

# The adventure of the speckled band and lamb to the slaughter sir arthur conan doyle...

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



In this essay I am going to compare the two crime and detection stories 'The Adventure of The Speckled Band' and 'Lamb to the Slaughter' Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote 'The Speckled Band' in 1892. It was widely admired as one of the best written and most exciting Sherlock Holmes stories. 'The Speckled Band' is about a middle class family where a murder is committed and Sherlock Holmes is called in to investigate it. He successfully solves the case and we find out that the step-dad kills the daughter who is just about to get married because once the daughter gets married the step-dad won't be able to claim any money from the mother's will.

Roald Dahl wrote 'Lamb to the Slaughter' in 1954. Roald Dahl specialised in writing short stories of the unexpected horror and surprise such as 'Kiss Kiss' in 1960. His children's books display a similar taste for the grotesque such as 'James and the Giant Peach' 1961 and 'Charlie and the Chocolate factory' 1964. 'Lamb to the Slaughter' is about a woman who kills her husband with a leg of lamb and then when the police come to investigate the murder she cooks the leg and lamb and fools the police into eating it. Both stories are Crime and Detection stories.

Crime and Detection stories have been popular for many years. Perhaps this is because of a human fascination with crime, it is the desire to find this basic curiosity to discover 'whodunit', that makes us keep turning the pages and reading detective fiction. Usually the writer leaves a trail of clues for the reader to follow. If we are alert readers we can pick up the clues and solve the puzzle.

However, things aren't always as they seem and we can find ourselves being distracted by misleading clues - 'red herrings' which is all part of the fun of reading detective fiction. The Speckled Band' opens with Watson, Holmes side-kick, looking through the files and cases that Holmes is solved. The mood is quite mysterious as Watson searches through " On glancing over my notes of seventy off cases...

I find many tragic, some comic, a large number merely strange. " This specific line makes the reader feel like they want to keep reading the book - to find out which case Watson is going to go into detail about. It also makes the reader feel quite sad that there are so many murders going on that they have to solve them. Watson searches through his notes until he finds the best one to set the story on. The opening does prepare the reader for what is about to come because as soon as the reader opens the book they know that they are dealing with a Crime and Detection story because of Watson going through all the cases.

'Lamb to the Slaughter' is quite calm at the start of the book because the husband had just come back from work and they are acting like a normal couple. The wife says "Hullo darling" and she takes his coat and hangs it in the closet, which is very calm and normal. I think it starts this way to make the reader want to read what is going to happen next, and to get the reader a little bit confused to they want to know what is going to happen. This start does not prepare the reader for what is about to happen in the book because as soon as the reader opens 'Lamb to the Slaughter' it could be any type of book with any type of genre by the way the couple are acting. The Speckled

'Band' is more appealing at the start because we know that Watson is going to talk us through a crime being committed, however, the start of 'Lamb to the Slaughter' seems a bit boring and you don't know if anything is going to happen.

The start of 'Lamb to the Slaughter' is different from traditional detective stories because it doesn't give the impression that a crime is going to be committed, it just makes us think that the husband and wife are a normal family. In both the stories a murder is committed, however, it is committed very differently in each story. In 'Lamb to the Slaughter' the woman kills the husband. We do not know the reason why because it does not say the exact reason, however we are lead to think that the husband tells the wife some distressing news, and the wife gets up set.

We think this because the man says " This is going to shock you a bit I'm afraid" and it describes the woman " she sat very still through it all watching him in a kind of dazed horror as he moved further and further away from her with each word". The woman then gets very upset and angry by this news, goes to the kitchen and gets a leg of lamb from the freezer and kills the husband with it. This conveys the character as being quite strong and reacting to the husband's news in a harsh way. There are not many clues about the characters physical appearance and the murder didn't seem like it was planned and the wife just made a decision very quickly because the husband must have upset her when he told her the news. She seems quite a scary woman and one which can be violent. At the start of the book you

wouldn't have thought she was capable of committing a crime, however, she succeeds with killing the husband and getting away with the murder.

She is obviously a good actress because she managed to cover up her crime well. After she has committed the crime she goes to the grocers to get his dinner, gets back and pretends she found him dead. This is very sneaky and quite clever because she manages to trick everyone. We carry on reading 'Lamb to the Slaughter' when we know who the murderer is because we want to find out if she gets caught, and it is frustrating for the reader if they put the book down because they will never know if she gets caught. In 'The Speckled Band' we do not know how the murder is committed until the end of the book (whereas in 'Lamb to the Slaughter' it was committed at the beginning).

