



"A Twist in the Tale"

Story 1: Post 1900 text "Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl

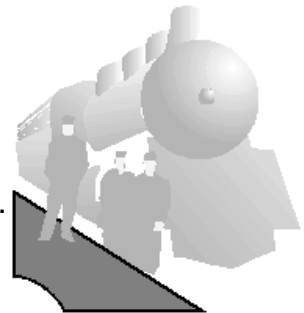
Story 2: Pre 20th Century Text "The Signal-Man" by Charles Dickens

Outcomes

- Original Writing Coursework
- Wide Reading Coursework

Lesson Sequence

1. Read 'Lamb to the Slaughter' by Roald Dahl. Complete group discussion activity and fill in the chart on the sheet. It would be helpful to read some other stories by Dahl or other post 1900 authors on the same theme. Answer questions on the worksheet.
2. Students write their own macabre tale with a twist (see sheet). Discuss elements of a macabre story.
3. Read 'The Signal-man' by Charles Dickens. Discuss differences with the Dahl story: language, setting, period etc. Watch the BBC version of 'The Signal-Man'. Answer questions on the worksheet. I have included some suggested answers for these.
4. Set the essay writing assignment comparing the two stories. See the [Alison Rothwell writing frame sheet](#).



Notes:

Points of comparison between the stories

- One is supernatural, the other is entirely secular
- Dickens has a serious purpose; Dahl is just seeking to entertain?
- Both involve a scepticism about modern science and technology
- Both involve a protagonist who is 'out of their mind' for different reasons
- One is first person, one is third person
- Both involve violent deaths



Story 1: 20th Century Text

Lamb to the Slaughter by Roald Dahl

Answer these questions using evidence and quotations from the story:

1. What is the mood like at the beginning of the story? Choose some words or phrases that help create the mood. What effect do these words have on the reader?
2. Where is the story set? Place, indoors, outdoors, past or present?
3. What is the story actually about? What do you think the author wanted to achieve?
4. Who are the main characters in the story? Describe them. Find some quotations that show what they are like. Which characters do you like or dislike?
5. Does the author use lots of description or hardly any? Do they use direct speech? Do they tell the story in the first or third person? Why do they do this?
6. Is there suspense in the story? When does it begin? What adds to the suspense? When does it end?
7. What is the twist or surprise ending? Did you expect it? What effect does this twist have on the reader?
8. What did you enjoy most or least about the story?

Story 2: Pre 20th Century Text

The Signal-Man by Charles Dickens

Answer these questions using evidence and quotations from the story

1. Why is the Signalman shocked when the narrator calls to him?
2. What clues are there that something mysterious or supernatural is involved? What details add to the suspense?
3. Describe the setting where the story takes place. Use quotations.
4. What do we find out about the signalman?
5. What is the signalman afraid of?
6. What happened after the figure had appeared on the first occasion?
7. What happened after the figure had appeared on the second occasion?
8. What happened to the signalman in the end?
9. What did you like about the story? What did you find difficult about the story?
10. What is the story really about? What does Dickens seem to be saying about industrialisation?

