

The signalman by charles dickens the speckled band



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The short story today is now accepted as a genre in its own right; short stories are now in an equal place along with poetry, plays and novels. Before the nineteenth century, short stories were very unpopular and seemed very poor in comparison to the novel. Despite being around for many hundreds of years, short stories only became known and more popular in the 1800s. The increase in popularity in the nineteenth century was due to changes in cultural, political and social lives.

The nineteenth century was an extremely quick and dramatic change in lifestyle for the people in Northern Europe. Before the industrial revolution people usually worked themselves on the land, these were known as the 'peasants'. At that time there were some trades around the most common were blacksmiths, wheelwright and carpenters. The working conditions were terrible there wages were at minimum and they worked extremely long and difficult hours. Technological advances changed everything, the invention of the internal combustion engine made lots more work for everyone. Factories were being opened everywhere providing jobs for more and more people.

The rural population found themselves moving into the cities to find work. This meant factory owners paid their employees very little and expected them to work long, tiring hours. Unsuitable working conditions lead to people demanding better conditions. Working conditions improved as well as health care.

As time went by factory schools began being built and some children were allowed to be educated basic literacy and numeracy. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the importance of reading was perceived only in terms of

the moral education. By the mid 1800's, reading became a lot more valued and helped individuals learn for themselves. After the industrial revolution printing became easily accessible, newspapers and magazines were then in demand because people could read them. Short stories then became present in magazines and newspapers.

This was great news for authors, a good way to earn money and build up audiences. The attitude to reading soon changed, it became a social event large groups of people would get together and read. In this essay I will talk about 3 short stories. The Signalman written by Charles Dickens, The Speckled Band written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and The Red Room written by H G Wells. A kind, friendly man was just taking a walk around the countryside when he spots a man, the signalman standing by the railway line, down the steep hill just prior to the railway tunnel. The man waves to the signalman in a friendly, sociable manner hoping that he will be thankful of his company being in the secluded area of where he worked.

At first the signalman seems not to acknowledge the man but then shows signs of suspicion and discomfort. The man goes right down the railway banking unto where the signalman is stood and is then welcomed into the signal box for a chat and cup of tea by the hot fire. Whilst chatting to the signalman the man realises that he is just a lonely, poor man with a very repetitive lifestyle. They seem to bond well and the signalman feels as though he trusts the man and announces his troubles and anxiety to him The man then visited twice after and on both occasions something terribly bad occurred.

They had witnessed a train crash and a young bride falling out of a train carriage travelling at a high speed. This story is written in chronological order and is a short story where lots of tension is created by the author; it is a mysterious story and has a clear beginning, middle and ending. The story is set in a dark setting, down by the railway line. The signal box is situated just before a dark tunnel and shows little light, the area is isolated except for the signalman and the continuous trains day after day which create extremely loud noises in comparison to the peaceful area. The setting sets the mood for the unusual events which the signalman experienced.

Throughout the story there is lots of emphasis brought to the area and how quiet and secluded area, this builds the reader up for the mysterious events about to occur. During the story the Signalman speaks of a railway worker who had the job of attending to the signals. Throughout the works he hears men shouting to him 'halloa! below there!' and trying to warn him away from something. Lots of mystery is created here. The story begins with the narrator shouting down towards the signalman ' halloa! Below there!' followed by the signalman's peculiar response.

When reading the story we cannot understand why his response is so unusual. He explains his unease by expressing his sightings. After reading this, the suspicion of the Signalman is some supernatural creature, perhaps a ghost of some kind. The setting of the story, however, doubts this, because the story is set in a signal box by the railway this is unlikely and ghostly creatures are more likely to be found in castles or mysterious houses.

I enjoyed reading this story; however, I found it quite difficult to understand and confusing some aspects. The Speckled band is about a murder which is haunting someone else and affecting their life. It is a mystery story involving inspectors to solve the mystery. Helen, the girl who is being haunted by the murder of her sister is eager to find out how her sister died. She died just before her wedding. Helen is due to get married soon too and she is becoming worried that the same will happen to her.

To solve the mystery of Julia's death, Helen gets 2 inspectors to search and study into the mystery. The inspectors involved are Holmes and Watson. They find out that Julia died from a bite from a snake which killed her in a matter of seconds. The story is set in 3 different places. The first place which we see is Stoke Moran situated in Surrey.

This is where the death of Julia occurred. The house is large and not a calm relaxing place to be. The house in London of Watson and Holmes is very different from this. The Speckled Band is written non-chronologically.

It starts with Watson speaking about the story. He speaks about the seventy-odd cases he'd had over the past 8 years. We then go back to the Roylottes case at Stoke Moran. The story is told in the past when Helen arrives. He tells the story in present form but refer back to the past when it happened. The story then goes back into the present when they all go to Stoke Moran for detective work.

The story is told by the first person narrator. The story is mainly told by Watson he tells the story about Helen and Julia Stoner, so does Helen. She talks about what happened to her and her sister, this is an embedded <https://assignbuster.com/the-signalman-by-charles-dickens-the-speckled-band/>

narrator. It is told by the omniscient someone who knows everything that happened. The story is told through the use of multi-perspectives.

It starts off with Watson telling it with his opinions, and then is moved onto Helen expressing her opinions. I found this story very difficult to understand and didn't think it was written as well as it could have been. More tension and suspension should have been used. The Red Room is a story set around a room which is supposedly haunted. There are myths and legends about events which have happened in the red room. Due to all these stories no-one has the courage to enter the room alone.

However, there is one man who is keen to enter, he is eager to find out what is in there. Throughout the story there are lots of minor characters. They are usually older men who sit around a roaring fire chatting amongst themselves. None of these minor characters are acknowledged by names. This is strange because no names are said.

The man who is keen to enter the red room is part of the group of men. Before entering the room he was a sceptic but when he returns he is a believer of ghosts. The story throughout is just set in one place, in a large castle. I think that a castle is a good place to set the story because castles are big and often known to be quite spooky.

Therefore, the story fits well because the story itself is meant to give an eerie sensation. The narrator in the story is the man who has courage to enter the room. As things happen we find out the same time as the characters. The story is told by the first person narrator.

The story is set at Lorraine castle, in a red room in a haunted house. The story is written chronologically and has a clear beginning, middle and end. I thought that this story was very well written; the description throughout was very good and caused tension and suspension in the correct places. Out of these three stories my favourite was The Signalman; it gripped my attention the most out of the three and gave a real clear description of what was happening.

I thought that it was a very strange story which in some cases would be hard to follow but after taking lots of things into perspective it becomes apparent of what's happening.