

Compare and  
contrast the ways in  
which the authors set  
out essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In this essay, the two stories that I will be comparing are: 'The Whole Town's Sleeping' which was written by Ray Bradbury and 'A Terribly Strange Bed' written by Wilkie Collins. Although written in different periods (one in the 19th Century and the other in the 20th Century) both writers succeed in playing on the readers' fears and therefore both producing good quality thriller stories. I will be analysing which techniques in each story create the right atmosphere and overall which story is more effective.

Tension is shown clearly throughout the structures of both stories, however the writers use different techniques to create suspense in their writing. In 'The Whole Town's Sleeping' the writer tends to use a lot of false plateaus which changes the pattern of the structure and therefore the tension in the story tends to rise and fall which may leave the reader somewhat 'wary' of what is going to happen next. An example of this is when Lavina and the rest of the girls are walking and they see a shadow of someone in front of them.

"Got you! The man jumped from behind a tree". We later find out that the man was their friend, Tom Dillon playing a joke on them. The effect of having these false plateaus in the story is that it leaves the reader insecure in some way and they are left to feel somewhat uneasy throughout the rest of the story. However it keeps the reader on the edge of their seat and wanting to read more because they want to know what happens next. In contrast, Wilkie Collins uses a different method of creating tension and suspense, nevertheless it is equally effective.

In 'A Terribly Strange Bed' we can see that the writer has chosen to gradually build up tension rather than continuously playing on the readers

fears. An example of how he does this in the story is when Faulkner is in his bed and the bed-top is being lowered. " Down and down, without pausing and without sounding, came the bed top... till the dusty odour from the lining of the canopy came stealing into my nostrils. " The way Collins manages to create this sense of tension and suspense is by using emotive and descriptive words.

This helps the reader visualise the story and secondly it helps create a bit more tension as well. The effect of having a gradual build up to the story is that it gets the reader ' involved' in the story and furthermore, like with the other story, it keeps you wanting to read more. The setting in both stories plays a big role in building up the atmosphere for the story and it also helps create a sense of fear and tension for the reader. In ' The Whole Town's Sleeping' the writer has chosen to set the story in a ravine. The use of this setting has connotations of danger, isolation and death.

From this only the readers can tell that something bad is going to happen because the story is set in a dangerous place. By using this setting it instantly plays on the readers fears due to the fact that most people these days do not like to be isolated from other people and the reader in some way feels like the character. Therefore that makes them feel cut-off from civilisation. In comparison, the second story, ' A Terribly Strange Bed' is set in Paris. Although this setting might not seem frightening to us now, in the 19th Century (when the story was written) people in Britain saw France as a very unpredictable country.

This was due to the fact that during this time the Napoleonic War was taking place and Britain had a feeling that France would attack. The effect of having this sort of setting in the story is that (depending on when you are reading it) the reader can in some way relate to the character in the situation and in result this will make them feel more uncomfortable and uneasy. Furthermore Collins also chose to set the main bit of the story in a gambling house which is seen as dangerous due to the untrustworthy people that are in there.

In addition a gambling house is seen as 'immoral' and this would create fear in a 19th Century reader because in the past, people tended to be more religious and they would think of a gambling house as a corrupt place, also they may have a fear of God and what He might do to them if they go 'the wrong way' in life. Another technique that Ray Bradbury uses to create a sense of fear in the setting of 'The Whole Town's Sleeping' is by using emotive and descriptive words. This helps the reader visualise the setting and maybe even makes them feel like they are there in the story.

An example of when the writer uses this emotive language is near the beginning of the story when he is describing the ravine. "Always the black dynamo was humming, with electric sparkles where fireflies hovered." Similarly in 'A Terribly Strange Bed' the writer also uses words to create a sense of fear in the setting, but in a different way. "Ah! sacre petit polisson de Napoleon!" The effect of having French words in the story is that it leaves the reader feeling very dubious because they do not understand what is going on and therefore they may feel somewhat alienated and uneasy about the people and the situation.

Furthermore not only does the descriptive words help to create fear in their readers. Due to the way society is now 'The Whole Town's Sleeping' would scare women more than men because these days more crimes take place at night; which is when the story is set and also women are seen as more vulnerable than men and therefore more crimes take place with women as their victims. In addition the idea of Lavina and the other two girls walking on their own at night will scare women because they can relate to the characters and they themselves know what kind of threat there is out there for women.

The imagery throughout both stories plays a significant role in helping to create tension and suspense. In 'The Whole Town's Sleeping' the writer uses a lot of imagery, which helps to create tension and to build up the right atmosphere. A good example of how Bradbury uses imagery in his story is when the three women are walking down the street and they are all alone. "... the echoes following like gunshots". In this quote Bradbury successfully manages to set out the scene and the reader can visualise the empty street, also the particular words he uses are effective because they have connotations of death and danger.

