

Landlady analysis essay sample

[Sport & Tourism](#), [Hotel](#)



A snarling wolf can be as nice as a loving grandmother, and a cute bunny might actually be a demon in disguise, but you never know until you get to know them. The Landlady, written by Roald Dahl, is a short horror story of a young man named Billy Weaver going to the town of Bath for a business trip. While looking for a place to stay, he finds a seemingly kind, old lady who offers cheap bed and breakfast. While treating Billy to tea at night, the landlady poisons Billy and goes to make him one of her taxidermied collections. Dahl uses foreshadowing, characterization, and irony to examine how innocence can change the way things seem.

Foreshadowing, the use of hints to suggest events that will occur later in a plot, helps show the blindness created by purity. First of all, cheap hotels have many guests. “ It was fantastically cheap... There were no other hats or coats in the hall. There were no umbrellas, no walking-sticks—nothing” (Dahl, 64). As Billy steps into this cheap, low-cost hotel, he expects the place to be full of guests; however it is completely empty, as if no one has come before. The price of a hotel is typically the number one determining factor in which where a person stays. If one sees a place where its looks nice, has a low cost, and has a bed and breakfast, they can’t possibly desire more. This hotel was less than half of what Billy was willing to pay for.

If Billy had grown more in common society, he might have observed the potential threat of the hotel. Secondly, chrysanthemums and velvet curtains don’t fit a nice, cozy hotel. “ Green curtains (some sort of velvety material were hanging down on either side of the window. The chrysanthemums looked wonderful beside them” (Dahl, 63). Unknown to Billy, velvety curtains and especially chrysanthemums have a special significance. In many

countries of Europe these flowers are symbolic of death and only used for funerals and to put on graves. If Billy were to notice these facts, he would have chosen to skip this hotel and go to Bell and Dragon beforehand. Nonetheless, the innocence of Billy hid him from the danger lurking before him.

Another element, characterization, the way a writer reveals the personality of a character, showed how oblivious Billy was. “ Billy was seventeen years old. He was wearing a new navy-blue overcoat, a new brown trilby hat, and a new brown suit, and he was feeling fine. He walked briskly down the street. He was trying to do everything briskly these days. Briskness, he had decided, was the one common characteristic of all successful businessmen” (pg. 62). As young businessman, this was most likely his first trip outside of his hometown. His current goal was to become the best businessman he can and focused his priority on briskness because he thought all successful businessmen were brisk in their actions. Too innocent to know otherwise, Billy focused all of his attention on being the best possible worker and let his life itself on the line. The characteristics of the landlady should also have given Billy a bit of a worry. “ She seemed terribly nice. She looked exactly like the mother of one’s best school friend welcoming one into the house to stay for the Christmas holidays” (pg. 64). Rather than noting the landlady as “ extremely nice” or “ very nice” Dahl chose to describe her as “ terribly nice”. Billy was blinded by her kindness and didn’t see through the hidden threat.

Finally, irony, a contrast between expectation and reality, gave a twist to the adventure Billy went through. “ Animals were usually a good sign in a place like this, Billy told himself; and all in all, it looked to him as though it would be a pretty decent house to stay in. Certainly it would be more comfortable than The Bell and Dragon” (pg. 64) Little did Billy know that the animals inside the room are stuffed and that he would soon end with the same fate. It was also ironic that the hotel was described as “ more comfortable than The Bell and Dragon” since Billy would soon be staying there for the rest of his life. “ The room was wonderfully warm and cozy. I’m a lucky fellow, he thought, rubbing his hands. This is a bit of all right” (pg. 65). This quotation adds more to the irony of the story since Billy wasn’t even close to lucky and would soon die a tragic death. Rather than “ a bit of all right”, it should more like a “ lot of bad luck” for Billy.

Although a bit of an over exaggeration, Dahl portrays the possible destruction from the lack of understanding and innocence towards common society. One must also be cautious and not too trusting. Nowadays, many try to keep their little siblings or children as innocent as possible but when they actually venture out into the real world, it can prove to be a disadvantage or even be dangerous towards themselves. In the Landlady, this attribute of innocence inside of Billy, despite all the hints, leads to his ensnarement, and ultimately his demise.