

# Compare the settings of a terribly strange bed and the landlady essay



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' A Terribly Strange Bed' and ' The Landlady' are both stories based on suspense and fear. ' A Terribly Strange Bed'- written in 1856 by Wilkie Collins, is set in Paris and involves an attempted murder at a gambling house, it is written in first person narration. ' The Landlady'- written in 1960 by Roald Dahl, is set in Bath and involves a young man being drawn into a Bed & Breakfast by a suspicious landlady, it is written in the third person. Although the two stories were written 100 years part, the authors still create an element of fear in similar and different ways; this is what I am going to be looking at in my essay. A Terribly Strange Bed' is set in Paris.

Paris is seen as a pleasant and lovely place, a ' delightful City'. However, in the story, the well-educated, high-class narrator visits a dingy gambling den. The narrator wanted to experience a ' wild life' and was ' tired... of all the ghastly respectabilities of such a social anomaly'.

This alone, gives the reader of the story an uneasy feeling, as it seems that the narrator is almost searching for danger. As the danger of the unknown is seen as exciting and gives people a thrill- which is what Mr Faulkner wants, and he feels he is going to find this in the gambling den. This tells the reader that what goes on in the gambling den could be unsafe. The gambling den contrasts with the pleasant scene of the city, it is ' horrible', and only seems to attract ' lamentably true types - of their respective classes'. The narrator uses the words ' weird' and ' tragedy' when describing the feeling he gets from the den. Yet, he still enters instead of leaving, as he still feels there is an aspect of excitement and fun present there.

The few people already in the den look like vagrants and are described as ‘worse than blackguards’, making us feel that the place can’t be very nice if it attracts these sorts of people. The atmosphere in the den gives off a great feeling of sadness and misery ‘the depression of the spirits’, and makes the narrator feel slightly uncomfortable as it was not something he was expecting neither was he used to, ‘I had entered a the place to laugh, but the spectacle before me was something to weep over’. To escape this feeling of depression he ‘found it necessary to take refuge in excitement’. This excitement was the gambling, which had an element of danger as he could lose all of his money in one go, or could become richer than when he first entered the den. When Mr Faulkner had won a considerable amount of money, drank a great deal of champagne and had been befriended by a ‘rather suspicious specimen of an old soldier’, he was offered a place to stay in one of the capital beds in the gambling house.

When first entering the bedroom of which he was to occupy for the night- Mr Faulkner went straight to the washstand for a gulp of water and to splash his face. When feeling slightly less giddy, he sat down in a chair and looked around. He noticed that the atmosphere in the room was more pleasant than that of the gambling den ‘The change for my lungs from the fetid atmosphere of the gambling-room to the cool air of the apartment I now occupied. ‘Mr Faulkner seems very worried that something may happen to him and his money whilst staying in this room, ‘So I determined to lock, bolt and barricade my door and take my chance till the next morning’; this tells the reader that there is a reason to be anxious for Mr Faulkner’s safety in the

room. The drug that the old soldier slipped into the narrator's coffee made him to be disorientated '.

.. every one of my senses seemed to be preternaturally sharpened'. We can see that the language used by the author helps us to see how Mr Faulkner is feeling; the repeated use of the word ' and', and the short sentences reflect the drunken state of the narrator. While the narrator was having trouble sleeping, feeling very agitated due to the affect the drug was having on him, he took in the surroundings of the apartment. The first thing Mr Faulkner describes is the bed in which his troubles were to start, '.

.. the bed I was lying in; a four poster bed, of all things in the World to meet with in Paris! ' he didn't notice anything at all strange about the bed, apart from the fact that it was a British bed in Paris. '..

. remembered having mechanically drawn back against the posts' the word mechanically in this sentence relates to the mechanical movement when the mattress is lowered in an attempt to murder Mr Faulkner later in the story. The rest of the furniture in the room is described as being cheap, tawdry and dirty. Mr Faulkner notices that the window was an '...

unusually large window'; this is the window that he escapes out of later- having remembered that it is large enough for him to fit out of. Mr Faulkner concentrated intently on a ' dark old picture'; the picture was of a ' fellow in a Spanish hat, crowned with a plume of towering feathers'. The man in the picture was looking intently upwards, towards the top of the bed in which the narrator was presently lying in. The picture seemed to have a power over Mr

Faulkner and forced him to look upwards towards the top of the bed-  
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showing the reader that there is something strange about the bed. When collecting his thoughts whilst lying sleeplessly in the bed, Mr Faulkner noted that there was something peculiar about the house ' Here was I, in a strange house of the most suspicious character', this shows us that the narrator realises that all is not as it seems in the gambling house. ' The Landlady' is set in Bath.

