

Both arthur conan  
doyle and roald dahl  
cover the issues of  
crime and  
punishment e...



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Crime and Punishment being the common factor, the two stories we studied were ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ by Arthur Conan Doyle and ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ by Roald Dahl. Arthur Conan Doyle is famous for his stories featuring the fictitious detective ‘Sherlock Holmes’ of which ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ is one. Roald Dahl is more commonly known for his excellent children’s books like ‘James and the Giant Peach’ and ‘The Witches’, some of which have been made into films, he also wrote adult books and films like ‘The Gremlins’ and ‘Tales of the Unexpected’ which ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ featured in.

In ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ Mary Maloney, a housewife, is at home waiting for her husband, Patrick Maloney, a local police officer, to come home. On arriving home in an unusually bad mood, he pours himself an extra whisky, as well as the one he usually has when he arrives home, -‘the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whisky in it’. Mary Maloney offers to make him something to eat when she stands up he tells her to sit back down and informs her that he has something to tell her.

We are never informed of what the news is but we can only assume from their actions before and after the news that it was shocking and bad - ‘He had become absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down so that the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow. ... ” This is going to be a bit of a shock to you, I’m afraid” ‘After being told the news Mary Maloney’s reaction was primarily to deny that it had even happened - ‘her first instinct was not to believe any of it, to reject it all.

It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn't even spoken' She then continues to go and get something for dinner out of the freezer. She got a leg of lamb. When he once again tells her that he does not want anything to eat, she, on impulse, hits him over the head with it and kills him. This is shocking and unexpected. The story carries on explaining how she feeds the evidence to the detectives and the alibi she uses. The story finishes with her laughing unnervingly.

The storyline of ' The Adventure of the Speckled Band' is very different it starts with Helen Stoner going to the residence of Sherlock Holmes a great, and well known detective of his time. She explains that she is the stepdaughter of Dr Grimesby Roylott, the last survivor of one of the oldest Saxon families in England, but the wealth and prosperity of the family had over the years collapsed due to four successive heirs being " of a dissolute and wasteful disposition". Their mother had married him while in India, but shortly after returning to England, she died in an unfortunate railway accident.

Dr Grimesby Roylott was an eccentric character; he kept a baboon and a cheetah as pets on his land surrounding the manor house. During the nights preceding the late Miss Julia stoners wedding, she had heard a low whistle in the middle of the night and had spoken to her sister, Helen, about it. In the last of these nights Helen was awoke by her sisters screams, she ran to her sisters room, and saw her standing in the doorway, she then collapsed into Helen stoner arms and died, but not before whispering " It was the speckled band".

It become apparent, when Sherlock Holmes reveals it et the end of the story, that Dr Roylott had introduced a deadly Indian snake via a ventilator between Dr Roylott's room and the room that miss stoner was now sleeping in, and that Julia stoner had died. Dr Grimesby would then call back the snake by whistling and reward it with milk. Sherlock Holmes hid, with Dr Watson, in the room of Helen stoner one night. When he heard the hiss of the snake he hit it with a stick, sending it back to Dr Grimesby, who surprised by the snakes sudden return was bitten and died almost instantly.

In ' The Adventure of the Speckled Band' Julia and Helen Stoner are the victims. They are stereotypical vulnerable women who have already been mistreated -“ for answer Holmes pushed back the frill of the black lace which fringed the hand that lay upon our visitors' knee. Five little spots, the marks of four fingers and a thumb, were printed upon the white wrist”. To the audience reading ' The Adventure of the Speckled Band' the stoner sisters would be believable and realistic victims.

Dr Roylott is of a large strong build and together with a short temper, he is a stereotypical villain we know this because we are told, “ he is a man of immense strength and absolutely uncontrollable anger. ” We are also told, “ In a fit of anger, however, caused by some robberies which had been perpetrated in the house, he beat his native butler to death and narrowly escaped a capital sentence”. This made the story more realistic to the Victorian audience who may not have expected him to be the murderer, but it would not come as an unbelievable shock.

The detective, Sherlock Holmes, is one of great stature in the community and is renowned for his excellent skills of investigation and elimination. He is very thorough and remains sceptical of all evidence he collects and uses.

This is primarily shown when he discovers the means of transportation that Miss Stoner used to travel to his home " I observe the second half of a return ticket in the palm of your left glove... and yet you had a good drive in a dog cart, along heavy roads , before you reached the station" ... " the left arm of your jacket is spattered with mud in no less than seven places.

