

Both "the red room"
and "farthing house"
are ghost stories



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Ghost stories have fear in them, twists to the story, they have strange characters. Ghost stories are generally set in haunted houses or castles or derelict places. A ghost story is Gloomy and tells the reader of sounds and dingy colours. Sounds that make you scared and make your arm hairs stand up, howls of a wolf and screams of despair. Traditional ghost stories generally have someone in a haunted house and at the stroke of midnight, things start to go wrong and ghostly happenings begin. More Modern ghost stories have the twists to them that you only find out the real truth of it right near the end of the story.

The two authors (H G Wells & Susan Hill) of the two ghost stories in question are from two different eras. H G Wells was born in 1866. He specialised in science, his first book published in 1893 was called, “Textbook of Biology”, which confirms that he had an interest in science. He started to write due to ill health. He was also the author of, “The Time Machine” that was a novel and was first published in 1895. “The Red Room”, the story in question was first published in 1896. The Red Room has elements of the supernatural in it. This maybe points to him be interested in both science and the supernatural.

H G Wells died in 1946 at the age of 80. Susan Hill is a modern female writer. She is born in Scarborough in Yorkshire in 1942. Susan Hill has been a full-time writer since 1963 and has written over thirty titles. Since 1977 she has been a monthly columnist for the Daily Telegraph. Her work/writing explores people's darker sides. She is interested in fear and the supernatural like Wells. Her other books include, Gentleman and Ladies, A Change for the Better, I'm the King of the Castle, The Albatross and Other Stories and around 26 more. The genre of “The Red Room” is gothic.

The Red Room has an actual legend to it, which is revealed gradually throughout the story. The legend is of an earl who frightened his wife to death and from then on there have been rumours of a ghost in the room. The main part of the story is where a young man goes to stay in the room for a night to dismiss fears of ghost in the room. The genre of “ Farthing House” is a contemporary ghost story. Written in the first person narrative. Mrs Flower is telling it from her past and at the start of it she is talking in the present and the actual story is her writing a letter to her daughter.

Mrs Flower goes to see her aunt in the old peoples home Farthing House. Things start to happen when she is put in cedar room. She has some weird nights in the room. Both stories are told in the first person narrative. The advantage of this is you become the main character; the disadvantage is that you only are reading their point of view. The main character in the “ Red Room” is a young man, whose name does not get revealed. But his age does. In the book it says he is “ eight-and-twenty years” which was the way that people used to tell their age.

In our day and age now it would be 28. At first he is over confident and a bit arrogant. But once he’s in the Red Room his confidence gradually goes away. And fear steps in. He is very one sided when he goes into the room. He stands by his dismissal that there is no ghost in the room. And needs scientific proof before believing that there is a ghost. He had not looked at all the possibilities of him entering the room if there is a presence in the room. The only thing he has took to protect him is his a revolver which will not be very useful against the spiritual world.

The main character in “ Farthing House” is an older woman who is looking back on her life. In this story we know her name, her name is Mrs Flower. Knowing her name makes the reader more attached to the character. She is warmer than the young man and is open minded about the ghost. At one point in the story where she sees the woman ghost walk a cross her room she is scared but has the courage to follow her where as in the red room the man is very scared and more cautious and tries to run away from his fears. Mrs Flower confronts her fear and follows the ghost.

The Minor characters in the “ Red Room” are three old custodians who have looked after the place since the duchess left. The two old men and one woman are somewhat strange. The custodians names are also not revealed. They are named by their characteristics. There is “ the man with the withered arm”, “ the man with the shade” and “ the old woman”. I think the reason why H G Wells has not gave them names is so that you the reader doesn’t get attached to them, because some times you can get into the character more than the actual plot.

Or it might be that he does not want you referring to them as main characters. They keep saying things over and over again, for example the old woman keeps saying “ This night of all nights! ” This sort of sentence makes the reader want to know what the character means, and what is different from that night compared to all the other nights. The Minor characters in “ Farthing House” are very different from the minor characters in “ The Red Room”. For one, you don’t know the characters names in “ The Red Room” and you do know the names in “ Farthing House”.

Aunt Addy and Janet Pearson are two of the minor characters. Janet Pearson seems a polite person. When she meets Mrs Flower she greets her in a polite way. She says, “ You are Mrs Flower- how nice to meet you” and puts her hand out and then says, “ Janet Pearson”. A nice friendly gesture for a friendly personality. We know their names so we are closer to them, and also you get to learn about them more than the red room characters, you can get an overall summary of the character.

The setting of “ Farthing House” and “ The Red Room” could not be more different. “ The Red Room” has a more traditional setting for a ghost story. The setting is in a castle (Lorraine castle). All of the action takes place in the castle and all over one night. The castle is quite empty and has no lights, it is lit by candles and this is one of the things that suggest that it is set pre 1914. The thought of there being a ghost in “ The Red Room” makes it far from being homely. Rather the opposite a feeling of fear and uncertainness. The traditional setting through out the story gives it a lot of the fear factor that I think ghost stories should have.

The actual Red Room itself is quite cold and dull. And it has lots of alcoves, which also make it seem like there is lots of shadows that also makes you think there is another person or presence in the room. This threatens the man and he builds a barricade in front him using furniture. The room also has a large bed in it and has sconces mounted on the walls and also has a large chimney in the room. “ Farthing House” has a range of settings. Farthing House is set in an old peoples home that very well suits the style of an old person and has a comfortable feel to it.

The scenery near by and around the grounds is an obviously quite picture place, “ A lovely place” Aunt Addy said. Mrs Flower says that she feels like she is on holiday. This story is quite obviously from the start not going to be a simple visit to her aunt at farthing house. When Mrs flower gets there she felt a sense of loss and melancholy (Depression and deep sadness which is possessed by the ghost). And she can also smell as she enters the house she has the faintest smell of hospital antiseptic. Mrs flower also gets given a room called Cedar. Cedar room was a high-selling room.

Mrs Flower feels as though there should be something else their, another presence. The atmosphere thorough out the story seems to get worse with Mrs Flower feeling more depressed. The staff and the setting for “ Farthing House” are far more friendlier and homelier than “ The Red Room”. In a sense at the end of each story they both have ghosts in them. “ The Red Room” has not really got a ghost but more a presence of fear that everybody has when they walk in to the room. And people’s minds are made to think that there is a ghost by different things in the room like, the alcoves, which create the shadows.

Which adds to them thinking that there is a presence in the room. “ Farthing House” has got a ghost actually present, it is a girl of 19 years old. The girls name is Eliza Maria Dolly who wanders the corridors of farthing house crying looking for her daughter who died. The feeling of melancholy that Mrs Flower gets is what is coming of the ghost. The ghost is giving off the bad vibes. The language used in “ The Red Room” is written pre 1914, but uses language that is unfamiliar to the reader.

But when it was written it was not. The language used in “ Farthing House” is language that is familiar to the reader and is of a familiarity to them because it is quite modern in how it is wrote. The difference between “ The Red Room” and “ Farthing House” is that “ The Red Room” is written in chronological order and happens all over one night. “ Farthing House” goes back and forward in time. “ Farthing House” ends up going back to the present time. Where we find out about a baby being snatched and Farthing House long forgotten. The Red Room” ends openly and we don’t actually find out if there is a ghost.

The reader is left to make up their own mind, whether it was a ghost or just a presence of fear. I preferred “ The Red Room” to “ Farthing House” because it does not tell you if there is a ghost or not, and leaves it rather open for the reader to decide. Also “ The Red Room” is in some sort of chronological order in how the events happen in the story where as “ Farthing House” goes back and forward in time. I prefer stories that keep to the present all the way through.