

How do people and themes, change throughout the course of the story

[People](#)



' The Darkness Out There' by Penelope Lively Jordan Roberts How do people and themes, change throughout the course of the story? ' The Darkness Out There' combines the author's narration with the thoughts and feelings of Sandra, a girl belonging to the ' Good Neighbours Club'. She goes to help out an old lady, Mrs. Rutter, with the help of a boy called Kerry. Mrs. Rutter lives in the countryside; next to a wood called Packers End, feared by Sandra because of its supposed supernatural qualities. Mrs. Rutter has a secret, that when told, horrifies the children.

This sub story is of the German she found and left to die back when she was a girl in the war. Penelope Lively develops Mrs. Rutter's character in many ways, with clues early on to her true self. Sandra's views on the characters change by the end, as well as her whole outlook of life as a result. There are several themes within this short story this paragraph, deals firstly with the theme of darkness, and light it covers the darkness around us In Packer's End " It was a rank place, all whippy saplings and brambles and a gully with a dumped mattress and a bedstead and an old fridge.

And, somewhere, presumably, the crumbling rusty scraps of metal and cloth and bones? " This evokes a sense of desolation a hostile haunted kind of place, somewhere you don't really want to be, nasty things could happen, this sets the mood of the woods also this was set in the past and the present, at one point the writer graphically describes the trees when the German plane went down, " The branch shapes to look like faces and clawed hands" and " You couldn't quite see into, the clotted shifting depths of the place. This makes you kind of hold your breath in anticipation wondering what will happen there, you know it is horrible from the descriptive words used. It also <https://assignbuster.com/how-do-people-and-themes-change-throughout-the-course-of-the-story/>

tells you of the girl that was possibly sexually assaulted by a knife wielding men so you know now it is definitely are not the place for a young girl to be.

The other aspect of Darkness covered in this story is the darkness of badness, evil, human wickedness, vengeance which is never a pretty thing.

The dark blot on Mrs Rutter's soul for leaving that poor man to die, obviously drawn out over several days so no doubt a painful, lonely death and he was a mere boy really barely reaching manhood about 20 yrs. old, but she saw it as ok, she " Licked her lips" she enjoyed the redemption as she signified these injured German pilots as those who in fact killed her own husband.

Another key theme is the supernatural, and the mysterious ' Packers End' which is often conveyed as the so called ' Darkness out there' as her fears change throughout the story. She fears " German Ghosts" who are said to in fact haunt ' Packers End'. But lively changes Sandra's fears almost in correlation as We, the reader see her grow up. As the story starts she fears ' German Ghosts' but as the story develops she then fears a ' knife wielding rapist' and this shows the fears of a girl and the fears of then the fears of a woman.

Furthermore, a key theme throughout the story is growing up as we see Sandra and Kerry realising the changes there body is going through as Sandra " her breast popping out her shirt" shows the stages of puberty her body is going through as her character becomes more developed mentally so does she physically as she begins to notice the changes happening with her body. Kerry is the same describing his chin " covered in acne" Her opinion of Kerry changes as lively further develops his character as Sandra does not

really know Kerry, but she shares her friends' opinion of him, " Kerry Stevens that none of her lot reckoned much on".

But at the end of the story she changes her mind. Kerry seems a bit of a stereotype because he works part-time in a garage, and will have a full-time job there when he leaves school. He identifies Sandra's dad by the make and colour of his car. But however lively suggests clues that suggest Kerry is not as Sandra sees him, for example, he is ready to spend his free time helping old people, and he asks Mrs. Rutter what she wants them to do, then gets on with it steadily. At the end of the story however it is Kerry who takes the initiative, and passes judgement on Mrs. Rutter. In Sandra's eyes he had grown; he had got older and larger... " Which furthers the point that Sandra had in fact misjudged, Kerry but this furthermore foreshadows him growing up through the course of the story. Another key point of the story is when he offers her a piece of the Aero bar before he has some himself a subtle message, of which foreshadows the end of the story showing his unselfish nature. One of the ways Mrs. Rutter's character is portrayed by Penelope Lively is through her environment, both historically and geographically. The house is introduced sending out two different messages. One is that of a quaint homely place.

This can be recognized through the descriptions of the china ornaments, " big-eyed flop-eared rabbits and beribboned kittens and flowery milkmaids and a pair of naked chubby children wearing daisy chains". Firstly, this gives the impression of a cuddly ' grandmother' figure, but then the picture is broken with the mention of the " smell of cabbage". This comment conflicts with the otherwise friendly scene to suggest something is not right. The house

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reflects Mrs. Rutter's character. An example of this is "her eyes investigated quick as mice". Later, the house mirrors this comment by the author describing that it "smelt of damp and mouse".

Animals and flowers are frequently mentioned in the description of the ornaments and her love of plants, "You should see the wood in spring, with all the bluebells". This constant reference to nature implies there is a link with Mrs. Rutter, for nature is changeable and not always as it seems. There is also evidence to suggest she is an old lady whose mind is still stuck in the past, such as her collection of "old calendars and pictures torn from magazines". This could later explain why her memory of the German plane and dying soldier is still vivid as ever. The effect of what Mrs.

Rutter says and does also reveals sides of her character. She welcomes Kerry and Sandra into her house. But right at the beginning there is a contrast in description, "a creamy smiling pool of a face in which her eyes snapped and darted" sounds friendly and comforting but subliminally uneasy and then later sinister as her character becomes more developed. She's a very judgmental woman. She sends the boy straight away outside to do the manual work and leaves Sandra the light chores indoors. She makes conversation with the girl, but not with Kerry, thinking he'll have nothing interesting to say.

