

The monkey's paw and the red room



In this essay I am going to compare The Monkey's Paw by W. W Jacobs and The Red Room by H. G Wells examining how the writers create suspense. Both stories were written during the Victorian period. The stories are similar in the following ways, they both have an unknown which in the Monkeys paw is the Monkeys paw and in the Red Room the unknown is the shadows which represents fear. The way the themes compare is that both stories were to do with strange and frightening things.

For Monkeys paw the them is that fate ruled peoples lives and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow, which meaning something sinister is going to happen and in the Red Room the theme is fear, darkness and shadows which represent fear. Both writers use different techniques in creating sinister settings to their suspense. In the Red Room the author uses 1st person, which makes the reader feel more involved in the story and it emphasises the emotions felt by the reader. When using 1st person the narrator is the central character. For the Monkeys Paw W.

W. Jacobs uses 3rd person which is the grammatical category of forms that designate a person or thing other than the speaker or the one spoken to examples of forms in the 3rd person include pro nouns such as she and they. Also its in the point of view of someone outside the story. Also the settings both authors use are very similar. In the Red Room, it is set in Lorraine Castle which defines somewhere which is eerie and frightening, a typical gothic setting which used a lot in Victorian times. The long draughty subterranean passage inside the castle was chilly and dusty.

The Red Room is described also as a discomfiting, scary place, where there had been previous incidents which had happened. Like the young duke who died, where he had fallen headlong down the steps. It is a large sombre room, and its shadow window bays, its recesses and alcoves, and the blackness of the chimney. There were two big mirrors each with a pair of sconces bearing candles. Also the housekeeper's room is described as old fashioned. " Deep toned old fashioned furniture of the housekeeper's room". Again the housekeeper's room described as ghostly.

The ornaments and conveniences of the room about them were ghostly". Many things show that the setting for the red room is a frightening, unpleasant place. " I caught a glimpse of myself, abbreviated and broadened to an impossible sturdiness in the queer old mirror". This quote is just one of the many things in the place. The mirror distorts him so that he looks ill formed like the three strange characters. Another example " I heard the sound of a stick and a shambling step on the flags... and the door creaked on its hinges" the writer is sharing sounds with the reader. stick" stressing old age, " flag" emphasising cold stone of flooring, " door creaked" conveying an eerie noise. There are both similarities and differences between the characters portrayed in both stories.

In the Monkeys Paw, the attitude at the beginning of the story of Sergeant Morris prepares the reader that something sinister and ominous is going to happen. The son in the Monkeys Paw is sceptical just like the man in the Red Room, which means that they are inclined to question or doubt accepted opinions. In the Monkeys Paw the son is sceptic about the monkey paw, that it is not real. We're going to be rich and famous and happy, wish to be an

<https://assignbuster.com/the-monkeys-paw-and-the-red-room/>

emperor, father, to begin with; then you can't be henpecked", and in the Red Room the man is sceptic about the Red Room, doesn't believe it is spooky and scary. "I can assure you" said I, "that it will take a very tangible ghost to frighten me". The characters in the Monkeys Paw change during the story.

The Mum at the beginning has a very close relationship with her son and jokes about a lot, then at the end she changes to a completely different person, into a possessed screaming maniac, who is desperate to see her son return. Old woman with a sudden wrench broke free and ran from the room', "Strained and Panting", "Wildly". Whereas the father doesn't want to see his son return, because from what he saw from the bits left from his sons body.

He is content at the beginning with what he has. "It seems to me I got all I want". He loves his wife and would do anything for her, but he doesn't like to see her suffer. In the Red Room the old are portrayed from all being the same age and been living in the castle for years, so they know what has happened in Lorraine castle.

The old people are all mysterious and warn the man about going in to Red Room. The old woman seems very strange and deformed. She always sways her head side to side, like someone who got something wrong with them would do, and she always staring into the fire which is also very weird. She repeatedly warns the young man about the room "there many things to see", "This night of all nights". However the old man with the withered arm cares for the worried narrator, he also warns the narrator of dangers. "Its your own choosing", he tells this to the man 3 times.

The withered man is abrupt at the beginning, he is physically deformed and frightening, sinister looking. He is sympathetic at the end towards the man, he is one of the old people which changes during the course of the story. He goes from being abrupt at the beginning to sympathetic towards the narrator at the end. What we know of the man, is that he is 28 years old and that he is going to go into the Red Room to show that there's nothing unearthly about the room. The young man himself, the central character changes his attitude throughout the story.

