

Both lamb to the slaughter and the speckled band shares essay

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



Roald Dahl wrote the story “Lamb to the Slaughter” in 1995. He was born on the 13th September 1916 in Llandolf, South Wales and sadly died in 1991.

Some of the other many novels he wrote are the ‘BFG’ and ‘Willy Wonka’.

“The Speckled Band” was written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who was born 22nd May 1859 in Edinburgh, Scotland and also sadly died on the 8th July 1930. He wrote many stories on the adventures of Sherlock Holmes and amateur detective. Dr Joseph Bell inspired the idea of the character. In the story of “Lamb to the Slaughter” the mood is warm, friendly and tranquil.

We can tell this when the room is described as being “warm and clean”. The “two tall glasses” and the “whiskey” create a homely or domestic mood. A bright, cosy and in a way safe atmosphere is created. When the writer describes the main character as being “without anxiety” and to have a “slow smiling air about her” this adds a calm and quiet feeling to the story.

When the word “placid” is used the character gives off the idea of peacefulness and contentment while waiting for her husband to return home from work. The beginning of the story is described as a “blissful time of day”.

The atmosphere creates a false sense of security and a murder is not expected, where as a love story is. The tale seems very ordinary. The story is different from traditional detective stories as you find out who the murderer is in the beginning story. However, at the start of “The Speckled Band” the mood is very extra ordinary. We can tell this when the writer uses the word “singular features”. The case described in the story seems unusual or mysterious especially when we are told a promise of secrecy was made.

A very strange and curious mood is set and the reader is left wondering who the young lady in the story is and what is so terrible it is making her shiver from fear. The young lady is described as being “in a considerable state of excitement” and the way she wears a veil as well as being dressed all in black adds to the curiosity of the reader. The mood and the atmosphere suggest that something terrible is going to happen. This opening is in complete contrast to the one in “Lamb to the Slaughter” as a much more sinister and dark mood is set. The reader is left with many unanswered questions.

There is one similarity in both the openings of the stories and this that the tension builds up for example Mr Maloney’s anxiety and the unknown young lady. One of the differences between the two openings is that “The Speckled Band” seems to be a traditional detective story where as “Lamb to the Slaughter” isn’t. “The Speckled Band” is a lot more appealing in the beginning as there is a lot more mystery to the story. Being a witness to the murder in “Lamb to the Slaughter” affects the reader as they are forced to wonder will the murderer get caught?

Mary Maloney’s physical appearance is very feminine where as Dr Roylott is the exact opposite we can tell this when we compare the two. Mrs Maloney has “placid” eyes, a soft mouth, translucent skin and she has “a slow smiling air about her”. Mrs Maloney is also six months pregnant. Mary seems a very feminine and an attractive woman. She also seems very tranquil, pleasant and gentle. The way Mary is sewing and waiting for her husband to return home from work emphasises her femininity.

The way Mary “ went forward to kiss” her husband when he returns home from and how she made him a drink and offers to get his slippers shows how she is a very loving wife. Mrs Maloney seems to be a typical housewife and very domesticated, her home is very important to her “ the room was clean”. In a way the way Mrs Maloney acts around her husband makes her seem pathetic. The reader is overwhelmed with positive details. Mrs Maloney is not a stereotypical villain, as we do not expect her to be the murderer. After her husband says he is leaving Mary seems as though she doesn’t want to accept it “ her first instinct was to not believe any of it”.

When her husband shouts at her it brings home the reality and out of anger and passion, as a spur of a moment thing she kills her husband. The murder isn’t planned. Mrs Maloney seems to change after the murder she becomes clever, calm and collected “ all right she told herself, I’ve killed him”. She decides to make herself an alibi and she even practises what she is going to do and say. When the police come she cries hysterically and acts out the part very well, although she loved him that much she is truly heartbroken to see him dead. All the old love and longing for him welled up inside of her”.

This tells us how strong her love for her husband is and how it was a murder of passion. She manipulates the police officers with her femininity and they begin to fuss over her. She asks for a drink of whiskey hoping the guards will join her. She also flatters the guard to soften them up. Mrs Maloney now seems more like a criminal the way she is so cunning and the way she giggles at the end of the story because she knows she has got away with it.

As we are allowed to see in to her private thoughts she does not lose our sympathy.

Especially after when we find out the only reason she doesn't turn herself in is because she wants to protect her baby. Mrs Maloney is a very complex character as she develops as the story goes along. All the way through the story Roald Dahl tries to get you on her side and feel sympathy for her. On the other hand, Dr Roylott is the exact opposite. We can tell this is not only by appearance but by personality as well. Dr Roylott is tall and wide, he has a long pointed nose and a large face with thousands of wrinkles and it has been "burned yellow with the sun".

