

"the red room," and
"the phantom coach"
essay sample



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“ The Red Room,” and “ The Phantom coach” Essay Sample

In the twenty-first century, mystery and horror genre stories are still as popular with modern society readers, as they were in the nineteenth century with Victorian readers. I have studied the two short stories, “ The Red Room,” and “ The Phantom Coach.” In this essay I aim to compare and contrast the two short stories, focusing on language and stylistic techniques.

H. G Wells wrote the “ Red Room” in the year of 1866. The “ Red Room,” short story is based on people’s fear of the supernatural. This short story was very popular in the nineteenth century for many reasons:

One reason is that Victorian people were very superstitious, and liked to read horror and mystery stories about the supernatural, people also liked the tension and suspense created. Another reason was that short stories became a popular form of fiction in the nineteenth century. This was because people used stories and magazines as forms of entertainment; television and radios had not been invented during the period of the nineteenth century.

Amelia. B. Edwards wrote the “ Phantom Coach,” in 1852. The “ Phantom Coach,” story is based on an incident that happened in a man’s life, James Murray’s, and the fact that it has haunted him ever since. This story was popular for similar reasons as the, “ Red Room,” but there were also other factors:

Amelia. B. Edwards began writing stories at the beginning of a period when women’s works had only begun to start getting published. Women used to

apply to get their work published in magazines like, " Pallmal," and," The Strand."

H. G. Wells, the author of " The Red Room," was born on September the twenty-first, 1866, in Bromley Kent. When H. G. Wells was sixteen he won a scholarship to, " The Normal School of Science," but his rising interest in journalism and politics led him to fail his exams. Wells then began to write books, gaining literary recognition from his novello, " The Time Machine," in 1895. Wells also became involved with the " Fabien Society," from 1902-1906. During Wells' career he had a total of eighty books, writing novels right up to his death in 1946, his final novel being,

" Mind at the End of its Tether."

Amelia. B. Edwards was born in 1831 in London. Amelia was home educated by her mother, and displayed a flair for literacy from an early age; Her first poem was published at the young age of seven. Her first story was published at the age of twelve. When Amelia was thirty her parents both died- this left Amelia with no friends of family, so she began to explore the globe, and became interested in Egypt, a reason why she may have been intrigued in Egypt, is due to the Egyptians belief of " Life after death," Amelia may have felt closer to her mother and father through this supernatural death beliefs. In 1882 Amelia largely funded the Egypt Exploration fund, of which she later became secretary. Amelia died in Weston-Super Mare, Somerset, on the fifteenth of April 1892.

Openings are one of the most important factors in any story, but especially short stories. This is because the openings introduce the main characters, <https://assignbuster.com/the-red-room-and-the-phantom-coach-essay-sample/>

and show the reader the setting. Short story openings are especially important because the author cannot write for endless pages, introducing characters; they have to get to the point, but also keep the reader hooked and intrigued. Both the "Red Room," and "Phantom Coach" are written in first person, but are still different in narration; the "Phantom Coach" is telling the reader about an event that had previously happened, whereas the "Red Room" tells the reader the story as it happens, the reader feels as though they are actually with the characters, this helps to create tension.

"The Red Room" opens at Loraine castle, with the narrator and some strange old people, having a conversation about the supernatural and a haunted room. The author uses the dialogue to engage the reader into the story; also the haunted room dialogue begins to pose questions in to the readers mind about, "Where the room is," and, "Why it is haunted." Because these questions are in the readers mind, they read on. Another factor that keeps the reader intrigued is the excellent use of language styles, including onomatopoeia and repetition.

"Then he began to cough and splutter again."

Splutter is an example of onomatopoeia.

The "Phantom Coach," opens at a bleak, wide moor, in the north of England. James Murray, the main character, is lost and desperately wants to get home to be with his wife, The opening of the story creates mystery, because the reader begins wonder why James Murray is lost, and whether something unexpected such as an accident may befall him- the questions created in the

readers mind also help to make the reader want to carry on reading, they become intrigued.

Both of the stories establish a successful opening, because they both create a vivid atmosphere and create tension and suspense. This is because they both use high paced openings, so the readers' tension is not lost, in fact they hook reader. Also both openings create tension, suspense and atmosphere, which help to make the reader continue reading the story.

The " Red Room" setting is based at Loraine castle, which as previously been abandoned for eighteenth months. This creates tension and suspense because Loraine castle is a stereotypical Victorian gothic setting. It is an old building, which is isolated, this creates tension because if an accident happened to the main character, nobody would hear him, also the fact that the main character is unfamiliar with the setting, adds to the tension.