Similarly in 'A Terribly Strange Bed' Collins also successfully manages to create tension by using imagery. For example when Faulkner enters the gambling house with his friend the writer starts to describe the other characters in the room. "... wrinkled old man, with the vulture eyes and the darned greatcoat". The words used in this quote are very well chosen, for instant, 'vulture' - from this word only we can imagine what the character is like because 'vulture' has connotations of craftiness and slyness.

<https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-the-ways-in-which-the-authors-set-out-essay/>

It also tells us that we should watch out for this character because he is like a vulture and vultures swoop down on their prey and are very quick, its almost like the man is preying on Faulkner this is telling us that Faulkner should be careful about this man or he is going to catch him out.

Furthermore another aspect of imagery is personification and in ' The Whole Town's Sleeping' Ray Bradbury uses personification to bring the dummies in the shop windows ' to life'. " Their blank blue eyes watched as the ladies walked past them, down the night street.

This technique is effective because it helps to create fear because the idea of having someone or something watching you is quite scary and to make it worse the dummies are not even real. Overall the effect of having imagery in the stories is that it emphasises the danger and loneliness, which makes the reader feel uncomfortable. The characters in both stories are very ' typical' and from the beginning of the story we as the readers can tell which one of the characters is going to be in trouble in the end. Furthermore both of the main characters attitudes help to add more tension to the story.

In ' The Whole Town's Sleeping' the main character is Lavina Nebbs, she is a very ' typical' character because she is a woman and she lives on her own. Lavina is portrayed as a very confident, well loved but yet naive woman in the story, we can tell this by her attitude and also by how other people think of her. " Sure look pretty tonight" said the druggist. Due to her attitude the character of Lavina manages to create a lot of fear and anxiety to the reader because her approach is very carefree and it makes the reader think, ' No! Don't do that! and she makes the readers feel nervous for her because they can sense that something is going to happen.

<https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-the-ways-in-which-the-authors-set-out-essay/>

Similarly just like the Lavina character, in 'A Terribly Strange Bed' there is also another headstrong character called Faulkner. Both characters are very alike and they both don't listen to their friends in the stories and they both seem to have the same 'effect' on the reader by doing 'unusual' things that get themselves into danger which makes the reader feel uneasy. The other characters in the stories also help to create tension in the story by being a total contrast to the main characters.

They help to create suspense in the story by being very cautious and trying to look out for the main characters. Furthermore the men in the story are not fully introduced so that the readers' will be suspicious about who the 'Lonely One' is out of them. The Narrative Voice in both stories also help to create tension and suspense but they both achieve this in different ways. In the story 'The Whole Town's Sleeping' the narrative voice is in third person. This is an effective technique because the reader, to some extent, knows what's going to happen to the character in the story.

Therefore this makes the reader more involved in the story and makes them feel more uncomfortable. In comparison the story 'A Terribly Strange Bed' uses the narrative voice in first person. This is equally effective due to the fact that it does not give away so many details about what is going to happen next and it keeps the reader on the edge of their seat because the reader only knows as much as the character. Having the narrative voice as first person creates a sense of fear because we do not know who is plotting against the character.

An example of this is shown in the story 'A Terribly Strange Bed' when Faulkner accepts a drink from the French man. "My attentive friend handed me one of the cups with a bow." This quote shows us that Faulkner accepts the drink without the slightest hesitation, we as readers feel a little uncomfortable about the French man but we do not really feel that he will cause any trouble because Faulkner seems at ease with the man. This again is re-inforces the idea that we only know as much as the character in the story.

The endings in both stories also help the overall story and make it more 'scary'. In both stories the writers use different techniques to end their stories but they are both equally effective. In 'The Whole Town's Sleeping' Ray Bradbury chooses to end the story as a cliffhanger. This is effective because it leaves the reader guessing 'what happens next?' However the reader may not feel like they have got the most out of the book and may feel somewhat 'unsatisfied' because they do not know what happens at the end of the story.

In contrast, 'A Terribly Strange Bed' has a resolved ending. This is also good because the reader knows what happens at the end and they don't have any questions once they have finished the story. However the downside to having a resolved ending is that it does not really have the same effect as a cliffhanger and drops the tension level. Overall, I personally think that 'The Whole Town's Sleeping' is the better story because the techniques the writer uses are more effective than what are used in 'A Terribly Strange Bed'.



Furthermore I think the way the story has false plateaus and also the way that the story is built up till the end and then there is a cliffhanger is very effective. I think that is very effective and creates a lot of tension. In conclusion I think the techniques used in both stories are very effective and the way both writers play on the reader's fears both succeed in creating an effective atmosphere for the story. Both of these stories will attract a large audience because people like to read thrillers.

The reasons that I have found for such keenness for thriller stories is that people like to experience the adrenalin rush and the fear but at the same time from a ' safe distance'. Furthermore we all seem to have a sort of fascination with death and to many of us death is almost like our worst fear, and maybe we tend to be interested in thrillers because it helps us to ' confront' the idea of us passing away. Furthermore in today's society I think that thrillers are still popular because now people can relate to the story lines because it happens.