

# Group exercise on the landlady critical essay

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## PLOT ANALYSIS

In the exposition stage of the plot, the author reveals all the pertinent details of the story. This story however does not reveal everything about the landlady until the climax of the story. 1. What clues did the author give the reader regarding the sinister plan of the landlady that was about to unfold? Animals were usually a good sign in a place like this, Billy told himself. But both animals were stuffed. He was in the act of stepping back and turning away from the window when all at once his eye was caught and held in the most peculiar manner by the small notice that was there. BED AND BREAKFAST, it said.

BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST, BED AND BREAKFAST.

Each word was like a large black eye staring at him through the glass, holding him, compelling him, forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house, and the next thing he knew, he was actually moving across from the window to the front door of the house, climbing the steps that led up to it, and reaching for the bell. He pressed the bell. Far away in a back room he heard it ringing, and then at once —it must have been at once because he hadn't even had time to take his finger from the bell button—the door swung open and a woman was standing there. She has a room ready for him before he comes in. She had put a warm water bottle in the bed before he came, and the bedclothes had been neatly turned back on one side, all ready for someone to get in. “ Five and sixpence a night, including breakfast.”

There were no other hats or coats in the hall. There were no umbrellas, no walking sticks—nothing. There were only two other entries above his on the page, One was a Christopher Mulholland from Cardiff. The other was Gregory W. Temple from Bristol. And the last entry was two years old. She wants him to sign the book, so that she won't forget his name, and then she can always check the book. She does it with Mr. Mulholland and Mr. Temple.

2. At what point do you begin to become suspicious that the boarding house is not quite normal? •When he goes in a kind of hypnosis and goes to ring the bell

•The landlady answers the door right away.

•It is very cheap, but no one there.

3. Where is the climax in the story?

Its when he realizes there only have been two others visitors besides him, and he notices a suspecting smell and taste in the tea (gets poisoned) potassium cyanide 4. Why does the author write the story in this way? How can you relate his plot's structure to the theme that he is trying to communicate with you?

I think that the reason for this is, that throughout the story there are hints throughout the story that says that this is not a good place – the sign outside – how quickly she opens the door – few visitors – the smell of both her and the tea – her habit of stuffing her pets – etc. This is how he shows that when you are seventeen you still are naive and do not always see the big picture, even if there are hints on the way.

## THEME ANALYSIS

What is the main theme of the story? Why is the author telling you a story of a landlady who inadvertently is also a serial killer? The main theme is “Naive”. The young man thinks at first that this is the perfect place and is naively comfortable and does not have any suspicion, although there are some hints throughout the story. He doesn't realise the true character of this “nice” landlady until it's too late, and he has been poisoned. I think that the author is telling the story in this way to show that there still is a lot to learn at the age of seventeen, and you are still not ready to make accurate decisions and really not always able to see the big picture.

#### INTERPRETATION

What is your reaction to the author's view on life and/or human behavior?

- Should people be careful of strangers?

The author is trying to tell us that things aren't always as they seem to be, they can seem harmless on the outside, but on the inside they can do the most unimaginable things, as we read in this story the nice landlady kills and stuffs her victims. This is why we think that the author is trying to show us that you should be careful of strangers, because they aren't always as nice as they seem to be.

- Is it better to live in a small town than a big city?

We think that the main difference between living in a small town and a big town is, that in a small town it is hard to hide things from your neighbours, and that's why they are more likely to notice if something is not as it should be, whereas in a big city, people take less notice to other people. They mostly keep matter to themselves and only see the other people on the

surface. That is why we think that it is better to live in a small town, if you want to live safe.