He has "deep, bile set eyes" which suggests they are yellow because of his anger "bile". He is wearing a black top hat, a long frock coat, high gaiters and he has a hunting crop in his hand. This makes him seem as if he is dressed half wealthy and half as a field worker, this also makes him seem very odd. The quote that helps us realise how different the two characters are is when Roylott's face is described as being "marked with every evil passion". Dr Roylott is also described as being "a fiery old bird of prey" this is a simile that is used to suggest that all he wants to do or does do is killing or attack his prey.

Roylott is a very angry man and unlike Mary Maloney is very unattractive. We do not meet Dr Roylott till quite away in to the story but we are told he is an unpleasant looking man and his behaviour is quite unlike Mary Maloney's as well. We are also told that he beat a man to death before and that he

hurts his step daughter, we know this when Holmes notices “ five little vivid spots” upon Helens wrist. When Roylott moved back to England he is described as being a “ morose and disappointed man” this means he was miserable and bitter.

Dr Roylott is a very angry man and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle likes to write about this anger: Violence of temper approaching mania” This quote is used to show how violent and out of control he is. He fights with the people in the village and is known as the “ terror of the village”. When Roylott moves back and becomes and turns into a hermit and changes. He is a ferocious, short-tempered man full of quarilism. This character is more expected to be a villain. He is a strange man and letting gipsies who were feared in the Victorian days, as well as exotic animals roam his grounds adds to this. The way Sir Arthur Conan Doyle brings out the eccentric man makes him seem more interesting and colourful.

When Roylott first meets Holmes he acts very undignified. The way he throws open the door, his aggressive speech, the way he screams furiously, how he shakes his hunting crop at Holmes, and the way he calls them names adds to the idea of Roylott’s anger. Roylott tells Holmes he is a “ dangerous man” and when he bends the poker and throws it in the fire proves this. Roylott’s motives are completely different to Mary’s as she doesn’t have one and his are greed and money. Unlike Mary he plans the murder by adding fake bell ropes, vents, scaffolding and training a snake to return on the sound of a whistle.

He goes to elaborate lengths to carry out the murders. He is very patient and clever but Mary's story seems a lot more realistic. Dr Roylott isn't a very complex character and we do not feel sympathy for him perhaps because we are not allowed to see into his private thoughts. In the stories the two detectives are very different. Sherlock Holmes lived in London, which was a poor place at the time the story was set. Murder, prostitution, alcoholism and drug taking which was a lot more lethal than were all very common. The police seemed inefficient and corrupt as they began to take bribes.

The Victorians were constantly criticising them. That is why the character Sherlock Holmes was so popular. People liked the idea of a detective that could solve every case and who was always good and never evil. Sherlock was an amateur detective and was offended to be called a police officer the writer shows us this when Holmes says " Fancy his having the insolence to confound me with the official detective force! " Holmes is a typical detective, he is clever and is seen as a hero that is why he was admired so much. He is the focus in the story.

He takes his work very seriously and in the story he even puts himself at risk. He is a gentleman and in a way, the way he talks to and treats Helen seems as though he thinks women are feeble and as if he has a very stereotypical view of women. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle seems to understand what the Victorians want as Holmes is like a super hero. The story is a contrast to reality. Holmes does his job because of his love for it not for the money " as to reward, my profession is my reward". He isn't greedy and this is why he gains respect off the readers. He builds up the story for the reader.

Even though he is very professional Holmes still shows concern for the young women “ You must not fear said he soothingly bending forward and patting her forearm This shows how he is a real gentleman. Holmes has a very observant nature we can tell this because he knows how Helen travelled to him “ you have come in by train in this morning”. His profession is his only reward he tells Helen that even though she has no money he will still do the case and she can pay him back whenever she can. He is very precise and listens to each detail, “ pray be precise to detail”.

He isn't happy with the vague. His mind works quickly and thoroughly unlike Jack Noonan. He then notices the bruises on Helens wrist and realise it is her stepfather “ you are screening your stepfather”. He is very calm and quick in his actions. Holmes remains calm even when Roylott is shouting and threatening him, he doesn't react. Holmes just smiles and stays cool even when provoked. He also wastes no time we can tell this when he goes and finds the will as soon as Helen leaves. In contrast Jack Noonan is the exact opposite he is inefficient and sloppy.