When Billy first entered Bath (for the first time) he was only 17 and the boy felt that this new experience of being independent was exciting ' and a new brown suit, and he was feeling fine. '- this compares to Mr Faulkner in ' A terribly Strange Bed' wanting a new experience of excitement when entering the dingy Gambling house. First impressions of Bath are quite good, like the first impressions that we get from Paris, although the houses on the street that Mr Weaker is walking down seem to be a little shabby and in need of repair '... he paint was peeling from the woodwork on their doors and the windows, and that the handsome white facades were cracked and blotchy from neglect.

' When Billy notices the poster advertising the Bed ; Breakfast Billy felt an urge to go and have a closer look ' He stopped walking. He moved a bit closer. The impression the room created on Billy was good; he saw a ' bright fire burning', ' a pretty little dachshund', ' pleasant furniture' and a ' large parrot in a cage'- all of these things create a good impression on Billy and the reader of the story. Billy felt that especially the animals were a good sign ' Animals were usually a good sign in a place like this'. After Billy had found the unnatural force had pulled him into the Bed and Breakfast, the ' terribly nice.

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.. welcoming' landlady showed him to his room. It was ' small but charming' unlike the shabby capital bed that Mr Faulkner in ' A Terribly Strange Bed' had to occupy for the night. The fact that the bedroom is so cheap, the Landlady is so nice and welcoming, and the house is so pleasant and warm gives the reader the impression that the house is just a little bit too nice. In his room, the landlady had already placed a hot water bottle in his bed and folded back the sheets- this seems very strange, as it is almost as if the landlady was expecting him to arrive when he did.

Billy went downstairs to sign in the guest-book as the Landlady had wished him to, the atmosphere in the living room was so ' wonderfully warm and cosy' completely the opposite to the atmosphere that the author created in ' A Terribly Strange Bed'. When making the tea for Mr Weaver the landlady seemed to play on the fact that her house was nice and cosy, almost trying to tempt Billy away from his thoughts about the two other guests names in the guest-book ' how nice and cosy this is, isn't it? ' she said. When taking the place on the edge of the sofa, next to the landlady, a peculiar smell came to him that seemed to be coming from the landlady- ' he wasn't quite sure what it reminded him of. Pickled walnuts? New Leather? Or was it the corridors of a hospital? . The landlady was watching Billy very attentively; this along with the strange smell and her pushes for Billy to drink the tea that she had made for him gives the impression that she had done something to his tea - this compares to the old soldier in ' A Terribly Strange Bed' drugging Mr Faulkner's coffee.

Once the Landlady started to speak of Mr Mulholland and Mr Temple, it seemed as if for a moment she had forgotten Billy was still there, Billy's first, <https://assignbuster.com/compare-the-settings-of-a-terribly-strange-bed-and-the-landlady-essay/>

(and wrong) impression of the landlady started to change. He realised that she wasn't as nice as she had first seemed, and when he recognized that the animals that had first tempted him to stay in the house weren't real- they had been stuffed by the landlady, the atmosphere in the room began to change as well. Although Billy didn't quite realise what the landlady was planning to do, the language used by the author gives the reader the impression that the first atmosphere created in the Bed & Breakfast was false- so as to entice Billy into the house. The nice old lady wasn't so nice after all, but weird and probably dangerous. The stories ' A Terribly Strange Bed' and ' The Landlady' have quite a few similarities.

Although the language used in each stories is totally different, the ideas are the same. Both contain a character that at first are pleasant and welcoming, but then we see what they are truly like and realise that all is not how it first seemed. The setting in the stories are different- in ' A Terribly Strange Bed' the setting is the opposite of what Mr Faulkner is used to, it is ' shabby' and ' Dingy'. Whereas, in ' The Landlady' the Bed ; Breakfast is seen as being ' nice' and ' welcoming'.

The settings help build up the suspense in the stories by creating different atmospheres using the way that the items and people in the rooms are described. I like both stories, but I think that I can relate better to ' The Landlady' as the language used is a lot easier for me to understand. I also prefer the ending in ' The Landlady' as it doesn't actually tell you what happens- it leaves it up to the reader's imagination.