

REDMOOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: WHAT ARE MYSTERY NARRATIVES?

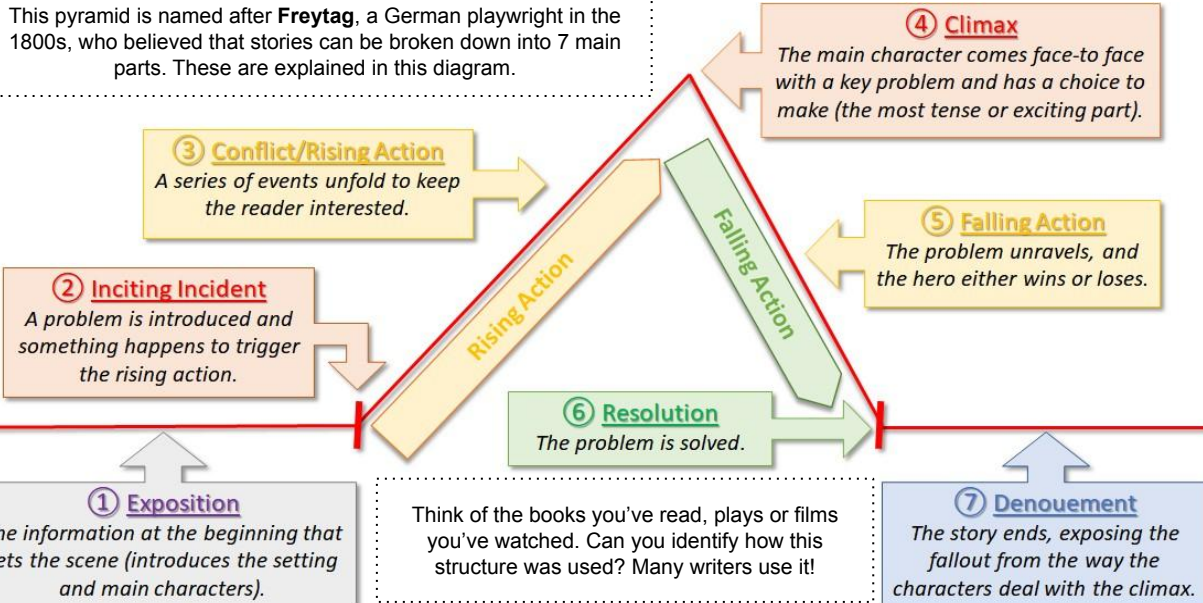
| What is Narrative Writing? | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Narrative writing | A narrative is a piece of text or prose that focuses on telling a story. We refer to a story as a narrative. Novels are the most common form (type) of narrative writing. |
| Genre | Genre comes from the French word 'type.' If a writer wants to write a certain type of book, they need to know its main features, known as genre conventions. Popular genres include crime, science fiction and fantasy. |
| Plot | A plot is the name given to the main events in a play, novel, film or similar work. Narratives typically follow the same plot structure with 7 main parts. These can be seen on the diagram below. |
| Setting | A setting is where or when a story is set. It is usually introduced at the exposition (beginning) of a story along with the characters. . |
| Character | A character is a person, animal or being within a story. Writers use characters to perform the actions and speak, moving the story along the plot line. |

| The Mystery Genre | |
|---|--|
| What is the mystery genre? | Mystery is a genre of literature whose stories focus on a puzzling crime or situation that needs to be solved . Many mysteries involve a ' whodunit ' scenario, meaning that the mystery revolves around an investigation into uncovering a culprit or criminal. There are always a set of suspects who come under suspicion before the crime is resolved at the end. |
| When and why did mystery stories appear? | Mystery stories appeared in the 1800s. At this time, people began to crowd into cities and there was more crime. As the need for detectives emerged, the mystery genre emerged. One of the first mystery writers was the American Edgar Allen Poe. In the 1860s, novels like <i>The Moonstone</i> by Wilkie Collins became popular. Perhaps the most famous mystery writer is Arthur Conan Doyle. He created Sherlock Holmes in 1887. |
| Genre conventions | <p>Plot: the mystery story typically begins with a crime or murder, after which readers follow the detective as he or she conducts an investigation.</p> <p>Key features: the author may hide clues and motives, revealing information as the story progresses. Red herrings are false clues that lead the reader and the detective away from the true culprit.</p> <p>Character: the central character will often be a detective, like Sherlock Holmes, who eventually solves the crime by using his/her great mind, becoming a hero. Mystery novels always feature a villain who tries to cover up their crime.</p> |