He doesn't to take his job a seriously as Holmes. When they are sent to investigate the murder he seems very willing to accept her story straight away. He also lets Mrs Maloney remain with them throughout the investigation even though she should have been one of the main suspects. When she tells them her story they do check her alibi but only because it is procedure and they have to not because they want to. He then doesn't delve any deeper and seems to forget about Mary being a suspect, even though it is very important in a case to suspect everyone.

Noonan finds it “ impossible” that Mary to have committed the murder because of her femininity and the fact that she is a woman. All the way through the investigation the prime suspect Mary is unsuspected and treated kindly. Noonan seems very unprofessional. The writer Ronald Dahl seems to insist on making Noonan and the police force look thick and sloppy. It seems as if Roald Dahl has no respect for the police force. Noonan offers to let Mrs Maloney stay with his wife or her sister, which in a way would let her be able to escape if she wanted to.

He then has a drink on duty even though he knows he shouldn't and it isn't allowed “ It's not strictly allowed, but I might just have a drop to keep me going”. Noonan doesn't set boundaries or constraints where as Holmes clearly does as he suspects everyone. The writers both use the detective characters to show what the Victorians think of the police force, because Holmes seems to have superhuman thinking and the police force seem to act as if they all share a brain and are very slow in the head. “ Lamb to the Slaughter” is set in a house in an American suburb.

The officers Noonan and Maloney both have an Irish surname, which suggests that the story was set in the 1950's. We know this because it was common for Irish people to immigrate to America or to have Irish relatives. The way Mrs Maloney doesn't work, she just stays at home and looks after her husbands also gives us an idea of when the story was set. Mrs Maloney is a homemaker we can tell this because she stays at home and makes sure that the house is “ warm and clean” as well as sitting by herself and “ sewing”.

When the police come after the murder they ask Mary if she wants to go and stay with someone as if she can't look after herself. On the other hand "The Speckled Band" is set in the 1880's or the late 19th century. There are many things in the story that tell us this for example the transport "a dog-cart". The way they dress is another example we can tell this because Miss Stoner is dressed all in black and wearing a veil. This suggests that she is in mourning which wasn't unusual in the Victorian times; it was expected when a relative or someone close to you dies.

In the Victorian times middle class women had no independence as well as all women being seen as the weaker sex. This attitude is present in both stories. Helen was not allowed her inheritance till she got married and when she did everything she had became her husband's. She also wasn't allowed to live by herself so on the night of the attempted murder she has to go and stay with a relative "remove Miss Stoner to some place of shelter" The actual house Stoke Moran couldn't be more different to the Maloney's house. It is weird and in a way frightening place to be as there is no sense of security.

We know this because wild Indian animals and "vagabonds" were allowed to freely roam the grounds. Gypsies were feared in the Victorian times so this adds to the weirdness. The setting is also a dark and sinister one. "Gathering darkness", "all was dark in the direction of the Manor house" are some of the quotes that are used to show this. The animals and the darkness add to the tension in the setting. It is an old house and extremely old

fashioned: “ The windows were blocked by old fashioned shutters with broad iron bars”

This quote adds to the idea of living in a prison or somewhere that isn't very nice. The setting in “ The Speckled Band” fits the criteria of a typical murder story but “ Lamb to the Slaughter” isn't because we know the murderer is in the beginning of the story. The homely atmosphere in the Maloney's house helps secure Mary's alibi and makes it seem very unlikely that she is the murderer. In the “ Speckled Band” pathetic fallacies are used for example “ Far away we could here the dark tones of the parish clock, which boomed out.... “.

Lamb to the Slaughters” structure is a chronological one, as it starts at the beginning of the story and follows the events as they happen as if they unfold. Where as “ The Speckled Band” is in retrospect as it is looking back we know this when the writer says “ It was early in April in the year '83”. The Sherlock Holmes story is a classical traditional “ who dunnit” format because we don't know who the murderer is until the end of the story. On the other hand “ Lamb to the Slaughter” isn't because we witness the murder and know who the murderer is.

In “ Lamb to the Slaughter” there is lots of suspense and tension in the story at the beginning and because we know the murder wasn't for evil reasons and because we are on the murderer's side it isn't as interesting. Where as in “ The Speckled Band” the reader wants to know will Roylott kill Helen and will they know he is the murderer the storyline is a lot more gripping. “ The

Speckled Bands" structure and organisations are a lot longer than "Lamb to the Slaughter". In the time "The Speckled Band" was written reading was a lot more popular and those who could read had more time to do so.

When "Lamb to the Slaughter" was written television was the latest thing out so people didn't want to sit down and read long novels. In the stories the reader is left to figure out some of the clues like why was Helen Stoner in danger and not only who killed her sister but why. Red herrings are used in the stories to put us off track for example Mrs Maloney's husband having something very important to tell her and shouting at her. In "The Speckled Band" they are used as well for example when we find out there are gipsies and wild animals roaming the manor.