The effect this has on the story is that the reader wants to carry on reading to find out who committed the murder and it makes the story a lot more interesting to try and guess. Sherlock Holmes explains how the murder has taken place and we find out that the step-dad kills the daughter. Dr.

Grimesley Roylott kills Julia because she was about to get married and would get all the family money, he didn't want this, and using a snake to bite her, and kill her.

The snake goes through the ventilator and into the girl's bedroom.

Throughout the story Conan Doyle leaves clues about how the murder is committed and many red herrings such as a baboon and the cheetah. Doyle used Red Herrings as they add a lot to the story. The reader can be misled

by them and it makes the reader more interested to find out what happens at the end.

The writer does not tell us much about the murderer, however, when the sister of the woman that was killed approaches Sherlock Holmes about solving the murder, she said (describing the man) " He shut himself up in his house and seldom came out to save to indulge in ferocious quarrels with whoever might cross his path" which made us suspicious of him. Also, he threatens Sherlock Holmes in Holmes office saying " Don't you dare meddle with my affairs! He also bends the iron poker, and Holmes bends it back again. This tells us that he doesn't want Sherlock Holmes investigating the case. Dr. Grimesby Roylott doesn't give us many clues on his physical appearance however; he does seem a very clever man that tried to trick Holmes in a very clever way by leaving red herrings.

The murder was obviously planned because he had used a plan to send the snake down the ventilator to the girl's bedroom so one day the snake would eventually bite her. He had the bed bolted to the floor and a bell rope which wasn't attached to any bell so the snake could climb down it. The doctor's motives were very carefully planned and he seemed the sort of character that would be able to commit a crime at the start, because he was always one of the suspects. He succeeds in killing the girl, however, at the end of the book he himself is killed because the snake bit him.

The murderers are not similar about the way which they commit their murder, one is planned and one isn't and one gets caught, the other doesn't.

The Speckled Band' murder is probably more complex because Dr. Grimsby Royalltt plans the murder out step by step and before the murder has taken place. He does very simple things that make the murder go to plan such as bolting the bed to the floor. He put the bell rope above the bed which proves he has thought carefully about the murder.

However the woman in ' Lamb to the Slaughter' just goes to the freezer, gets a leg of lamb and kills him. Our attitudes don't change to the murderer in ' The Speckled Band' at any stage because he killed the woman because he wanted the money and he was selfish however, in ' Lamb To The Slaughter' we may feel a bit sorry for the woman because she is pregnant and her husband has told her something she does not want to hear and it has obviously upset her very much. The writers do allow us to have private thoughts about the villains because, for example, some people in ' Lamb To The Slaughter' may have felt sorry for the woman whereas others may have thought that she should not have gone that far. In murder and detective stories it is surprising to have a female killer because most killers are nearly always male.

We even read this ourselves in ' Lamb to the Slaughter' where the policeman says " Get the weapon and you have got the man" However, it is also a sign of the times that crime and detective stories are getting more modern and using females more, this may be because there are more female killers today. For example Myra Hindley who murdered children in the 60's on Saddleworth Moores. If there was a female killer in one of Conan Doyle's

books the audience would not have liked it and would have found it strange to have a female killer. A typical detective is Holmes.

He would solve the case well and not make any mistakes. However in 'Lamb to the Slaughter' the police don't investigate it very well. Holmes goes about solving the crime well in a methodical manner whereas the police are very laid back. They take wine from the woman and she even cons them into eating the leg of lamb when that was the murder weapon. The police automatically assume it was a man that killed her, whereas Holmes doesn't give away who he thinks killed the woman.

Holmes does solve the crime because he is very professional. We never know if the police do solve the crime because at the end of the book it just leaves us on a cliffhanger with the police eating the leg of lamb. The author's intentions in 'The Speckled Band' are for us to see Holmes as a very clever man who solves the case very well. In 'Lamb to the Slaughter' Roald Dahl's intentions are for us to see the police as un-professional.

We admire Holmes because he solves the case well, like in many of Conan Doyle's other books, however we despise the police for dealing with the crime in an un-professional manner. Holmes' superhuman thinking proves to us that he is a great detective. He notices the red herrings are there to fool him and unless you study the book in great depth you may be able to pick out the killer but not how he/she did it. However, the police assume a man did the murder, take wine and drinks from the woman, and eat the leg of lamb which is very unprofessional and leads them to probably not solving the case.