At first he is sceptic, challenges the existence of the ghost. "It will take a very tangible ghost to frighten me", but as the story goes on he becomes panicky, paranoid and worried. "It was after midnight that the candle in the alcove suddenly went out". He admits at the end that there is something sinister about the room. The writers use other effective techniques throughout their stories which help to enhance the level of suspense. In the Monkey's Paw Jacobs increases the tension and suspense when describing the climax of the story.

He quickens the pace after the funeral of the son e. g. hysterically and rapidly, rapid exchange of dialogue, and sounds of silence, 'A Stair creaked and a squeaky mouse scurried'. Also Jacobs gives clues all the way through, which is preparing and inviting the reader to read on. "The first man had his 3 wishes, I don't know what the first two were, but the third was for death". This gives the reader a clue that something eerie and sinister is going to happen. After increasing the pace Jacobs then decreases the pace, when they make the 2nd wish and the knock on the door. "She cried, struggling". Jacobs also increases tension when the wife demands to make the 2nd wish

to bring her son back. Bring him back” cried the old woman and dragged him toward the door.

This shows the tension which had increased. In the Red Room Wells uses the use of personification to describe the shadows ‘the fear’. He uses words darkness and shadows to represent fear. This is intensified toward the climax of the story when the man actually admits to that there something sinister about the room, and that it is fear which made him scared. Again like the Monkey's paw Wells increases the pace when the candles begin to extinguish, which increases the rise of tension. “The candle in the alcove suddenly went out”.

It gives the reader a clue that something is going to happen. Also similar to the Monkey's Paw there are clues especially through old people warnings. “This night of all nights”, “It's your own choosing”, this basically tells and gives the reader clues and warnings that something unpleasant is going to happen. These stories were written in the Victorian times, and both Jacobs and Wells use a lot of Victorian long sentences. “The man with the withered arm gave this newcomer a short glance of positive dislike; the old woman took no notice of his arrival, but remained with her eyes fixed steadily on the fire”.

That phrase is from the red room and is an example of a long Victorian sentence. The writers present the theme of the unknown (the paw and the shadows) by giving the readers clues that something is going to happen. The unknown in the monkey's paw is the paw which was traditionally from India and is mummified. It tells the reader a brief story about the paw and that

people used the paw before to make wishes, but have end up with unpleasant circumstances. Like the sergeant tells the family that the last person who possessed the paw made a wish for death.

This gives the reader warnings and clues that the paw is a bad thing, and that something tragic is going to happen in the story, involving the paw. The sergeant major was very reluctant to discuss the paw which also gives the reader a clue that the paw is not a good thing. It is mentioned when unexplained things happen e. g. face in fire, 2nd and 3rd wish. In the Red Room the unknown is the shadows which represent fear, unlike the Monkeys Paw the reader is still left ignorant in what is actually letting out the candles, which gives the story an unexplained ending.

I researched and found some background information on W. W. Jacobs and H. G Wells. Herbert George Wells was born in Bromley, Kent. In 1883 Wells became a teacher at Mildhurst Grammar School. He obtained a scholarship to the Normal school of science in London. He spent 3 years (1890-1893) in Windsor and Southsea, being a draper. In 1891 he settled in London, married to his cousin Isabel and continued his career as a teacher in a correspondence college. From 1893 Wells became a full time writer. He wrote the story Red Room in 1894. William Wymork Jacobs was born on the 8th September 1863 in London.

Jacobs is best mentioned today for his horror classic ' The Monkeys Paw'. The major part of Jacobs work consists of stories about seaman on the Thames Wharfs, and he is particularly noted for his great, unadorned style and droll humour. He grew up literally on the docks of Wapping in London. Jacobs

attended private school. At the age of 16 Jacobs left school to take a position in the Civil service. He became a clerk at the post office savings bank and rapidly developed an extreme distaste for the work. It was possibly out of frustration with his captivity, that he began to write.

In conclusion, it could be argued that both stories were very effective in creating suspense. I felt that the Monkeys Paw was more effective in creating a feeling of fear and sinister because you knew something sinister was going to happen, but you didn't know what. No one would of thought that it would be kill the son, but then you think back when he saw faces in the fire and you think was it himself he was seeing in the fire. I just felt that the Monkeys Paw had more tention and wanted me personally to want to read on more to see that happens, than I did with the Red Room.

The particular weaknesses and strengths in both stories were either of the stories I didn't know what was actually going to happen. I knew something unpleasant would but didn't know what, especially the son dying because of the paw. Also I felt the way the writers both wrote their stories, made me want to carry on reading. However I felt a weakness in The Red Room was that the ending was unexplained and not that tragic, compared to Monkeys Paw it was a tragic ending. But after reading both stories I thoroughly enjoyed reading them, and seeing the different language written in the Victorian times.