There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way and then only when you sit on the left-hand side of the driver". When Sherlock Holmes enters the room of Dr Grimesby room near the end and sees the snake, he instantly knows what it is and where it is from, " the squat diamond-shaped head and puffed neck of a loathsome serpent. ' It is a swamp adder! ' cried Homes; ' the deadliest snake in India. He has died within ten seconds of being bitten. ' The general feel about Sherlock Holmes is that if there was a clue, or the villain had made an error in covering up after him or herself, Holmes would find it.

This was reassuring to the Victorian people who wanted the feeling of security and safety and that justice will prevail. Whereas, in ' Lamb to the Slaughter' sympathy is built up for the murderer and we are looking at the situation from Mary's view. Mary is an average woman for that time, a homemaker and housewife. She appears to be a stereotypical woman at first, but then as the story progresses, we realise that she is, in fact, a murderer. Roald Dahl uses the character of Mary Maloney to challenge the common stereotypical view of women.

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To the audience at the time that it was written ‘ Lamb to the Slaughter’ would have seemed surprising and almost unbelievable. The sympathy that we feel for Mary starts when, after being told that she actually enjoys her husband and being in the presence of him ” she loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel – almost as a sunbather feels the sun – that warm male glow that came out of him to her when they were alone”, she offers to get him something to eat and get his slippers.

Her eagerness to please him “ I’ll get it! she cried, jumping up” is only met with short and negative responses from Patrick “ Sit Down,”, “ No. ” “ I don’t want it.”. At this point in the story, before the murder has taken place, we feel sympathetic towards Mary Maloney, and then even more so after Patrick has told her the ‘ news’. Mary Maloney is actually a very clever person which is shown by her actions directly after the murder. The victim in ‘ Lamb to the Slaughter’ is Patrick Maloney. When Patrick comes home, he is in an unexpected bad mood and is very short and nasty with Mary, we can only assume that this is unusual behaviour and he is usually pleasant.

We can tell that he is tense and that that day is like no other because when he gets himself an extra drink there a couple of references to the unusual strength “ she noticed the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whisky in it... she watched him as he began to sip the dark yellow drink, and she could see little oily swirls in the liquid because it was so strong”. Because Patrick is a police officer, he is seen as the one least likely, if any one, to get murdered because for a police officer to get murdered or to be the subject of any vicious crime was an extremely unlikely event.

Police officers were thought of, like Sherlock Holmes, to be able to spot the smallest, however unlikely, but plausible way of murder. They were also well respected in the community. Jack Newman is Roald Dahl's way of subverting this view. Jack Newman, the detective in this story, when he is at the Maloney's house accepts a drink from Mary Maloney, when Sherlock Holmes would have most definitely refused. He also concludes that a " heavy blunt instrument, almost certainly a large piece of metal", must have caused the blow to the head.

He does, however, eat the evidence and weapon of murder. Sherlock Holmes on the other hand, if he had been faced with this exact same case, would have thought of every possibility, including the use of something frozen. The settings in both stories are vital. Each story is particular to the place and time it is set. For example Mary and Patrick would not live in a two hundred year old house, outside the centre of a village in Victorian England, and nor would Helen stoner and Dr Grimesby Roylott live in a small house with a gravel drive. We do not know much about where the Maloney's live.

All we know is that they live close, within walking distance, to a greengrocers. We are told very little about their house, the most description lies in the first paragraph. " The room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight - hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whisky. Fresh Ice cubes in the Thermos bucket. " Due to the anonymity of the location where Patrick Maloney was murdered, it makes you think that it could be anywhere, anyone, even someone you know or somewhere you know, or live.

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On the other hand, ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ includes many references to and descriptions of the setting. Arthur Conan Doyle uses many adjectives to describe the surroundings of Sherlock Holmes. Arthur Conan Doyle gives the most description when describing the manor house, which is also very stereotypical of what the audience would expect Dr Roylott’s house to look like. Arthur Conan Doyle uses similes to describe the house “the building was of grey, lichen-blotted stone, with a high central portion and two curving wings, like the claws of a crab.

The selection of a crab and its claws as opposed to, maybe, a bird with open wings, suggests that Conan Doyle may have chosen this particular comparison to create a subtle feeling of wariness, like one may behave around a crab. In both stories, the murderers have very different motives, if any in the case of Mary Maloney. Dr Grimesby Roylott kills for money, which is a common motive in fictitious and actual murders. When either sister had married, they would have been entitled to a certain amount of income.