Holmes dominates the story because he doesn't give away how the murder happened until the end which keeps the reading and always asking questions like " What is Holmes thinking? " and wanting to know what Holmes thoughts are. He doesn't give away any of the case to Watson or anyone he might know because they might take all the credit for the case, or, not solve it aswell as he did.

The writers use the detectives to show attitudes at the times of writing because Holmes is a very professional detective and when the book was wrote that was how detectives were meant to be. However, the police are very laid back and ' Lamb to the Slaughter' is actually quite humorous at times, if Conan Doyals audience had read that they would be quite shocked, because they would hope that doesn't happen in real life and would like the investigation to be done in a professional manner. Also, if Doyle had wrote about a woman his audience would be shocked. In each of the stories there are many different settings, however, ' Lamb to the Slaughter' and ' The Speckled Band' are mainly set at their respective homes.

The settings reflect each time in history because when Dr. Grimsby Roylett goes to Holmes office, he bends an iron poker. A iron poker is quite a old fashion object to have by a fire place so we can tell that the book is quite old. Whereas in ' Lamb to the Slaughter' we can tell it is a quite recent story because the woman goes out to the grocers.

The settings mirror the characters because, for example, Holmes puts himself in extreme danger the in house and Holmes is a very brave

character. The settings mirror Mary Malonies character because she knows she is in her own territory which could make her a better actor and therefore make her cover up her crime more efficiently. The settings in 'The Speckled Band' fit with the settings of a classic murder story because it is set in a creepy old house, that the reader could be suspicious of, with weird things happening such as the bed being bolted to the floor and the bell rope above the bed, a old creepy house can also be stereotyped that a big scary murder has taken place. The other important setting in 'Lamb to the Slaughter' is when Holmes and Watson were in the pub next door to the house waiting for the signal from Helen Stoner to come to the house. At that point it was very tense because Helen was putting herself in danger and the reader did not know what was going to happen.

The settings of 'Lamb to the Slaughter' doesn't fit a classic murder story because it is set in quite a modern house where the murder is not planned, therefore there are no weird goings on or red herrings, the police make the Red Herrings themselves by saying it was a man that committed the crime. The Maloney household is an unexpected place for a murder scene because there is nothing there to prove that a murder has taken place and to all the residents around it, the house it just a normal quiet house. The homely atmosphere creates a secure alibi aswell because the police would have never considered Mary Maloney as a suspect because as far as anyone knew, her relationship with her husband was good, and they lived in a nice home. The Speckled Band' This represents a more traditional style used in the 19th century because Doyle would have not of created a house with no clues,

because he would want to keep the reader guessing and Doyle's audience would be quite shocked about 'Lamb to the Slaughter' because the murder happened at the start of the book, they would not be able to guess how it happened.

The two stories are put together in two different formats. 'The Speckled Band' starts with a flashback, with Watson going through Holmes' notes and remembering different cases, like a diary. Whereas as we move on further into the story Watson is narrating it however we feel as if we are there when it is actually happening. This is a classic "whodunit" format because the reader does not know who committed the murder and is trying to guess. The key point in 'The Speckled Band' is when Holmes puts himself in danger. This part puts the reader on the edge of their seat in suspense.

We can tell he is in danger because he says "Have your pistol ready in case you should need it." 'Lamb To The Slaughter' is put together with 3rd person narrative. Roald Dahl narrates the story and we read it as it actually happens. The key point is the police trying to find out who committed the murder because it also holds the reader in suspense.

Both of the stories are different lengths 'The Speckled Band' is quite a long story and leaves clues about the murder throughout the book so the reader can pick up the clues whereas 'Lamb To the Slaughter' is a short story and it does not leave any clues because the reader already knows how the murder is committed. 'The Speckled Band' needs to be a long story so the reader can get into it. If it was a short story the reader could end up very confused

and not know what was going on, also, they may not have picked up all the clues. 'The Speckled Band' uses flashbacks because Watson is telling the story as he remembers it whereas 'Lamb to the Slaughter' is in a chronological structure. 'The Speckled Band' is more gripping to read because as you are reading it you can try and pick up clues and solve the murder yourself, however most of the time you are wrong and Holmes is right.

Red Herrings are used in 'The Speckled Band' like a cheetah, baboon, and gypsies. This creates tension and suspense because the reader may think they have something to do with the murder, when they don't, and the reader is always worrying that Holmes is going to not solve the case because of them. There is also a danger element with the Baboon and Cheetah and the reader would worry that someone could get hurt, that creates suspense. 'The Speckled Band' focuses on the crime because they are trying to solve it.

