Harry agrees to go.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Nick’s gesture of kindness helps Harry escape Filch’s punishment, and in turn Harry agrees to attend his party and help him. Not only does Harry show Nick respect, and vice versa, but their mutual kindness and budding friendship becomes mutually beneficial.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter), [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger), and [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) are excited about going to the deathday party, because they know that living people are rarely invited to ghost parties. Halloween arrives, and they go down to the dungeon, which is filled with hundreds of ghosts. All of the food is moldy and gross, and the music sounds like fingernails being scraped on a chalkboard.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Just like Harry, Ron and Hermione reveal their respect for those who are different from themselves, and are even excited to widen their perspectives by experiencing something new. This shows that they are unlike other characters who simply write off those who are different from them as inferior.

***Summary Part 6:***

[Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) spots another ghost, [Moaning Myrtle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/moaning-myrtle), who haunts one of the girls’ bathrooms on the first floor. Hermione says no one really likes her because she’s always crying and flooding the bathroom. Myrtle sulks over to [Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter), [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley), and Hermione, and Hermione tries to cheer her up by saying how nice she looks. But Myrtle simply thinks that she’s making fun of her and she starts to sob. Just then, a dozen headless ghosts on ghost horses glide through the dungeon wall and greet [Nick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/nearly-headless-nick). Nick tries to make a speech, but the Headless Hunt starts a game of Head Hockey and distracts the audience

***Analysis Part 6:***

Myrtle, like Nick, also experiences prejudice. She is clearly upset about something and is often made fun of, but people simply reinforce that stereotype by calling her “Moaning Myrtle.” This abuse occurs to the point where Myrtle doesn’t even believe that Hermione could be nice to her, which helps create a negative self-fulfilling prophesy of feeling like an outcast, and then becoming one.

***Summary Part 7:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter), [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley), and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) decide to leave and go back to the feast, as they are very cold and hungry. As they leave, Harry hears the same voice from [Lockhart](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/gilderoy-lockhart)’s office: “…rip…tear…kill.” Harry stops in his tracks and tries to listen, looking up and down the passage. Harry can hear the voice moving away, while Ron and Hermione can’t hear anything. He wonders if it might be an invisible ghost, rising through the ceiling. Harry climbs the stairs with Ron and Hermione in tow, heading up to the entrance hall. Harry hears the voice again: “I smell blood…” He worries that the voice is going to kill someone.

***Analysis Part 7:***

Again, having no knowledge about the voice or where it might be coming from terrifies Harry. This point will become crucial in the following chapters, as lack of knowledge about the monster is what allows rumors and fear to fly around the castle. It is also notable that chooses to run toward the voice instead of running away from it. His impulse is to save others rather than to hide, showing his immense courage and willingness to sacrifice himself.

***Summary Part 8:***

[Harry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/harry-potter) runs up to the second floor, stopping at the end of the passageway with [Ron](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/ron-weasley) and [Hermione](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/hermione-granger) behind him. There they see a message: “THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED. ENEMIES OF THE HEIR, BEWARE.” Below the words, there is a puddle of water, and hanging by her tail from one of the torch brackets is [Filch](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/argus-filch)’s cat, Mrs. Norris, “stiff as a board.” Harry, Ron, and Hermione try to leave the corridor, but the feast ends and students pile into the corridor. As the students approach, they fall silent, until they hear a cry from [Draco Malfoy](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/harry-potter-and-the-chamber-of-secrets/characters/draco-malfoy): “Enemies of the Heir, beware! You’ll be next, Mudbloods.”

***Analysis Part 8:***

The first attack and the accompanying message reveal a bit of information about the motivation behind it. As Draco points out (perhaps because he has more knowledge about what “the Heir” means than others do), the motivation for the attacks is based on prejudice. Filch will go on to assume that Harry attacked Mrs. Norris because he discovered that Filch is a Squib. Even though Harry didn’t petrify Mrs. Norris, the truth is not far off, as it later turns out that the monster is after those whom Salazar Slytherin felt were “undeserving” of being at the school.

***Important Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

Harry watched, amazed, as a portly ghost approached the table, crouched low, and walked through it, his mouth held wide so that it passed through one of the stinking salmon.

"Can you taste it if you walk through it?" Harry asked him.

"Almost," said the ghost sadly, and he drifted away.

"I expect they've let it rot to give it a stronger flavor," said Hermione knowledgeably, pinching her nose and leaning closer to look at the putrid haggis. (8.93-96)

***Explanation:***

One of the most notable things about the ghosts in Book 2 is how human they choose to be. Nick is hurt and angry that Sir Patrick won't let him join the Headless Hunt, and here we have this fat ghost who misses food so much that he tries to taste salmon by drifting through an empty plate of it. So it comes down to sports and food. These ghosts may have died, but they still want to play and eat the way they did when they were alive. If you were a ghost, would you try to continue your human life? Would you do something else?

***Quotation 2:***

The dungeon was full of hundreds of pearly-white, translucent people, mostly drifting around a crowded dance floor, waltzing to the dreadful, quavering sound of thirty musical saws, played by an orchestra on a raised, black-draped platform. A chandelier overhead blazed midnight-blue with a thousand more black candles. Their breath rose in a mist before them; it was like stepping into a freezer. (8.83)

***Explanation:***

J.K. Rowling spends a lot of the Harry Potter series reminding us that death itself (while sad) is not necessarily something to fear. In the first book, when Harry destroys the Sorcerer's Stone that had been sustaining Nicholas Flamel's unusually long life, Professor Dumbledore promises that, to Flamel, death will be like the next great adventure. Here, we've got this rather hilarious deathday party. Nearly Headless Nick seems quite proud of having died 500 years before. All the ghosts seem so human – they want to chat and eat and play just like we do. It's hard to take death seriously in these early books – though that really starts to change in Book 4 and especially Book 5.