

GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE/LITERATURE WIDE READING using 'The Red Room' and 'the Darkness Under the Stairs'

Compare 'The Red Room' by H. G. Wells and 'The Darkness Under the Stairs' by Lance Salway examining how the writers create a suspense in the stories.

SUGGESTED ESSAY PLAN

Say something about both stories in your introduction mentioning the main similarity (genre) and the main difference (period in which they are written and set). Indicate what you are going to be looking at in your essay.

Move on to discussing the structure of 'The Red Room' and how suspense is created. Make a point, refer to or quote from the text and then explain what this shows or how it would affect the reader.

Discuss the structure of the second story making comparisons as you go. Don't tell the stories - you are commenting on how the authors have put the stories together to engage the reader and make them want to read on.

Now look at the setting used in 'The Red Room'. Why has H. G. Wells chosen this place - what does it suggest? How is typical of a Victorian ghost story? In what ways does it resemble the setting of a Gothic mystery? How does this setting contribute to suspense in the story - remember it is referred to before the narrator goes into the room.

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Compare this to the setting of the other story - there are similarities in the settings. Does this mean that we have similar views on what is ghostly to the Victorian readers of H. G. Wells?

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Mention how the language of each story is typical of its time. You don't need to write a lot about this but you need to show awareness of language and period so pick out some vocabulary or sentence structure in 'The Red Room' that demonstrates recognition of language typical of the Victorian period. Similarly, it is obvious that the Salway story is of this century - how?

Pick up marks with a thorough discussion of Wells' use of language to create suspense. Consider vocabulary chosen and the imagery used. Explain what is suggested to you by the writer's vocabulary and techniques. Think about what is suggested by specific words and images.

Look at the use of figurative language in the second story. Some techniques are used in both stories - are they equally effective?

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Before you come to your conclusion, consider the common theme of the nature of fear. Was there something supernatural in 'The Red Room'? Why was only Andrew drawn to 'The Darkness Under the Stairs'?

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In conclusion you need to sum up the main ways in which the writers attempt to create suspense and how effective you feel they are.

Remember

- Don't retell the stories - write about what the writer does.
- Consider what the writer is trying to achieve and what techniques he uses.
- Make a point, refer to the text, explain.
- Keep quotes short and make sure they're appropriate.
- Explain what is suggested to you by the writers' techniques.
- Don't throw in words like metaphor and personification - give examples and explain their effect!