

'the red room' by hg
wells and 'farthing
house'



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

'The Red Room' by HG Wells and 'Farthing House' by Susan Hill explore themes of fear and the supernatural. 'The Red Room' was written in pre-twentieth Century, when there were no televisions, so books and newspapers were the most common forms of entertainment. 'The Red Room' involves a young, sceptical twenty-eight year old man who is staying in a large, old house where one of the bedrooms, called The Red Room, is reputed to be haunted. He is spending the night in 'The Red Room' to try and prove that the room is not haunted.

Being set in the nineteenth century, there are no electric lights, only candles, which add to the situation the young man is in. 'Farthing House' is written in the early eighties when women were more important than in the nineteenth century. The narrator of the story is a woman called Mrs Flowers just about to become a grandmother, who is writing to her pregnant daughter, telling her about an experience. Her experience started when she went to visit her aunt in a home for the elderly on a weekend stay.

She was given a bedroom called Cedar room, which was haunted, and she discovers the ghost's story. Years on, a newspaper article brings back memories and she decides to put pen to paper. It uses many more modern techniques, such as flashbacks and there are many links with pregnancy. The beginning of 'The Red Room' goes straight into a conversation, which gives us the impression that it is mid-way through a conversation, which makes us want to read on and find out more about what the characters are talking about.

The first line says, ' I can assure you' said I. This shows us that the story is written in the first person, which allows the reader to relate to the character, as they can put themselves in the storyteller's position more easily. We are told straight away that this is a ghost story, ' it will take a very tangible ghost to frighten me. ' This make us want to read on and find out more about the ghost which is an effective approach because it immediately catches the readers attention. In ' Farthing House', rather than going straight into a conversation, it starts with a description.

The first line tells us, I have never told you any of this before - I have never told anyone. ' This tells us straight away that the narrator is writing a personal letter to someone close to her, but it is not instantly obvious to what it is about. This approach tells us that it is a secret and makes us feel like an eavesdropper, listening into events. Like, ' The Red Room', it is written in the first person, so that it is easier for us to follow as we can emphasise the narrator. It is harder to follow than ' The Red Room' because we do not know what the story is about, or who it is addressed to.

However, I think it is just as effective because it leaves an element of mystery as it makes us want to read on and find out more. The narrator in ' The Red Room' is a young man who is very sure of himself. He is daring to go into a room which is reputed to be haunted to prove that there are no such things as ghosts. ' Eight-and-twenty years' said I, ' I have lived and never a ghost have I seen as yet' The old people are advising him against it but he won't take their advice. They are wiser than the young man and have many more experiences, ' There's a many things to see, when one's sill but eight-and-twenty.

The old people have lived longer, and at only twenty eight years old, the man still has a lot to see. The use of language here is different than what we would use today. Instead of 'eight-and-twenty', we would say 'twenty-eight'. The old people all have strange ailments, 'the man with the withered arm' and 'he supported himself by a single crutch' These features show that the characters are very weak and frail, but wise in the mind, the young man contrasts them, by being physically strong, but less knowledgeable. It uses very strong descriptions such as, his eyes were covered by a shade, and his lower lip, half averted, hung pale and pink from his decaying, yellow teeth. '

This enhances the character, making him seem more interesting and his strong physical features represent his strong mind. One of the aged men repeats, 'It is your own choosing' four times. This stresses to the reader that the character chose to go into the room, although he was warned not to. It shows the reader that he is foolish going into the Red Room, because we can tell by the way the old people are behaving, that there is something about the room that is supernatural. Farthing House' involves a woman writing to her pregnant daughter about a past incident that affected her. It begins on a November day, when the narrator was raking some leaves and burning them on a bonfire.

'It was a most beautiful day, clear and cold and blue and a few of them were swirling down as I raked and piled. ' This description uses very simple, effective words to set the scene. As the smoke from the fire drifted towards her, the smell brought back memories to her. 'Something that had been drifting on the edges of my consciousness blurred and insubstantial, came into focus, and in a rush, I remembered.

