

"a vendetta" by guy
de maupassant and
"the red room"



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Story telling was a very popular form of entertainment in the nineteenth century since there wasn't the technology for televisions, radios and cinemas etc. like there is today, so people had to look for different sorts of entertainment. This entertainment came in the form of story telling and became very popular in the nineteenth century.

Fiction was a very popular genre in the nineteenth century and stories were mainly concerned with mystery and the supernatural (since these were extremely popular), for example Sherlock Holmes. Their popularity maybe explained by the common interest in the afterlife (death) and the supernatural as the grip religion had on society at the time was very strong.

To fulfil the objective of this piece of work, I have read two nineteenth century mystery stories: - " A Vendetta" by Guy De Maupassant and " The Red Room" by H. G. Wells.

The themes in the story " A Vendetta" are mainly revenge and murder since the story talks of a widow whose son is murdered and how she had achieved her promised vengeance through unusual means (by using the dog Frisky as a weapon). The main theme of the story " The Red Room" is the supernatural with reference to ghosts haunting the so-called " Red Room". Their popularity can be explained by the popularity of these themes as explained previously.

To create an effective atmosphere that would stimulate the readers' or listeners' imagination, the writer would have to describe this atmosphere in an unconventional manner (by using spooky and chilling details).

Examples of such details that I have found particularly effective in the story "A Vendetta" are; "The wind harasses the sea remorselessly", this sentence is effective in my opinion since it gives a vivid image of the wind actually attacking the sea tirelessly (this is achieved through the use of vocabulary such as "harassing" and "remorselessly")

Also "Like torn sheets floating and drifting on the surface of the water." This is excellent because not only is it effective at describing the atmosphere, it is also a simile and so would stimulate the reader's or listener's imagination further.

"She shut herself up with the body and the howling dog" This is effective since it portrays the chilling atmosphere through the image of the howling dog (often used to depict a ghostly atmosphere). It is also quite a spooky remark since it describes the woman as "Shutting" herself up with the dead body, which would have greater effect than saying that she was alone with the dead body.

Finally I find the sentence, "She [Frisky] tore the face to pieces and reduced the whole throat to ribbons." an extremely effective description of Frisky's attack on the dummy since it has vivid imagery portrayed through phrases like, "Tore...to pieces", and, "Reduced...to ribbons."

There are many examples of descriptions that portray a spooky and ghostly atmosphere in the story "The Red Room". A few of these are as follows: "

His lower lip, half averted, hung pale and pink from his decaying yellow teeth." I have chosen this sentence because it is extremely effective at

describing the grotesque character with powerful adjectives such as, "
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Averted" and "Decaying". This hideous character would help to create a ghostly and spooky atmosphere. I also found, "Their droning insistence." quite ghostly since the word "Droning" strikes me and describes the old people as being robots or having some sort of uniformity or monotone in their "Insistence".

"Man with withered arm" Here there is more descriptions of grotesque characters. The word "Withered" is quite spooky making this sentence quite effective.

Lastly, "The flames were still dancing between the glowing coals." Here the writer suggests that the flames are "Dancing". The sentence also makes the reader or listener imagine the flames more easily because of these vivid images. H. G. Wells has also enhanced this sentence further by adding, "Splashing red reflection upon the furniture". Here the writer explains how the reflection of light from the flames affects the surroundings ("Splashing" their "Red reflection"). Both these sentences create a spooky and ghostly atmosphere because of the unique way that the writer describes the flames.

In the story "A Vendetta" there is a lot of bloodthirsty details since its main themes are death and murder (both related to the spilling of blood). Some examples of such details that I find particularly effective are; "There was blood everywhere" This portrays a gory scene full of blood (also helps to set the atmosphere since it is describing the scene)

The writer also describes the actions of the dog Frisky in great detail such as, "Burying her teeth deep into the straw and tore out bits of sausage." This

sentence expresses the dog's anger well and it creates a scene of frantic chaos.

Near the end of the story the writer portrays an extremely gory scene through one sentence, " Frisky wrenched at his throat tearing it to ribbons." A strong image of death is portrayed in this sentence. The words, " Wrenched" and, " Tearing" give this scene its gore and so increase the impact on the reader or listener. It is also interesting to note that the phrase, " Tearing it to ribbons" is repeated throughout the story further increasing its impact.

There are no obvious bloodthirsty details in " The Red Room" since the story is based on the supernatural, concentrating on fear and ghostly events rather than blood and gore.

Since both stories are from the nineteenth century their vocabulary would be quite similar in the sense that it would be traditional and old fashioned. Examples of such vocabulary in the story " A Vendetta" are as follows; " Strait" This word is traditional for a lake or other body of water. It is effective in that the writer has chosen an uncommon word to describe something that is commonly known.

" Vowed" would probably be replaced by " Swore" in the sentence, " She vowed vengeance". The word " Vowed" in my opinion is more effective than the word " Swore" since it sounds more sinister. " Gangsters" would replace the traditional word, " Bandits".

Some traditional words from "The Red Room" are as follows; Every time the writer speaks, after the speech marks would be something along the lines of "Said I" rather than "I said". This is an old style to write in (inverting the verb and pronoun).

Also the word "Custodians" is seldom used in modern day English. It is the traditional equivalent of "Caretaker".

"Senility" (meaning mentally or physically weak from old age) is also not very commonly used in modern English.

The word "Atavistic" is also quite traditional. It means something, such as characteristic or quality, which has not been shown for many years.

Finally the word "Haste" is also traditional and means "Hurry" or "Fast". This word is often used in this story.

All the words mentioned above are all effective because they make the story unique in that the reader or listener would be unlikely to come across such words in everyday life. Also they remind the reader or listener (in modern times) that the story is old and traditional.

There are many examples of the five senses being described in both stories, although "The Red Room" seems to have more evidence of this.

In "A Vendetta" there is a strong reference to sight and sound, "Gazing at it [the corpse]." And, "The howling dog". The sense of sound is described here and is effective since they give us an image of what is happening.

" Pressing her cold lips against the dead man's lips." This sentence portrays a cold atmosphere while describing the sense of touch.

" Her gaze always fixed on the coast." This describes the sense of sight, as the woman is looking at Sardinia (the refuge of her son's assassin).

" Smell of which sharpened her appetite." The word, " Sharpened," means, " Increased" as Frisky smells the meat.

In " The Red Room" there are many examples of the five senses. " The old woman sat staring hard into the fire." The words, " Staring hard," describe exactly what the woman is doing effectively.

Also the writer says, " I heard the sound of a stick and a shambling shop on the flags in the passage outside." This sentence is effective because of the vocabulary that the writer uses, such as, " Shambling" meaning unsteady.

" I caught a momentary glimpse." Here also vocabulary is effectively used. Saying, " Momentary glimpse." has a greater impact than saying, " Quickly saw."

I have enjoyed reading both stories although I found " A Vendetta" more appealing because of the more vivid bloodthirsty detail. Also I like how the widow had achieved vengeance using the dog Frisky since it is unusual and quite unique. I particularly liked the phrase, " Frisky wrenched at his throat." Because it is very vivid and bloodthirsty.

"The Red Room" was also enjoyable but this enjoyment was dampened by the complex traditional words and style, which made it hard to understand at some parts.