

Lamb to the slaughter and a speckled band essay

[Experience](#), [Laughter](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

'A Speckled band' and 'Lamb to the Slaughter' are two stories about murderers. Lamb to the Slaughter challenges the stereotypical conventions connected a crime story whereas 'a Speckled Band sticks to the conventions.

In this essay I will compare the two stories about their approach to the narration, characters, setting, crime and how each story ends and show that even though 'A Lamb to the Slaughter' isn't a typical murder story it works effectively 'A Speckled Band' is written in first person from the point of view of Dr. Watson, Sherlock Holmes' sidekick. The reader finds out about the murder as the story goes along making it into a exciting classic 'who done it' Only the murderer knows who he has committed the murder and the detective is the only one with the skill to figure out the murder. Everyone else has to watch as the case unravels how the murder did it. This creates drama and tension. You don't find out how until the very end and only when Sherlock Holmes explains 'I had yet to learn of the case was told me by Sherlock Holmes the next day'.

You hear all the clues and get some red herrings to make the plot thicker 'the presence of gypsies and the use of the word band... I can only claim put me upon an entirely wrong scent.

'The story is written in the present but refers to the past 'it was early in April in the year 83' you know you'll get a conclusion to the case and the killer is caught or not. 'Lamb to the Slaughter' is written in third person, this gives an objective view and not a character perspective. You feel involved in the story and can judge for your self whether the murder had a motive that

could even justify the killing. You are already in on who, when and why the murderer killed but the tension and drama comes because you don't know whether she (the murderer) will get away with it.

You see and experience the murder and experience the emotions, you experience this in 'a speckled band' but you don't really experience why Dr. Grimesby Roylott kills and tries to kill again. Narrative viewpoints work well in each story, they create tension, drama and prevent the stories from being boring and dragging on, they make the reader want to read on. The characters in the two stories are totally opposite.

The detective in 'a speckled band' Sherlock Holmes is logical 'he uses rapid deductions as swift as intuitions'. He is cool, calm, collected, brave and very determined this is proven when Dr. Grimesby Roylott visits Sherlock and tries to intimidate him because he has heard about Sherlock and he is afraid that he will find out that he is the murderer. Holmes brushes off the comments that he is 'Holmes the meddler' and he replies 'Holmes the busy body.' Also when the snake comes to bite Helen Stoner but Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson have taken her place.

Sherlock quickly spots the snake and moves out of danger. Holmes will only investigate unusual cases that other people can't solve that show his deductive skills. You learn a lot about Sherlock Holmes' personality and skills because he is featured all the way through the story. He gets a result catches the killer prevents him killing again and becomes a hero because he saves Helen Stoner's life.

Jack Noonan is the main detective in 'a lamb to the slaughter.' In this story there is a whole team of police officers whereas Sherlock Holmes solves the crime all by himself. The team of police officers are sloppy and don't concentrate on their job, they drink on duty 'why don't you have one yourself...

I might have one to keep me going' and Mrs Maloney gets the police officers to eat the murder weapon. The officers come across as stupid, and pick like by the way they eat and lack of manners 'you must be terribly hungry...

why don't you eat up that lamb in the oven... their voices thick and sloppy their mouths were full of meat. 'When Mrs Maloney rings the police station the person asks if Patrick is dead even though Mrs Maloney has just told them 'Patrick is dead' 'who is speaking?' 'Mrs Maloney.

Mrs Patrick Maloney. ' 'You mean Patrick Maloney's dead?' Jack Noonan knows the victim and is very pleasant and friendly towards Mrs Maloney. Jack Noonan can't have a fair judgement in this case because he has a personal involvement and knows the victim and the murderer and it shows a lack of professional judgement and conduct. He even asks the murderer if she wants to stay with him. He never questions Mrs Maloney and thinks about the timing of the murder, the murderer came in the exact time Mrs Maloney was out and not long after he had come home from work so why did the murderer pick that time when people would have been around. He has no idea what the murder weapon was and where it was, it shows a lack of logical thought 'that's a hell of a club the guy must have hit poor Patrick with.

.. personally I think its right under our very noses. He talks as if he is very experienced but it doesn't it in his actions. ' He [Mr Maloney] had been hit with a heavy blunt instrument almost certainly a large piece of metal.