"Lamb to the Slaughter" is narrated in the third person because there it is the writer telling the story whereas in "The Speckled Band" it is narrated in the first person. In "The Speckled Band" it is a lot more complex because Dr Watson narrates some of the story and Miss Stoner narrates some with her flashbacks. In both stories the readers are forced to figure out who they think the suspects are and will the murderers get caught. As we witness the murder in "Lamb to the Slaughter" we know what Mary's motives are and we know it was out of love and passion, so we are on her side.

Styles of writing are often fixed by when they are written, attitudes in society at the time and cultural influences. Both stories are typical for their era and we can tell this by the way they have been written. For example both stories show how women had no independence and didn't work. In "Lamb to the

"Slaughter" the sentence structure isn't that complex making it much easier to follow. Simple and less sophisticated sentences are used in the story. The quote " Fresh ice cubes in the bucket. " Suggests that a much more colloquial style of writing is used we can tell this as it seems as if we are being spoken to.

The story itself is a lot more modern than " The Speckled Band" as the language that is used is very different for example when Mary welcomes her husband by saying " Hullo". In " Lamb to the Slaughter" non-standard English and slang is used, on the contrary in " The Speckled Band" the dialogue is standard and proper English for example when the word " pray" is used instead of please. The vocabulary in the later story is less complicated and much more down to earth. The way the characters speak to each other is very informal and this and the incorrect use of grammar " doc" reflect off the characters.

The story is a lot shorter than " The Speckled Band" as people do not have as much time to read now as they did a long time ago. So the story had to be a lot shorter to be able to compete with other types of media. The story is light hearted and not as realistic as " The Speckled Band". This helps us appreciate the humorous side of the story and so does the murder weapon used in the story. In contrast " The Speckled Band" has extremely long and complex sentences. Subordinate clauses and very sophisticated punctuation is used throughout the story.

The word order is also very complex so the reader has to concentrate when reading the story. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle seems as if he is not satisfied with using one word. The conversation is formal and grammatically correct and as middle class characters are used their speech reflects this. When the word “pray” is used rather than please we can tell the style of writing is very old fashioned. The story is a very serious tale and seems more believable than “Lamb to the Slaughter”. The story was set for a more educated middle class audience.

The stories were also in instalments in the newspapers so only middle class people would read them. Metaphors and similes are used but mainly in “The speckled Band” as Dahl doesn’t seem to write with as much description. In “The Speckled Band” effective similes are used when the manor is described to be like “the claws of the crab”. In both the stories the language of the characters is different but in different ways. For Example “In the Speckled Band” Holmes was a gallant gentleman and seemed to know exactly what to say at the exact right time, especially when he was talking to Miss Stoner.

He has perfect manners and appropriate language, which shows why the Victorians respected the character so much. On the other hand Mary uses her language as a tool to manipulate the detectives. Her quiet and feminine voice softens the officers up and secures her plea of innocence. When she says to the officers “would you do me a favour” and manages to get them to eat the murder weapon. Mary is clever but speaks unsophisticated “hullo”. In “The Speckled Band” at the end the mystery is solved as if there is a resolution and everything gets worked out.

However in “Lamb to the Slaughter” we are still left wondering will she get caught in the future and what will happen even though we are relieved that she doesn’t get caught. There is a twist in the tale in both stories but in “The Speckled Band” the murder weapon kills the murderer and in “Lamb to the Slaughter” the murder weapon is eaten. We do not realise why the writer chose the title “The Speckled Band” till right at the end when we realise it is an Indian snake used to kill the daughters.

“Lamb to the Slaughter” tell us the story might be about a person who isn’t aware of their fate. It has more than one meaning, as we understand when we read the story. The title also makes you wonder is there going to be blood or even death in the story. Holmes final quote tells us how he feels Roylotts death is his fault but he feels no guilt, where as Mary’s is her giggling at the police eating the murder weapon. The murder in “The Speckled Band” seems to be a lot more serious where as in “Lamb to the Slaughter” it is humorous as if to provide entertainment.

The attitudes to murder have changed over time and this can be seen when both stories are compared. I preferred reading “The Speckled Band” as it was a lot more mysterious because you didn’t know whom the murderer was and the story seemed more realistic compared to “Lamb to the Slaughter”. Where as I did enjoy the fact that it was a woman who was the murderer in “Lamb to the Slaughter” as they were seen as the weaker sex. Murder stories have changed a lot over the years as murder isn’t as rare any more and is sometimes seen in humorous ways.