

# How does hill create a sense of isolation in the woman in black

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The Woman in Black (TWIB) is a story about isolated people in an isolated place. Not least TWIB before she died. Janet Humfrye was isolated by her plight as a mother of an illegitimate child, which was frowned upon by society in the early 20th century when the story is set. Even the town's people of Crithin Gifford were isolated on the marshes and almost described as though they lived in another dimension, another part of the world set apart from the rest of society. The sense of isolation runs like a thread right through the whole book. Hill does this by creating vivid pictures in the reader's mind.

She uses detailed descriptions or imagery with frequent use of metaphor, simile and personification techniques. She also uses short and effective phrases with repetition of words to help create the impact of the descriptions on the reader. Hill was a big fan of Dickens who also used this technique. Hill begins the story by describing the central character Kipps as a bit of a recluse living at Monks Piece. She turns the story a full circle and finishes in the same place when Kipps has recounted the story of what happened to him in the marshes. The very name Monks Piece conjures up a reclusive monk living alone.

Kipps has been living a quiet hermit like existence since buying Monks Piece in his middle age. Kipps describes himself as needing solitude in order to cope with his feelings. He describes himself as a 'sombre pale complexioned man with a strained expression' and 'no taste at all for social life.' This is in stark contrast to his former self as the young Arthur Kipps who was keen, care free, innocent, ambitious and full of energy. The descriptions of Alice

Drablow (AD) in *A London Particular* by Bentley give the impression of a lonely isolated woman.

She is described as a 'rum un' by Bentley and lived like a recluse at Eel Marsh House when she was alive. Her only family lived abroad in India and had done so for 40 years. She is described as having 'no friends or neighbours,' her house was a few miles from the nearest town. "Living there" said Mr Bentley thoughtfully, "anyone might become rum". In the journey North, Arthur Kipps (AK) expresses his sense of isolation when the branch line train to Crithin Gifford has stopped to wait for a passing train. I tried not to sound concerned but was feeling an unpleasant sensation of being isolated, far from any human dwelling and trapped in this cold tomb of a railway carriage. "Here Hill has used a metaphor by describing the train carriage as a cold tomb which gives a sense of forboding and forshadowing of death as well as isolation. The sighting of TWIB at the funeral gives a picture of a lonely isolated figure. She appears and disappears without trace and stands away from the proceedings. The details of her appearance by Kipps also adds to this sense of her isolation. only the thinnest layer of flesh was tautly stretched and strained across her face. "In across the Causeway Hill uses the effect of sound throughout the chapter to create a sense of splendour and Isolation. "The only sounds I could hear above the trotting of the pony's hooves and the rumble of the wheels and the creek of the cart were sudden harsh weird cries from birds near and far." Kipps description of his journey across the Causeway adds to a sense of isolation. "Emptiness stretching for miles, the sense of space, the vastness of the sky above, passing no farm or cottage, no kind of dwelling house at all in three miles.

All was emptiness. " The description of Eel Marsh house also adds to a sense of isolation. " Facing the whole wide expanse of Marsh and Estuary. " " Isolated, uncompromising but also handsome. " Kipps feels quite alone when he arrives at EM house. " Certainly I felt loneliness" " I felt quite alone outside that gaunt empty house. Hill's use of repetition in short phrases helps the reader to empathise with the feelings of Kipps. " But for today I had had enough. Enough of the solitude and no sound, save the water and the moaning wind and the melancholy calls of the birds, enough of the monotonous greyness, enough of this gloomy old house. This all helps to add to a sense of the atmosphere and isolation that Kipps feels. When Kipps sets out on the causeway path back to Crithin Gifford he remarks, " I had never been quite so alone, nor felt quite so small and insignificant in a vast landscape. " At this point he is unaware that in minutes he will be shrouded in mist so that he can no longer see the house behind him or indeed see the path in front. Hill uses imagery throughout the book to create atmosphere, tension and vivid pictures in the readers mind. In the Pony & Trap chapter she describes the descending mist. " Like a damp clinging cobwebby thing. She writes " I felt confused by it, teased by it, as though it were made up of millions of live fingers that crept over me, hung on to me and shifted again. This makes it sound to the reader as though it were a live creature attacking Kipps. This adds to the tension, atmosphere and isolation that Kipps feels. He is far from anywhere and there is no one to call out to. Although Hill tells the story through the eyes of Kipps the central character ( or protagonist) in the book she is able to create a further sense of isolation through the use of dialogue between Kipps and the other characters.

Kipps is made to feel alone and isolated in the task of Eel Marsh house and sorting AD's affairs, by the responses he gets from the people of Crithin Gifford. Many were too terrified to get involved or even speak of TWIB or EMH. When Kipps for example asks Mr Jerome for the papers he replies, "There is no one. I am quite on my own. I cannot give you any help at all." This dialogue helps to bring out the feelings of other characters and in this case Mr Jerome's extreme fear of getting involved.

For me the most isolated figure described in the book is Jannet Humfrye who when alive not only was isolated by her tragic situation but, the fact that she had developed a terrible wasting disease. The flesh had shrunk from her bones and 'she looked like a walking skeleton, a living spectre.' Daily remarks to Kipps in a Packet of Letters, "When she went about the streets people drew back." As a ghost she appears several times in the book, but in particular when she is first seen by Kipps the description of her is quite sympathetic compared with the evil described in further appearances.

Despite her malevolent spirit we cannot help but feel some sympathy and sadness for her terrible plight. Hill balances our feelings towards her by telling her story through Kipps dialogue with Daily. Almost every page of the book is filled with vivid descriptive writing about characters, places and the weather. By creating a sense of isolation in this way Hill adds to the tension, the fear, the atmosphere and keeps the reader in suspense right the way through. By telling the story through Kipps we are drawn in to the rise and fall of his emotions. The reader effectively feels his fear, his tension and his sense of isolation. By Lucy Roberts