.. it's the old story...

get the weapon and you've got the man. ' He states the obvious, lets personal relationship with a potential suspect and her condition get in the way of doing his job. He and his officers don't follow the rules by drinking and eating on duty, this destroys any evidence against Mrs Maloney and she makes the police officers look like fool and laughs at there stupidity. The murderer in a crime story is supposed to epitomise evil, in ' a speckled band' the murderer is called Dr Grimesby Roylott has motive- money. If his stepdaughters get married they can claim from their mother's estate and get a substantial amount of money; Mr Grimesby Roylott therefore has to stop them getting married.

He doesn't object to the marriage, this is probably because he is less likely to be suspected of murder. He has a complex plan to kill his stepdaughters and has obviously given his plan a lot of thought and if Sherlock Holmes hadn't been asked to view the case then he would have probably got away with the murder of Helen Stoner as well as her sister who he previously murdered when she was just about to get married. He doesn't trust Helen and he follows her to Sherlock Holmes where he tries to intimidate Sherlock so his plan doesn't fail. He uses physical violence on Helen ' the marks of four fingers and a thumb were printed on the white wrist [Helens wrist].

.. he is a hard man. ' He is described as ' a huge man..

. is costume peculiar... so tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. His face smeared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with this sun and marked with an evil passion' The writer makes Dr Grimesby Roylott a stereotypical murderer he makes him big built and menacing.

He compares him to a fierce old bird of prey ' high thin fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey' It gives the character more believability and adds to the suspicion of Dr Grimesby Roylott. He is dangerous man ' ferocious quarrels with whoever might cross his path. Violence of temper approaching to mania' It would have been easier to beat up Helen and Julia Stoner but he would have been caught before. The complex way he committed the murder shows he was an intelligent man.

The murderer in this story is stereotypical and believable but as a reader you don't automatically suspect him because of other red herrings mentioned in the story, he shows no remorse for the first murder because he tries to kill again. The murderer in ' a lamb to the slaughter' is called Mary Maloney she is a vulnerable, pregnant woman. The reader is made to feel like she is the victim because her husband is grumpy and horrible to her, and is planning to live her, because she is pregnant she needs protecting. She treats her husband well doesn't know that her husband is going to leave her.

She doesn't plan the murder and it is more an act of revenge and shock. Directly after the murder she can't believe she has killed Mr Maloney. After she calms down she plans how to get away with the murder, she goes to the shops to confirm an alibi, and then she calls the police and starts playing a victim of the murder. It is easy to do this because the state of shock she is in and the stupidity of the police. Mrs Maloney is the opposite of Dr Grimesby Roylott, she gets the readers sympathy and the reader can understand the emotions she felt but Dr Grimesby Roylott didn't have a good reason for his murder, his was premeditated and he tried to kill again. The victims in 'a speckled band' are twins, one was murdered before (Julia Stoner) and the second was an attempted murder (Helen Stoner).

) Helen's eyes are described as 'those of some hunted animal' and her stepfather is hunting her. Both victims lived with their stepfather in an old mansion which the most of the rooms were inhabited. They were only two years old when their mother remarried and therefore Dr Grimesby Roylott was a father figure to them. Both victims were female and both due to get married and to be were left with a considerable amount of money from their mother to receive when they got married.

'Julia... met a half pay major of the marines to whom she became engaged' This creates sympathy because they were both venerable and innocent. They suffered violence from their stepfather '5 livid spots, the mark of four fingers and a thumb were printed upon the white wrist..

. our step father he is a man of immense strength...

uncontrollable in his anger'. If Helen Stoner hadn't asked for Sherlock Holmes' help ' Miss Stoner [Helen] sooner or later would have fallen a victim her self' It shows how innocent and helpless Julia and Helen Stoner were against there step father. The description of Julia when she was dying shows again how helpless she was and how desperate her stepfather was. My sisters door was unlocked.

.. her face blank with terror she slowly died' Patrick Maloney doesn't get the readers sympathy as a victim because of the way he treats his wife. He comes in after being at work all day and breaks some news to his pregnant wife.

The reader never gets to find out the news because it could affect the reader's judgement about Mr Maloney but it suggests that he is going to leave her. Mrs Maloney is affectionate towards Mr Maloney and adores him and offers to get him drinks and his slippers, she is pleasant to whereas he is blunt and nasty. She hits him in a state of anger and shock, it was not premeditated and the reader feels sorry for Mrs Maloney, but it is normally the victim you feel sorry for. The writer I think is trying to make a point about not expecting her to kill him and the reasoning why the victim deserved it. Both murderers have inside information. Mrs Maloney is the wife of a senior officer and knows how to cover up the crime.