He had planned the murders very carefully, carried one out successfully, and had previously killed while in India. Unlike Mary Maloney, who killed on impulse without any specific motive but to take out her anger, while at the same time hurting him how he, we can only assume, hurt her, not physically but emotionally. The end result in ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’, like in many books in the Sherlock Holmes series, is that the culprit is brought to justice. In this case, Sherlock Holmes brought Dr Grimesby to justice.

Although the public and the police were not aware of Dr Grimesby's death being justified, as is shown in the statement " the doctor met his fate while indiscreetly playing with a dangerous pet" and the true story behind his and Julia Stoners death, justice did prevail. The reasoning Holmes gives for not telling the police the true facts of the case is that he was indirectly responsible for Dr Roylott's death " In this way I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott's death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh heavily upon my conscience".

In the end of ' Lamb to the Slaughter', the police do not catch Mary Maloney and do not even know it is her. Right at the very end, she laughs rather unnervingly. We, as the reader are not sure whether she is laughing at the irony, when the detective, while eating the evidence, says " Probably right under our very noses" referring to the weapon, or because she had got away with it. The main theme covered in both stories is Crime and Punishment. In 'The Adventure of the Speckled Band' there is the typical Murder Mystery theme, which is not so much evident in ' Lamb to the Slaughter' because it is more an element of surprise than mystery.

When both stories were written, capital punishment was still being used; we know this because Mary Maloney is not sure on the protocol when the murderer is with child " She knew quite well what the penalty would be. That was fine. It made no difference to her. In, fact it would be a relief. On the other hand, what about, the child? What were the laws on murderers with unborn children? Did they kill them both? " In ' Lamb to the Slaughter' the murderer goes unpunished, the punishment is that of Patrick Maloney and is delivered by the criminal, his wife.

The crime committed in both stories is the same, murder, but the way in which it is carried out is very different and the way we feel towards the murderer and the murdered is also very different. The Victorian audience would have been happy with the ending of ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’, because Dr Roylott is ‘punished’. As would the audience of ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ be happy with the ending, even though Mary Maloney is not caught or brought to justice, because we sympathise with Mary and she was willing to face the punishment, had she not been pregnant.

The language used in ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ is Standard English. It is written in the third person, narrated by Dr Watson, Sherlock Holmes’ partner. Arthur Conan Doyle has used the active voice to create more emphasis, particularly on what Sherlock Holmes says “‘Farintosh,’ said he”. When reading ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ I noticed the use of words and phrases, which, over the centuries, have changed in use or meaning “The ejaculation had been draw from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man had framed himself in the aperture. .

The language in ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ is more modern and contemporary. Roald Dahl, unlike Arthur Conan Doyle, uses an omniscient narrator that is someone who is not related to the story and has a ‘god’ like view, meaning things can be told which could not be known by a third person narrator or some actually there, things like what some one is thinking Or, maybe, how something tastes to someone – “when she walked across the room she couldn’t feel her feet touching the floor”.

Although the narrator knows everything about what is going on, we are not told what the shocking news is that he actually tells her, we also are only told how Mary feels not how Patrick feels or thinks, and this contributes to building up sympathy for her. There are many differences in relation to structure between the two stories. In ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’, there is a long introduction and progressive build up of importance in the story. ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ was set in Victorian England.

We can tell this from the subtle clues given in the story, for example, dogcarts were still in use. Arthur Conan Doyle cleverly put in a reference from actual current affairs at that time. The mention of Palmer and Pritchard, two doctors who murdered some patients by use of poison, is relative to the story line of ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ because Dr Grimesby Roylott is a doctor and uses poison, in the form of a venomous snake, to kill his step-daughters, this also makes the audience think that the story is more factual than fictitious.

In ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ Roald Dahl uses anonymity to help the reader believe that it could be a true story and that it could take place anywhere, even locally. The date that the story is set is around the 1940’s, before capital punishment had stopped, but after the invention of the thermos bucket. Which compared to ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ is quite modern. In conclusion when comparing ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ by Roald Dahl and ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ by Arthur Conan Doyle, it is easy to find many differences and similarities.

Overall, the two stories are more different than alike, mainly because the stories were written in different centuries, for different audiences, by different authors. The moral and overall message of ‘The Adventure of the Speckled Band’ was summed up by a comment that Sherlock Holmes said to Dr Watson – “Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another”. Crime and Punishment is a common theme in fictional books, especially murder mysteries. In the comparison of these two stories, we can see the changes over the years that Crime and punishment has gone through.