The " Red Room" setting was chosen because in Loraine Castle there has previously been a death there, and also rumours were that the castle contained ghosts. This created tension and suspense to the Victorian people were very superstitious, so the thoughts of ghosts would make the people imagine terrible things were going to happen.

The " Phantom Coach" has three main settings: The first setting is an isolated, bleak, wide moor in the North of England. This situation creates tension because James Murray is lost, in a place where he is unfamiliar with; desolation of the setting also makes reader fear for his safety. The second setting is at an old, isolated house like barn. The house is strange because the house contains everything,
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" One end was piled to the roof with corn, like a barn.

The other was stored with flour- sacks, agricultural implements;

Casks, and all kinds of miscellaneous lumber."

This adds to the tension and suspense because the reader begins to wonder why the house contains strange objects. The third setting is along an old coach road, the weather conditions were, " Bitterly cold," snow lay thick on the footpath. This old road adds suspense and tension because there had previously been a coach accident there. This makes the reader fear for James Murray, because they presume that the same accident will happen to him.

In both stories the authors have successfully created as vivid atmosphere and setting, so that the reader can visualise the surroundings.

There are some similarities in both stories:

In both stories an accident had previously occurred, in the " Phantom Coach" there had been the coach accident where people died. In the " Red Room" the Duke died.

The main protagonist in both stories has never to the settings before, and in both stories the main characters become isolated. Both stories have had previous accidents, and similar incidents happen as the stories are happening. One important factor that links the two stories is the fact that the stories contain the supernatural. In the " Red Room," the narrator fears for the ghosts. In the " Phantom Coach," James Murray enters a coach, were

ghosts are inside. All of the above create excellent tension and suspense in both short stories.

In both stories the author's use one main protagonist. This is important because short stories have to involve the reader into the plot immediately; if lots of characters were used, the story would last too long, and the readers' interest is lost, so one main character makes more sense. The authors write descriptive characterisation passages to create tension and suspense. This is very important because it also helps the reader to empathise with the character who is in tense situations.

The main character in the "Red Room," is the narrator, his name is undiscovered throughout the story, but he is a strong character and pretends not to fear the ghosts, but when he enters the room his fear overtakes him. This makes the reader feel tense because a strong, fearless character becomes scared of the supernatural this makes the room seem more ominous than it actually is. Also his overconfidence and self-assured manners worries the reader.

James Murray is the main character of "The Phantom Coach," he is well educated, his job being a barrister, confident and also impatient. James Murray creates tension throughout the story, but one of his most tense situations is at the beginning, when he is telling the reader that he is going to tell them about an incident that happened twenty years ago, and that he has only told one other person. This makes the reader wonder why only one other person knows- what could be so bad?

There are two subsidiary characters in each of the two short stories. In the "Red Room," there is the man with the withered arm, and the old woman. Both of these characters are not physically described, the reader just learns that the old man is crippled and can hardly walk, the old woman is not described; she is left as an enigma. These two characters create tension and suspense, by acting eccentric, and by repeating certain phrases. The old woman tries to make the "Red Room," seem worse than it actually is, by saying:

"This night of all nights"

The old man repeats:

"It is of your own choosing."

The old man is trying to make the man feel as though he does not have to go to the room, but instead this makes the narrator want to visit the haunted "Red Room," even more.

In the "Phantom Coach" there are also two main subsidiary characters; Jacob and the strange man. Jacob is a sad, lonely, old man, who is a servant to a strange man. Jacob creates tension, because he never actually gains the reader's trust, the reader is continuously thinking that he might be a ghost- he is used as a red-herring to lead the reader from discovering the true danger. The Strange man is literally strange! He is very well educated and never leaves his old, eccentric house, the reader thinks that the strange man is a murderer, but the reader then discovers that the man is harmless. The strange man is also used as a decoy. Similarly the characters in the "

Red Room," are used as decoys and red- herrings to send the readers of the scent.

A good plot or storyline has to have; twists, suspense unexpected events, and the reader has to be able to empathise with the main characters. In both of the stories all of the above are used making them excellent plots.

The " Red Room" plot is mainly about a confident man that decides to go and investigate a so-called haunted room, but encounters some strange events while in the room. The above storyline keeps the readers attention because strange events are continuously happening, and the reader starts to question- is the " Red Room" haunted? Also the varied use of sentence lengths, changing the pace, keeps the reader intrigued, and adds to the tension.