This is because she doesn't think much of his ambitions, smiling falsely while he tells her that he wants to work as a car mechanic. She insults him, "well, I expect that's good steady money if you'd nothing special in mind. Sugar?" then moves on quickly to a gesture of hospitality, trying to conceal the jibe aimed at Kerry. This is also a key theme throughout the story the ideal of <https://assignbuster.com/how-do-people-and-themes-change-throughout-the-course-of-the-story/>

certain roles and pre-conceived stereotypes of what a man or woman should be, Mrs. Rutter upholds very traditional stereotypes. She's patronizing too, with comments like " You're a little dress maker, too," and " Chocky? She asks Sandra to offer Kerry a chocolate too, but has already forgotten his name " Take them out and see if what's-' s-name would like one? " showing his insignificance in her mind. One reason why she does this may be because she has no children of her own, so she goes on stereotypical ideas. She also makes the reader feel uneasy, " Mind your pretty skirt, pull it up a bit, there's only me to see if you're showing a bit of bum. " This provokes the thought that she has a slightly warped mind. She starts to tell Sandra about her husband who was killed in the war. He died rite at the beginning, and she hasn't formed any relationships since.

This can make the reader feel a little bit sympathetic towards her. Penelope Lively lets us know what others think of Mrs. Rutter as Kerry builds a profile on her character when he talks with Sandra. He shows his dislike of the woman, " I don't go much on her" and " I dunno. The way she talks and that. " Sandra encourages him to feel sorry for her by telling him of her tragedy, but he explains that " There's lots of people done that" dismissing the excuse for her peculiar and disturbing behavior by implying that she wasn't the only one to loose somebody in the war.

The way Mrs. Rutter always watches Sandra and " glinting from the cushions" gives an uneasy feel towards her. When Kerry returns inside Mrs. Rutter begins her anecdote. He asks if she saw the plane come down and she chuckles, seeming to delight in the idea. She explains how her and her sister went to investigate the scene and was only going to get help if it was

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an allied plane. This alarms Kerry. Her twisted side becomes more apparent when she says; " We cheered, I can tell you" as they realized it was German. Sandra is alarmed and quips how awful it was, but Mrs.

Rutter, who disregards her discomfort, abruptly interrupts her she is so involved in telling the story. She tries to soften what she is saying by ' sugaring the pill', for example friendly additives such as " my duck" to unsettling sentences. She refers to the injured man in the broken plane as " that site". She mentions nothing about the man himself but just remarks how " it wasn't a pretty site". She is unmoved when the German was crying " mutter, mutter". This shows she is a cold, heartless woman. She recollects easily how she left the man in pain because it was raining.

This shows she has no feeling of mutual human kindness and doesn't feel obliged to help. Again, she is not bothered with the fact he is in his late teens. Which shows her becoming more and more distant from her ' grandmother' stereotype, showing how lively makes the reader question the fact that not all as it in fact seems. Mrs. Rutter is bitter and resentful because of the death of her husband. She delights in the German's death, " I thought, oh no, you had this coming to you, mate, there's a war on. " She seems surprised when Kerry and Sandra suddenly get up to leave, disgusted with her tale.

She has no remorse and doesn't realize there was anything wrong with what she did, her conscience still not activated all these years later. Rite from the beginning there had been implicit clues to her nasty inner character, not just from the story she told which revealed it explicitly towards the end. Penelope Lively through other means, like metaphors, reveals the character. Like her <https://assignbuster.com/how-do-people-and-themes-change-throughout-the-course-of-the-story/>

body, her personality is not clear-cut. The author suggests this when she explains "she seemed composed of circles". Introduced as "a cottage loaf of a woman", gives the misleading impression of a warm, traditional, safe, chunky, old woman.

But following this is in fact another metaphor, "with a face below which chins collapsed one into another," implicitly meaning she had different guises, was false and two-faced. Someone not to be trusted. On balance, it seems that Mrs. Rutter was a twisted old lady, unable to let go of the bitterness she acquired from her husband's killing and sick because of the fact she relished in the idea of the young German soldier left to die. Her historical background, the fact she lived through the horrors of war is no excuse.

She believes herself to be an innocent old lady; blind to her own faults and separated from the outside world. Penelope Lively used various characterization techniques to skilfully convey the character of Mrs. Rutter well. Also by the end of the novel, Mrs. Rutter's character development changes almost full circle as she is converted from an "old popper" to what Kerry calls her "a bitch". This is used by Lively to convey the ideal that not all things are as they seem. And it is not in fact 'the darkness out there' but in fact the darkness within people, and as we reveal more and more of Mrs.

Rutter's character we can clearly see a warped woman, who left someone to die, with no element of remorse whatsoever. In conclusion, a reason why the original thoughts of Mrs. Rutter were so misleading was because Sandra didn't realize her disguise. 'The Darkness Out There' was a collaboration of

1st and 3rd person text. Unless the audience was very analytical and close
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readers, they would generally go along with what Sandra was thinking, they wouldn't know any better. When Mrs. Rutter is exposed by her evil characteristics the audience learns and was guilty with Sandra.

They make the same mistakes of stereotyping as her. As a result, they are more emotionally involved and affected by the moral ending message. The themes and people almost change completely as the fears of Sandra develop from 'ghosts' to in fact the darkest part of people's souls. Sandra becomes forced to question everything she believes in like Kerry a pre-conceived nobody in her eyes but is in fact a good person who offers her chocolate before in fact himself showing an unselfish nature. The title is of course used to question are innermost fears the darkness is in fact closer than it may seem.