

Compare the  
openings of the  
signalman and the  
foghorn essay  
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“ The Foghorn” was written by Ray Bradbury in the 20thC and is a short story whereas Charles Dickens wrote “ The Signalman” in the 19thC. Although they were set in different times and written by different authors there are many similarities between the two stories. They both have a story within a story, first person narrator, the main characters are both men and McDunn and “ The Signalman” have huge responsibilities in such a way that if they don’t do their job properly it may cost someone their life.

Both man are also extremely proud of their jobs and want to do it to the best of their ability. In both stories something is destroyed and the two men are also being haunted with a secret and they both decide to share it with someone they trust. One of the greatest things that make these two stories so similar is the fact that both McDunn and “ The Signalman” are very lonely people and work in a very isolated place with few visitors.

The opening of “ The Signalman” gave the reader a sense that it was a “ solitary and dismal a place” this created the right kind of atmosphere for this particular story and gives the feeling of loneliness and isolation. Dickens expressed the feeling of unwelcoming in the “ barbarous, depressing and forbidding air”. His detail and description gives the reader a clear image on how gloomy and eerie the setting is with “ so little sunlight ” can suggest someone or something lurking or hiding in the darkness. This fits a supernatural story, as it is unwelcoming and isolated, suggesting anything could happen and know one would know about it.

“ The Signalman” spends “ many long lonely hours” down by the railway track. Not only is he a lonely man but very responsible and takes great pride

and care in his job. Dickens matches him well to the unfriendly environment that surrounds him, as "The Signalman" is very uneasy, and in a way seems afraid of something but unsure what it might be. He works in an oppressive environment that is "gloomier" and more "depressing" than can be imagined, in a way like a "dungeon".

Dickens uses a very descriptive and creative language with a wide range of vocabulary using words such as "oozier and wetter" this creates a great setting for the reader giving him/her a sense of supernatural presence. "Gloomier entrance to a black tunnel" could suggest to the reader that something is lurking in the darkness.

"The Foghorn" is set in "the cold water" surrounded by "lonely ships" whereas "The Signalman" is set by a railway line with very "little sunlight" but with these differences the fact remains that both Dickens and Bradbury are explaining the lives of two lonely men with a hidden secret.

Bradbury use of language is very effective and is used to capture the reader's attention and draw him/her into the story. He uses repetitive speech "Deep, deep down in the deepest depths" this works well as it makes Bradbury's writing technique more interesting. He describes McDunn and Johnny as "two birds in the grey sky" as if they are all alone and cut off from the rest of civilization. Bradbury builds up the sense of another world, something unknown, when he talks about "sunken lands, in the fairy kingdoms".

McDunn is a secretive and lonely man. Not only this but he is a good storyteller "one day many years ago". When he talks about the monster it <https://assignbuster.com/compare-the-openings-of-the-signalman-and-the-foghorn-essay-sample/>

seems as though he can relate to the creature and what it may be feeling “ waiting for someone who never comes home”. McDunn is set far from land and humans and the only thing he can understand is the monster, as he can share its pain.

I particularly enjoyed “ The Signalman” as I found it unpredictable. It gave me a huge sense of mystery and not only this but I sympathised greatly with “ The Signalman” as to me he seemed so isolated from the rest of the world. A job he once loved with great passion now made him question himself and his ability to do his job properly.