

Lamb to the slaughter and the speckled band essay

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



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Both Lamb to the slaughter and The speckled band are murder mysteries. Although they both include factors, which make a typical murder mystery, they are both very different.

In this essay I will compare both stories and look at how they are different, how they are similar and what effect this has on the reader. The most obvious similarity between the two stories is the basic typical factors that make a murder mystery. A murderer and a victim. The victim in The speckled band is a typical victim.

It is a female who is vulnerable and I think, is very lonely. Her mother was killed in an accident and her sister has been murdered. The murderer is also very typical of a murder mystery, it is a male who is very big and very strong, and he also has a very bad temper. He gives us evidence of his temper when he follows Ms Stoner to the home of Sherlock Holmes, where he calls Holmes a " busy body" and a " Scotland yard jack-in-office" and then in a rage grabs a steel poker and twists it with his bare hands.

On reading Lamb to the slaughter, you find that Roald Dahl has not opted for a typical murderer or victim. The murderer is a female who is heavily pregnant and seems to be happily married. I am presuming she is happily married because " she would glance up at the clock", " merely to please herself with the thought that each minute gone by made it nearer the time he would come". The victim is very different as well. The victim is a male police senior, portrayed as very dominant.

Reasons to suggest this are the fact that as a police senior he has a lot of authority and when his wife talks to him he replies in short and abrupt answers. For example when asked by his wife would he like his slippers he replies with a snappy "no". The murderer and victim work well in both stories due to the scenes before and after the murder, because suspense is built as the reader waits for the murder to take place. As for the murderer and victims themselves I think they work better in Lamb to the slaughter based purely on the fact that they are so different. It is ironic that Mrs Maloney has just committed a murder, yet we can still sympathise with her and somewhat justify her actions because we feel sorry for her. The reader's sympathy is drawn to her because of the fact that she is pregnant.

We know she didn't commit the murder in cold blood because she loved her husband and the unborn child. In The speckled band the reader feels sorry for the victim only because we know it is wrong. Most of our support is drawn to the detective (Sherlock Holmes). This is because it is typical for the victim to be a weak female and we don't really learn anything of the victim's personality but just of her situation. From reading The speckled band we witness acts of kindness and bravery on the part of Sherlock Holmes.

This already gives the reader an image of a good kind man who just wants to help. Although Sherlock Holmes was the first fictional detective, he is still very typical of what you would expect a detective to be. He is male, logical, eager, brave and scientific. One example of these characteristics is shown when Dr Roylott warns Sherlock Holmes off the case.

Instead of being intimidated he thinks logically and presumes Dr Roylott must have something to hide. However, O'Malley and Noonan of Lamb to the slaughter are very different to Sherlock Holmes. They give us no evidence that they are scientific, brave, deductive or even professional. They drink on the job, eat and have a chat whilst they are meant to be working. The setting for The speckled band is an old house, which is very typical of a murder mystery; it leaves endless opportunity for secret rooms, passages, ghosts and murders.

The setting for Lamb to the slaughter is a family home, which is a very unlikely place for a murder to take place. The old house in The speckled band is large and mysterious; it meets the readers' expectation of a murder mystery. Arthur Conan Doyle, author of The speckled band wrote the book in such a way that the setting was very important to the story because of the clues set about the house. Such as the ventilator and the communication between the two bedrooms.

Lamb to the slaughter is written in a way that the setting just adds irony to the story. The reader wants to carry on reading The speckled band because of the suspense and way it is written. Lots of questions are left unanswered such as how was Julia Stoner killed and what do all the clues add up to. We know as little as everyone except for Sherlock Holmes who seems to see a little beyond that of the mere human eye.

Now in the story of Lamb to the slaughter we are kept captivated in the story because of our sympathy for Mrs Maloney. We want to see her through her

plight and see if she gets away with the murder. On reading the ending of Lamb to the slaughter we learn she does get away with it which is not very typical of a murder mystery. Usually the case is solved in the end as it is in The speckled band.

I did expect Mrs Maloney to get away with it because, she although a murderer was still very weak which is shown when she returns home from the shop and I quote " All the old love and longing for him welled up inside her". She was only a murderer by her actions not by her mentality. The speckled band kind of ended how I expected it to. I expected the mystery to be solved but did not expect Dr Roylott to die.

He was a very strong and the circumstances in which he died were shocking. The language used in The speckled band is very old and some of the words have taken on different meanings. It is written in long paragraphs, which are mostly the spoken words of the characters. The language in Lamb to the slaughter is not as old but is still different from modern language. The paragraphs are short but have long descriptive sentences. Overall The speckled band seemed more successful to me because although it was a very typical murder mystery it was written in such a way that you had to find out how Mrs Stoner died and who or what was responsible.

The circumstances surrounding her death were very mysterious and the clues kept you guessing but until you had finished the book You could never be certain. You realise that it takes a detective like Holmes to figure sense of all the little clues. Lamb to the slaughter was very interesting to read but

apart from the sympathy the reader felt for Mrs Maloney there wasn't much interaction between the readers and the character. In The speckled band, we are being told the story by Watson, which gives the effect of Watson actually talking to us. We are supporting Holmes and trying to make sense of all the clues before he does as if we are in a race with him.