A week later, she spots an article in the newspaper which disturbs her further and causes her to put pen to paper and write to her pregnant daughter about the past occurrence. Unlike, 'The Red Room', it does not go straight into the plot. It is more complex and harder to follow as it is spread over a period of time and it is not apparent what the story is about. I think that this is an effective way to engage the audience as it leaves an element of mystery as to what is distressing the story teller so much and leaves us wondering what her experience was.

A key moment from the early part of 'The Red Room' is when the narrator has left the old people and walking down the corridor towards 'The Red Room'. The reader feels like they are walking down the corridor with the young man, so it is easy to identify with him. The elderly people have unnerved him slightly and even at the start he is trying to dissuade himself, 'But with an effort I sent such thoughts to the right-about.' The author sets the scene of the corridor, 'The long, draughty, subterranean passage was chilly and dusty, and my candle flared and made the shadows cower and quiver.'

This uses more complicated words to describe the surroundings than 'Farthing House' and makes it seem like no-one has been down the corridor for some time and readers do not know what to expect. It also uses personification to emphasise with the character and make it seem more dramatic. It also relates the darkness with fear. His first impressions were not as he expected, 'everything was in its place; the house might have been deserted on the yesterday instead of eighteen months ago.' It seems untouched which although the man is trying not to admit it is unnerving.

<https://assignbuster.com/the-red-room-by-hg-wells-and-farthing-house/>

Nowadays, instead of saying 'on the yesterday' we would simply say 'yesterday'. At this point he loses his nerve, 'gave me the distinct impression of someone crouching to waylay me'. He reached for his revolver which shows he is scared, but he discovers that is a Ganymede and Eagle. He has now reached the door of the Red Room. 'Here it was, thought I, that my predecessor was found, and the memory of that story gave me a sudden twinge of apprehension. ' This leads the audience to ask questions, as to what had happened to the predecessor and heightens the tension further.

It also shows us that the story teller is scared and what is behind the door is unpredictable. A key moment from early in 'Farthing House' is when Mrs Flowers has reached 'Farthing House' on a weekend visit to see her elderly aunt. Her first feelings of unease are as she stands on the entrance porch. 'I was overshadowed by a curious sadness. ' This is important as it is the first hint of a ghostly presence at Farthing House and it also makes the audience curious as to what was making the woman feel so uncomfortable.

She dismisses it as tiredness and suggests that she may have caught a chill. The only other thing I noticed was the faintest smell of hospital antiseptic. ' Here, it uses the sense of smell to set the context and to provide evidence for the edginess of the woman. Once she gets inside the home, the tension is released as the narrator immediately feels at home. She also uses the sense of smell to recount the house to let us know that it is a cosy place and to give us the sense of security. ' furniture polish, and fresh chrysanthemums and, somewhere in the background, a light, spicy smell of baking. '

It also uses the sense of sight to describe the surroundings, there were framed photographs on a sideboard, flowers in jugs and bowls, there was an old, fraying, tapestry-covered armchair on which a fat cat slept beside a fire. ' The author also uses the sense of hearing, ' It was quiet, too, there was no rattling of trolleys or buzzing of bells. ' She uses simple words to portray the homely feel to the house and to describe the sensations she feels, so it is easy to relate to her and know exactly what is going on. We are told that the guest room is being refurbished so the story teller will have to sleep in Cedar Room.

We know that this is no coincidence and that there has to be a purpose for this change. Unlike, in ' The Red Room', there is no tension and we feel completely at ease. In ' The Red Room', the tension is still building up. It is set over a short period of time, whereas ' Farthing House' has skipped from the present to the past. I think that at this point ' The Red Room' is more effective because it is more exciting and there is more tension, but the clarity of ' Farthing House' makes us anticipate what is to come.

Another key moment in ' The Red Room' is when the young man is inside the room. He is trying to put the ghost stories that he has heard about the room at the back of his mind. The author is exploring the link between the darkness and the mans fear. ' My candle was a little tongue of light in its vastness, that pierced the opposite end of the room, and left an ocean of mystery and suggestion beyond its island of light. ' This is an intricate description, using metaphors and personification which paints a clear picture in the readers mind.

