

# The red room – review essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The red room was written by HG Wells pre 20th century. The story is about a room that is haunted by your own fear. Throughout the story the writer builds up suspense and tension, leaving the reader feeling tired after reading.

The title “ The Red Room” attracts the reader’s attention because we don’t know what the red room is, this immediately makes the reader want to find out more about it, it could mean anything, this builds up tension because red is sometimes associated with danger. The title is very mysterious and forces the reader to read on.

The story starts in first person the writer has done this so that the reader can empathise with the man, at the times when the writer is building up tension, the reader can feel more involved with the story

‘ I can assure you’ said I that it will take a very tangible ghost to frighten me’ from this first line, the reader knows two pieces of information. Firstly that this story involves a ghost, and secondly that the character is a little bit cocky and arrogant, making the reader assume that is inevitable that he will be the one meeting with the ghost. This increases the tension and stops the reader from putting the book down. Also it gets straight to the point.

We meet the second character, the reader doesn’t get told any names just that it is a man with a withered arm, this builds tension because we don’t know who this man is, it sets the scene because we immediately presume that the man is old. He tells the man that ‘ it is his own choosing,’ he doesn’t want anything to do with what this man wants to do, and he makes that clear, The old man is trying to warn the young man but at the same time he

is leaving the 'decision' to him. It is as if the old man is ridding himself of the responsibility for the young man. This makes the reader think and anticipation builds up.

The third character is introduced, an old woman. She warns the man that he has 'never seen the likes of this house.' The writer says this so that reader immediately thinks that the house must be haunted, and that a ghost will visit the young arrogant man, this builds anticipation, and the reader thinks they can predict what will happen next.

The repetition of 'it's your own choosing' shows the reader that the man is trying to protect himself from whatever lies in the red room, but it doesn't work if anything it just makes him even more curious, and the writer makes the reader more anxious of what could be so terrible about the red room.

In the last paragraph of the first page, the third character is introduced, the language used and the way in which he is described is different. 'more bent', 'more wrinkled', 'more aged.' This man is worse than the other two characters because the writer describes him a lot more, all we know about the first character is that he has a withered arm. The depth in which he is described builds tension because the second old man is by far the worst, he is the total opposite to the young man, this builds drama and the drama builds tension.

In the second page the writer builds tension by using powerful descriptions, he uses the term 'monstrous shadow,' this sets the scene, and makes the reader think that the whole house is mysterious, this builds further curiosity

of what the reader is going to find in the red room. The reader thinks that it is surely going to be a ghost.

The man thinks that ‘ human qualities seem to drop from old people insensibly day by day.’ The writer adds this to make the reader think that there is something odd between the old people; maybe they have something to do with the red room? Maybe they are not human? The tension is building with the reader because they are thinking of other possible things that could be odd about the red room

The old man is very shocked that he wants to go and see the red room he ‘ jerked his head back so suddenly,’ the man is surprised that he wants to visit the room this adds to its mystery, and what could be so bad about it building up tension as the reader reads on.

When the woman says ‘ this night of all nights!’ the reader is even more curious and this builds up the suspense because the reader wants to read on and find out what is so special about that night and why it is a bad idea to go tonight. They do not want to be involved and they tell him to ‘ go alone,’ they are terrified of that room and don’t want to go with him or help on his journey to the red room. He isn’t bothered by their warning, this makes the reader feel that the arrogant man is going to be proved wrong and that he is going to encounter something scary, and get what he deserves, and that is to be taught a lesson and show him that he shouldn’t look for danger.

The old man is still shocked by the fact that he wants to go to the red room because he would never do it, he thinks he is imagining it because he needs to know if he is ‘ really going’ he cannot accept that he wants to find out for

himself, this shows the reader that the man is not bluffing or lying about what is in the red room.

The writer uses repetition when he says again ‘ this night of all nights?’ the repetition builds suspense and tension and strikes the question again in the readers mind about what is so special about tonight?

The story is set in a castle which is perfect for the theme, the castle is spooky and mysterious, it gives the reader this feel without describing the castle, because the reader thinks that this is what castles are like that they are spooky and haunted, the writer chose a castle because they are large the part of the castle where the red room is, is out of bounds, it wouldn’t have the same affect if the story was set in a house.

The last paragraph on page three is very descriptive, it is a long paragraph with, few sentences, longer sentences build up tension because they make the reader read it faster, picking up pace and suspense as you read. The young man is losing a slight touch of his confidence already by describing things ad ‘ ghostly,’ if he doesn’t believe in ghosts, which he stated at the beginning, then he wouldn’t use this word.