In the readers head they are trying to investigate the crime themselves and not worry too much about Holmes investigation. This is different from 'Lamb to the Slaughter' because this story focuses on the investigation and how unprofessional the police are, we know how the crime happened in 'Lamb to the Slaughter' but we don't in 'The Speckled Band'. This reveals that the attitudes to literature and crime were very different in the different eras because many Victorians had a deep resentment to the police in London as they did not appear to be very protecting of the public. If Holmes audience had read 'Lamb to the Slaughter' they would have probably been quite

shocked that they know how the murder had taken place and they couldn't try and solve it themselves.

Roald Dahl narrates 'Lamb to the Slaughter' and Watson narrates 'The Speckled Band'. The narrator knows everything in 'Lamb to the Slaughter' however in 'The Speckled Band' Watson has to wait for Holmes to fill him in on some little details so we would be a bit behind the master detective. In 'The Speckled Band' gives us more than one point of view of the crime. We get Watson's point of view and Helens of what has gone on. It doesn't make a difference that Watson narrates then it switches to Helens accounts then back to Watson's again because the reader does not really notice and it goes with the flow of the book. However, if it was confusing who was narrating it would make a difference because the reader would get confused and stop reading the book.

Dahl's story is written with just Mary's point of view. This may have an effect on the reader because they only get one point of view. However, it does not make the book less interesting. In both stories the reader is left in suspense and they are forced to try and figure something out. In 'The Speckled Band' they are trying to work out how the murder took place and in 'Lamb to the Slaughter' they are trying to work out why Mary committed the murder.

'The Speckled Band' ends with Holmes successfully solving the case and the murderer dying. The reader would feel quite relieved that the murderer died because he could not commit any more crimes. 'Lamb To the Slaughter' ends with Mary giggling in room next to where the police are trying to solve

the murder. This is very sinister and shows how times have changed because that would not have happened in 'The Speckled Band'. 'Lamb to the Slaughter' has a twist in the tale because it ends on a cliff-hanger and we never really find out if the police solve the case or not and what happens to Mary. When the story doesn't end the way the reader expects it too it leaves the reader a bit shocked and quite disappointed because they never find out what actually happens.

The meanings of the titles of the stories are revealed to the reader at the end. A Specked Band is the snake the doctor used to kill the daughter so that tells us why the book is called 'The Specked Band'. The woman kills the man with a leg of lamb so that is why the book is called 'Lamb to the Slaughter' however, that is also revealed to us near the beginning of the book. 'Lamb to the Slaughter' is the more intriguing of the titles because the word 'slaughter' tells us someone is actually murdered whereas 'The Speckled Band' could mean anything if the reader did not know it was a snake.

'Lamb to the Slaughter' makes the reader understand the story more near the start because we know for definite she killed him with a piece of lamb however 'The Speckled Band' doesn't really help us understand the story because that title could mean anything, it only adds understanding to the story near the end when Holmes solves the case. Holmes ending comment "I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylotts death, and I cannot say it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience" tells us that Holmes has successfully solves the case and he knows he has, and he is not that worried about the doctor dying because he was the one that committed

the murder. Mary just giggles at the end, it says " and in the other room Mary Maloney began to giggle". This tells us she is not bothered about killing her husband and knows she is not going to go found out as the police are very naive.

The readers are left thinking that Holmes is a good detective whereas Mary has covered up her murder well and is a good liar and actor, whereas we do hope she is going to get found out! If the ending of ' The Speckled Band' was like the ending of ' Lamb to the Slaughter' Doyles audience would be shocked as they would have not have liked to not know what happens to Mary. This shows us how times have changed.' The Speckled Band' is probably the more appealing because as the book progresses the reader can try and guess how the murder was committed, and it has a better plot. However, I preferred the 3rd person narrative way of writing in ' Lamb to the Slaughter' because it was less confusing. I enjoyed both stories, because in ' The Speckled Band' I liked trying to guess how the murder was committed and in ' Lamb to the Slaughter' I liked being in suspense to see if she got found out. Both stories are very compelling however, ' The Speckled Band' is probably more interesting and gets the reader more involved.

As a conclusion to this essay I can tell that Crime and Detection stories have changed a lot and they come in all different sorts. We can tell this from the two stories I looked at because they are each very different and have got a very different plot/style of writing. Murder stories have changed a lot since Victorian times to modern times, they range from having a female killer instead of a male and the reader actually knowing how the murder has taken

place to trying to guess. Crime and Detection stories are all very different and as time goes on will probably keep changing.