The man thoroughly searches the part of the room that is lit by the candle to try and put his mind at rest, but the quietness was making him uneasy. As in 'Farthing House' it uses the sense of sound to help us picture what is happening, 'The echoing of the stir and crackling of the fire was no sort of comfort to me.' Here, H G Wells is connecting the quietness with fear. I can see that the man is getting more uncomfortable as he imagines a shadow as a 'lurking, living thing'. The narrator tries talking to himself to break the stillness in the room, but is again frightened by the unpleasant echoing.

As the tension builds up, the man is doing everything he can to try and distract himself from the position he is in and to try and avoid admitting that he is frightened because he is determined to prove that there is no ghost. I think that another key moment in 'Farthing House' is the second night of Mrs Flowers stay at 'Farthing House'. On the first night of her stay, she had a dream, about the night her daughter was born at St Mary's. This is a significant detail, as it tells us that the narrator is writing to her daughter and it is also another link with pregnancy, which hints at the final outcome of the story.

When she woke up she says, 'I had the absolutely clear sense that someone else had been in my room'. This leaves the reader with no doubt that there is a ghost. The second night of her visit, she woke again, to discover 'a desperate, woman's sobbing.' As she sat up, Mrs Flowers sees the ghost. 'The room felt horribly cold. I remember being conscious of the iciness on my hands and face.' Coldness is a typical sign of a ghost's presence in ghost stories. The tension is at its peak. She confirms to readers that she is not dreaming and clearly describes the ghost.

She was young, with a flowing embroidered night-gown, high necked and long sleeved. ' This tells readers that the ghost is from the past. ' She held out her arms as if begging someone to give her something. And that terrible melancholy came over me again, I felt inconsolably hopeless and sad. ' This gives us another clue about the ghosts story. The tension is starting to be released as we know that the ghost is not dangerous and has a sorrowful story, which gives us an eagerness to find out more.

The woman follows the ghost onto the landing, and again the tension is built up, but the ghost had disappeared. ' The flickering light had faded and the landing was in darkness'. ' I was too frightened to go any further. ' Like in ' The Red Room' it connects the darkness with fear. I think this is a very effective way to introduce the ghost into the story because it builds the tension up to a peak then in the following passage there is a release of tension. This means I can gather my thoughts about the ghost and eagerly anticipate finding out more about the ghost.

In, ' The Red Room', the young man thinks that by lighting candles and reducing the darkness that it will reassure him and make him less frightened. He lights seventeen candles so that every inch of the room is covered by direct light. He is starting to get less frightened. ' There was something very cheery and reassuring in these streaming flames. ' But then, an unnatural happening occurs, ' It was after midnight that the candle in the alcove suddenly went out, I did not see the candle go out; I simply turned and saw that the darkness was there. '

This is the first time there has been a ghostly presence. The young man tries brushing it aside and speaks out loud, finding excuses for what has happened. This makes us feel sorry for the man, as another two candles go out. Again he makes an excuse, ' Odd! Did I do that myself in a flash of absentmindedness? ' The man is getting hysterical, ' This won't do! ' said I, and the first one and then another candle on the mantleshelf followed' Here we are kept in anticipation and are able to follow his thoughts throughout and understand his perception of the situation. ' These candles are wanted. '

This attempt at humour is an appeal for sympathy for the young man, who is in a bad state of mind. As the candles continue to go out, the tension is built up further and the man now admits how scared he was. ' I was now almost frantic, with the horror of the coming darkness. ' Again, the approaching darkness represents fear. The author also uses short phrases, that when read following punctuation should highlight the franticness and the technique is used to increase tension and anticipation.

Finally, the man seems to have reached the end of his tether and it seems that he is losing his mind, I have a vague memory of battering myself thus, to and fro, in the darkness, of a cramped struggle, and of my own wild crying as I darted to and fro, of a heavy blow upon my forehead, a horrible sensation of falling that lasted an age, of my last frantic effort to keep my footing, and then I remember no more. ' This is the highest point of tension and appeals once more to the reader for sympathy. I think that this is a very effective way to end the action, as it leaves questions unanswered and I want to read on and find out if the man is alright and discover what the ghost was.