' As the wife of a detective she knew quite well what the penalty would be. That was fine' Dr Roylott had been to India and got knowledge about the deadly snake. The setting and date when each murder happened are very different. ' Lamb to the Slaughter' is modern day whereas ' A Speckled Band'

is set in 1883. The murder scene in 'a speckled band' is 200 years old and in an old mansion where only one wing inhabited.

The room where the murder takes place is given a homely atmosphere to fool the reader into a false sense of security. The room is isolated from the housekeeper's room so it is for the murder to take place. The corridor outside of the room is bare and white washed it is plain and bare and it suggests it is uncared for. When Julia is murdered Helen describes the conditions as 'a wild night, the wind was howling outside and the rain was beating and splashing against the window' it sets the atmosphere of the night. When Sherlock Holmes is going to switch places with Helen Stoner he sees a baboon in the garden, at first he thinks it is a deformed child, it makes the mood nervous and the house abnormal. The setting in 'a lamb to the slaughter' is very cosy and normal, the time of the day is described as blissful (about 6.

00pm) and you wouldn't suspect anything odd to go on there. The setting reflects Mrs Maloney's mood- clam and tranquil. The setting quickly goes from a cosy normal house to a crime scene. The setting in 'a speckled band' is one where you would expect to find a murder but the setting in 'a lamb to the slaughter' is where you would often find one. The murder in 'a speckled band' was premeditated and the killer had killed before, the murder in 'a lamb to the slaughter' was an act of anger but Mrs Maloney was clever enough to get an alibi to make her more secure from being suspected. Mrs Maloney never actually wanted to kill him 'all the love and longing for him welled up inside her and she ran over to him and began to cry her heart out.

It was easy. No acting was necessary' Dahl creates black humour in the story when the police officers are sat eating the murder weapon and she is sat giggling, she knows she has got away with the murder. It makes the reader pleased that she got away with the murder because you are made to feel that Mr Maloney deserved it. The murder is not straightforward so it makes the story interesting. It doesn't follow any of the normal conventions associated with a crime story but it is as believable as any other is. 'A Speckled Band' is an even more complex story that involves more logical thinking.

It is premeditated and carefully planned apart from Dr Grimesby Roylott has no alibi and no one apart from Sherlock Holmes guessed how he committed the murder. The murder involves air vents that didn't work so the snake could climb through them, a chair underneath the vent with foot marks on the seat so it shows someone had stood on it, a dummy bell rope for the snake to climb down to get to its victim. A trained snake with a dish of milk, a small dog lead hung from the wall to catch the snake with. It is a complex thought out plan that shows the effort that went into the murder. This all makes the reader wonder why they are there and not understand because you need the snake to come down the vent to understand how it all fits together.

The murderer dies in the end by bitten by the snake that was supposed to bite Helen, it shows that justice has been achieved, and it is funny that the elaborate plan the invited back fired and was the one to die. The use of black humour in both stories is very effective and makes the stories stand out to

that if the humour had not been included. In 'a lamb to the slaughter' the killer is never caught but she gets the readers sympathy because she is in a vulnerable situation and is treated nastily so in a way she is a victim. Living with the fact that she killed her husband could be punishment enough because she seems remorseful. Justice is served in 'a speckled band' because the killer is caught and cannot kill anymore; this is because his own murder weapon bites him. A good triumph against evil and Sherlock Holmes is seen as a hero because he saved Helen Stoner's life.

I sympathise with Mrs Maloney at the end of the story because she is now on her own with a child and having to live with the guilt of killing her husband even though she got away with the murder. She cares about her child because if she didn't have the baby then she would have turned herself in. 'she knew quite well what the penalty would be that was fine it made no difference to her, it would be a relief. On the other hand what about her child? I think Mrs Maloney was so angry with her husband leaving her and been on her own with a child. 'A Speckled Band' has a kind of happy ending because the killer has been caught, Helen Stoner could now go and get married and even sell the mansion.

Sherlock Holmes is now a hero and everything worked out. 'A lamb to the Slaughter' may not be a typical murder story but it still gives the same emotions of drama, suspense and humour. 'A Speckled Band' may not be more updated to modern days but it works as a classic murder story. I preferred 'a lamb to the slaughter' because I could believe the plot more. It is more realistic and you can make your own mind up about whether Mrs

Maloney deserved to get away with the murder. You don't get a character viewpoint.

You know how she committed the murder and can understand why but you don't know weather she will get a way with the murder. The only problem I had with this story was that it was to prefect because she fooled the police and twisted the police into eating the murder weapon. If it were more realistic other police officers wouldn't do this but.