

The landlady essay sample

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The Landlady

In 'The Landlady', by Roald Dahl, the main character, Billy Weaver, fails to realise that something sinister is happening all the time around him. With Dahl's highly effective use of techniques such as characterisation and imagery, he gives the reader several clues that Billy is heading towards his own downfall, but does not realise this.

The short story is set in Bath where Billy goes to on a business trip. Once Billy arrives he immediately seeks accommodation and is told about the Bell and Dragon. On the way here Billy comes across a B&B at the corner of his eye and makes up his mind to stay here. Throughout the rest of the story, Roald Dahl uses effective techniques to illustrate that the landlady is up to something and that something sinister is going to happen to Billy.

We are introduced to the character of Billy Weaver and quickly see a young seventeen young man with inexperience in the world. Roald Dahl presents this through Billy's personality and reactions throughout the story; 'To be perfectly honest, he was a tiny bit frightened of them' Here we are introduced to the sense that something sinister is about to happen as we feel as though Billy will be drawn in and cannot help himself. When we read on, the author continues to describe Billy's innocence. As the story builds up towards the end, Dahl's words start to become more obvious and you suddenly realise that Billy is in danger. Dahl continues to use imagery to show the sense of Billy being drawn in by the sign of the B&B when he writes; 'Each word was like a large black eye staring at him through the glass' This imagery is effective as it personifies the sign making it seem alive with

danger, actively seeking a victim which young Billy will soon become. This is continued in the authors word choice, 'compelling, holding and forcing,' this list of incredibly violent verbs creates a sense of intimidation. As the reader we see that Billy is powerless and has been caught in a spell by the sinister signs and unfortunately fails to realise this. This creates a sense of mystery as though he has been forced to stay here.

As the story develops we are introduced to the character, the landlady. As whom we immediately consider as strange when we first meet her; 'He hadn't even taken his finger off the door bell when the door swung open' This tells us that the landlady must have been expecting someone and gives the feeling that she was almost lying in wait to entice and capture Billy. The author continues to paint a picture of edgy and unsettling character; 'But his dame was like a jack-in-the-box'

Imagery here is effective as it illustrates that Billy was given a fright by her jumpy and eccentric behaviour. The landlady tells Billy that he 'just right' and by telling us that the reader can see her words are ambiguous and she shows an ulterior motive.

Soon on in the story, when Billy is signing into the guest book, he spots something very strange; 'There were only two other entries above his on the page' This continues the sense of mystery as it is a guest house and the fact that there were only two other men staying here makes you wonder. When the landlady comes into the room with a tray of tea, Dahl writes; 'As though the tray were a pair of reins on a frisky horse' Imagery suggests to us that she is holding it up as though it was an object of importance and she has to

try and be in control. The sense of danger increases here as Dahl refers to The Landlady as an animal who is focused on its prey and is never going to let him out of her sight as she's in control.

Towards the end of the short story Roald Dahl continues to use effective word choice to create a sense of worry about the character of Billy. Dahl continues to show imagery in his words when he says; ' He could feel her eyes resting on his face, watching him over the rim of her teacup' This would have made Billy feel incredibly uncomfortable and show that Billy should realise now that something sinister is going to happen to him before it's too late. The tension is added yet again by the author when he writes; ' Billy sat down his cup slowly on the table and stared at his landlady' At this point in the story Billy suddenly realises that something sinister is about to happen to him but unfortunately for him, his realisation has come too late. When Billy does finally realise the strange behaviour of the landlady we, the readers, feel a sense of relief for Billy as he has finally spotted what we have seen throughout the story although unfortunately Billy has realised too late and he cannot prevent what is about to happen to him.

Roald Dahl wrote the story 'The Landlady' very cleverly as he gives the reader several clues that the landlady is an extremely strange character although he fails to make Billy Weaver aware of this. Throughout the story there is a sense of mystery but Billy thinks that everything is normal until the end when it's too late for him to be able to do anything. If Billy was able to pick up on all the mysterious things we were able to see throughout the story then perhaps he could have prevented what happened to him in the

end. Through descriptive imagery and powerful word choice, Roald Dahl was able to make the reader feel incredibly sympathetic for Billy Weaver and show that young and innocent men need to be aware and be able to stop anything sinister that may happen.