In 'Farthing House', an essential moment is when the story is unravelled.

Mrs Flowers was looking around the local graveyard, 'They were all the graves of babies, newborn or a few days old, and dating from the early years of the century.' This is yet another link with pregnancy, which is vital for the outcome of the story. The tension is being built up as the ending is about to be revealed through a conversation with the vicar, Gerald Manberry. 'I see you have been looking at the poor little Farthing House graves.' 'Farthing house?' 'Yes, just down the lane.'

It was a home for women and their illegitimate babies from the turn of the century until the last war. 'Now, the readers know that the ghost was an unmarried mother who was treated badly because she became pregnant without being married. I think the circumstances in which the outcome was revealed was predictable and less exciting than in 'The Red Room.' 'I suppose a greater number of babies died around the time of birth then, especially in those circumstances. And the mothers too, I fear.' This makes us feel very sympathetic towards the ghost and appeals especially to women readers as we can relate more easily to the sadness of the ghost.

The tension is dropped as we feel sorry for the ghost and know that she can do no harm. I think that 'The Red Room' was more effective because it builds up the tension to a very high peak and then it is released, leaving questions unanswered. Personally, I find the outcome in 'Farthing House' slightly dull as there is no tension or anticipation and it leaves nothing to the imagination. At the ending of 'The Red Room', the man awakes in daylight to find himself being nursed by the old people. 'Where am I?' I asked; 'I seem to remember you, and yet I cannot remember who you are.'

<https://assignbuster.com/the-red-room-by-hg-wells-and-farthing-house/>

This contradiction makes readers feel sorry for the man who has been proven wrong, yet the old people are in awe of him because he has dared to do something that they had not done in the whole of their lives. The elderly people all suggest the identity of the ghost, but the man, wisened from his experience in the Red Room tells them. 'The worst of all things that haunt poor mortal man,' said I; 'and that is, in all its nakedness - Fear!' The author is trying to hold the readers attention with the outcome of 'fear'. This is something that everyone has experienced and can relate with which makes it convincing.

I don't think that it fits in with the story as the story involves unexplained, supernatural happenings and the ending leaves this unexplained. In some ways this is a good thing as it leaves something for the reader to think about but in my opinion this is a let down as there is no real ghost that haunts the room and I was expecting something bigger. The ending of 'Farthing House' skips back to the present where Mrs Flowers is writing about what became of Farthing House and tells of how when she was reading the newspaper, she saw an article which left her greatly troubled her. A young woman stole a baby, from its pram outside a shop.

The child had only been left for a moment or two but apparently she had been following and keeping watch waiting to take it. 'Immediately, the readers can work it out. ' Her defence was that she had stolen the child when she was out of her right mind after the death of her own baby not long before. The child was two days old. Her address was given as Farthing House Close, Little Dornford. ' Here, the ends are tied in a neat knot for us and leaves nothing to the imagination.

The final twist is very unconvincing as it is too convenient and very unlikely. The two stories are two very different stories written for different audiences. 'The Red Room' was written when there was no television so written word was the main form of entertainment, which I think was written more to scare. 'Farthing House' is modern and designed to make the reader think more. Women in particular can relate more to 'Farthing House', as there are many links with childbirth and women are able to feel sorry for the ghost and understand what she is feeling.

Men would probably prefer the scarier element of 'The Red Room'. When H G Wells wrote, men were a lot more important than women so therefore he was probably aiming for a male audience. I think that the descriptions in 'The Red Room' are better as they are more complicated and detailed whereas in 'Farthing House' the description is simpler. I think that the ghostly element is more satisfactory in 'Farthing House', but more predictable. In 'Farthing House', the story is set over many different time periods, which is a more complicated layout than in 'The Red Room' where it is set overnight.

This allows the tension in 'The Red Room' to be built up in a direct line and gives more intensity. In 'Farthing House', the tension is built up and released throughout the story as there are more diversions and other people to take the focus away from the main plot. This is good as it leaves time for the reader to think for themselves and have a break from the tension.

Overall, I prefer 'Farthing House' as I can relate to it more, and it leaves me to dwell upon how young mothers and their babies were treated.