The " Phantom Coach" plot is based on a man, who is lost on a bleak, wide moor. While lost on the moor he meets a strange, old man, whom he follows to a house, where he meets another unusual man. The main character is then directed to a mail coach stop, where he can get a ride home. When he is on the coach, he realises that the people on the coach are not quite normal, in-fact they are ghost! The " Phantom Coach" crashes, and the conclusion is revealed, the main character was a passenger in the previous coach accident. This story line keeps the reader's attention, because it uses varied sentence lengths in suspense parts of the story, also the use of dramatic irony creates suspense. This is used when James Murray enters the " Phantom Coach." The reader realises that the people on the coach are

ghosts, so they carry on reading to find out how long it will take James Murray to discover what the reader already knows!

Both of the storylines are successful, because they manage to keep the reader engaged. This may be because the final conclusions to the stories are not revealed until the last few paragraphs of the stories. This helps to gain and keep the readers' curiosity during the whole story.

Description is an important factor in any story. This is because description allows readers to imagine and visualise the characters and settings. It also helps the reader to empathise with the main characters in tense situations, because the reader has more of a vivid picture of the setting and situation.

Both stories create a lot of tension, just through description. The "Red Room" uses varied types of language styles such as,

"It's your own choosing."

This is an example of mysterious writing, which helps to create tension.

"The echoes rang up and down the spiral staircase."

This sentence uses onomatopoeic words; "rang," the word "rang" helps the reader to imagine the ringing sounds of echoes. The "Red Room" uses long, structured sentences; usually followed by short, blunt statements, all of these help to create tension. Similes, metaphors and personification help to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind; this is called "imagery." An example of a metaphor used in the "Red Room" is,

" My candle was a little tongue of germinating darkness."

This paints a vivid picture in the reader's mind of a candle producing a little ray of light, in a lot of darkness. The repetition of sentences by the old people, at the beginning of the " Red Room" adds to the tension and suspense.

The " Phantom Coach" mainly uses onomatopoeia, similes and metaphors.

" My feet were like ice."

This sentence is an example from many of the similes used, but the sentence also triggers people's senses, making the reader feel cold, and more in touch with the story. The " Phantom Coach" has a variety of sentence lengths; there are usually long descriptive paragraphs, followed by direct speech. This alternates the pace of the story in high climax parts of the story, this adds to the tension.

Both stories have successfully used language as a tool to create tension, because the reader can relate well to the stories due to the varied language styles. Personification is an effective language technique, because it helps the reader to visualise unreal things, like the wind or shadows, and creates a life " like" atmosphere. Both stories vividly describe objects and situations, so the reader can imagine that they are actually there,

" The first feathery flakes of a coming

Snowstorm just fluttering down upon

The heather."

This is a quote from the "Phantom Coach" that vividly describes the snow falling, which creates a picture in the reader's mind. The "Red Room" story ends unresolved in a cliffhanger. The reader is left wondering what the fear is of ghosts? In the ending of the story the narrator wakes up, from previously banging his head in an accident the night before. When people realise that he is awake, they begin to question him about his experience in the so-called haunted "Red Room." The man concludes saying that it is fear that haunts the room.

The "Phantom Coach" conclusion is more resolved, but has an aspect of mystery lingering. The story ends with James Murray waking up after an accident, this is similar to the "Red Room". James Murray concludes in the final paragraph that he has not told his wife about the incident, and that he never intends to do so. This creates mystery because the reader is left suspicious as to why James will not tell his wife.

The two short stories have similar endings, because both main protagonists are waking up from accidents. The accidents both could have involved the supernatural. The main difference between the two endings is that, in the "Phantom Coach" the reader is told the ending, and is therefore left with very few suspicions. On the other hand, the "Red Room" concludes leaving the reader with many suspicions, as to what the fear is.

Personally I found that the "Red Room" conclusion was the most effective.

This was because as a reader, I did not expect the room to be haunted by

fear, I thought that it was the supernatural. Also I liked the fact that the <https://assignbuster.com/the-red-room-and-the-phantom-coach-essay-sample/>

reader to some extent could actually decide for himself or herself what the fear was.

Throughout the two short stories, both authors have successfully managed to create tension and suspense, through using many writing techniques, such as, language, description and plot. I enjoyed both stories, mainly because they are both typical murder-mystery stories, and they both have created enough tension and suspense to keep the reader hooked. The " Red Room" and the " Phantom Coach," are successful horror genre stories that have kept readers from the nineteenth century, through to modern day readers in tension and suspense, and I am sure that they will still will for many years to come.