The passage is underground ‘ subterranean’ this makes the reader picture a dark damp chilly passage, this one word sets the scene for the atmosphere, you know it must be dark because you cant have any natural light underground, and the only source of light they would have is a candle.

Throughout page four he is very descriptive and sets the scene very well, he describes his every move and his surroundings in depth. He begins to see

things, he thought he could see someone ‘crouching’; this builds up tension because the reader thinks that there is a ghost already. He stood ‘rigid’, this shows us how scared he is the writer puts this to prove to us that he is not as brave as he made out, he told us at the beginning it would take a tangible ghost to frighten him, but he is scared by something that is not even there.

He is getting a little scared because he had a ‘sudden twinge’ of apprehension, he is not the same man as he was at the beginning because he opened the door ‘hastily’ but the man he made himself out to be would have opened the door immediately without hesitation. Because it is in first person the reader empathises and this builds up apprehension of what is behind the door leading to the red room.

The ‘pallid’ silence that the writer describes is almost too quiet and the reader is expecting something to happen, when everything goes quiet that is when you are supposed to be the most scared.

Throughout page five the tension is slowly rising, the darkness is ‘germinating’ around the room, Wells used this word because it is very descriptive, it gives the idea of the darkness growing, and as the darkness grows the suspense rises. He describes the opposite end of the room as an ‘ocean of mystery’, this is because he cannot see it, this shows the idea that the things that you cannot see are worse than what you can.

He searches the room fully, this is reassuring the reader that there is nothing in the room, the writer is building up the tension then letting you slowly release it by making you believe that there is nothing ‘lurking’ under the ‘bed’.

The writer says that there is a ‘ perfect stillness’, nothing is happening but this alone builds up suspense because, you expect something to happen, this builds up anticipation as the reader waits for the ‘ ghost’ to appear.

‘ The shadow in the alcove at the end in particular had that indefinable quality of a presence, that odd suggestion of a lurking, living thing, that comes so easily in silence and solitude’. This shows us how darkness is far more frightening than being able to see and knowing what is there. Tension is built by how the young man expresses his feelings. To conquer his fear of the unknown the man places a candle in an alcove in the corner of the room.

“ At last, to reassure myself, I walked with a candle into it, and satisfied myself that there was nothing tangible there. I stood that candle upon the floor of the alcove, and left it in that position.” Here he is referring to the opening line about having to find a very tangible ghost.

Tension mounts as he begins talking to himself, but after listening to the echoes, he gets more frightened than before. The tension increases now all the time. He is getting more nervous and he feels the need for more candles. He has to get some from the corridor and he lights them and places them around the room. His spirits lift but there is also tension created through his black humour. He may be watching what he describes as “ cheery and reassuring little streaming flames,” but he is getting nervous and he jokes about how he should warn any ghost about tripping over a candle on the floor.

Then it happens. The first candle goes out, casting a black shadow on the wall. The second candle goes out and the tension in the story is boosted, as

there is uncertainty about why the candle went out. Although the man does not feel any draft, he claims that it was a draft that blew it out. He tries to reassure himself by lying to himself although he has a deeper feeling that he may not be alone. He has to dismiss this from his mind otherwise he would become the victim of his own fears. As he goes over to re-light the candle, it goes out, then another and another. Then one is extinguished in front of him while he is looking at it.

“ Shadows seemed to take another step towards me”

The light symbolizes the truth. Without light, there is no truth. If the light goes out he has no way of finding out what is in the red room. The darkness creates the tension and fear. In light, we can see but when it is dark we cannot see and therefore tension and fear is everywhere. When the man says that the shadows take another step towards him, he is saying that fiction is closing in on him and as it does, he is being drawn away from the truth.

In the story, the man has a revolver. This symbolizes violence, which leads to conflict, and conflict builds tension. Fire symbolizes warmth and wards off evil. The old people with disabilities symbolize the fear inside him and how he would not like to end his life. However, at the end, he does become like them, talking in their style about what had happened.

Panic comes as the room gets darker with him racing around trying to keep up with the candles as they go out. Approaching the end, the tension increased, as the sentences become shorter. Clumsily he knocks his thigh against the table. From here on he loses control. He loses his quest for the



truth as he tries to light the fire with the last candle. He runs into something and knocks himself out.

Then there is a gap in time; and the tension starts to decrease slowly. He wakes up the next morning after being rescued at dawn by the old people. He personifies fear with the red room. He has had a fight with his fear and in the end his fear wins. I think the red room symbolizes fear. Nothing is actually in the room except what you believe is there.