How Narratives are Typically Structured

This pyramid is named after **Freytag**, a German playwright in the 1800s, who believed that stories can be broken down into 7 main parts. These are explained in this diagram.



Commonly Used Storylines

The same old story? In 2004, Charles Booker wrote a book in which he claimed that there were only seven basic story plots and that all literature, films, video games and plays use. Knowing these plots will help you think about archetypal stories (typical ones).

1. Overcoming the Monster: the protagonist (hero) sets out to defeat an antagonist (enemy) which threatens the hero or their homeland.

2. Rags to Riches: the poor protagonist acquires power, wealth, loses it all and gains it back, growing as a person as a result.

3. The Quest: the protagonist and companions set out to acquire an important object or to get to a location. They face temptations and other obstacles along the way.

4. Voyage and Return: the protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses or learning important lessons unique to that location, they return with experience.

5. Comedy: light and humorous character with a happy or cheerful ending; a comedy is a dramatic work in which the central motif (recurring idea) is the triumph over adverse circumstance, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion.

6. Tragedy: the protagonist is a hero with a major character flaw or great mistake which leads to their downfall (ruin / death). Their unfortunate end leads to pity.

7. Rebirth: an event forces the main character to change their ways and often become a better individual.

REDMOOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: HOW CAN I WRITE WELL?

Writing effective openings

Narrative Voice

Every narrative must have a narrator: someone who exists as the voice of the story or description, the reader's lens to observe the characters and events. They are not the writer but the writer's construct, sometimes used to voice the writer's ideas and opinions and sometimes as a character in their own right. Who your narrator is and their feelings will shape their choice of language used to describe different characters and events.

1st person perspective:

written as if the narrator is a character, observing or taking part in the story.

2nd person perspective:

written as if the narrator is talking directly to the reader.

3rd person perspective:

written as if the narrator is talking about the characters and events, but not necessarily a character in them.

Limited narrator:

a narrator aligned to a specific character, knowing nothing outside of that character's thoughts and interactions with the world and story.

Omniscient narrator

a narrator who is god-like, able to move from place to place and character to character, realigning the reader to any perspective they wish to share.

Always think about who your narrator is, what their narratorial voice is like and what their connection to the story and characters is.

Starting Well: Using a Narrative Hook to Open

Puzzling hook

This opening generates questions about the story or situation, causing the reader to feel intrigued.

Comical hook

An opening that appeals to the reader's sense of humour.

Visual hook

An opening that focuses on the sense of sight in creating a strong visual description, for example of a setting or character.

Direct speech hook

This start focuses on a conversation to plunge the reader straight into the story.

Atmospheric hook

The start of the story sets the tone or mood - e.g. makes a dark mood clear.

Direct address hook

In this opening a writer speaks to the audience directly using 'you' or 'your'.

Direct and Indirect Characterisation



Characters are the lifeblood of creative writing, driving the plot and representing the human interest element for the reader to care about. There are two forms of characterisation, **direct** and **indirect**.

Direct: this is where the narrator explicitly tells the reader details about the character; i.e.:

'Mr. Ramsay? He is absorbed in himself, he is cruel, he is unjust...'

Indirect: Indirect characterisation means that the narrator implicitly reveals (shows) the reader the character's traits

'He dragged the last smoke from his cigarette and then, with calloused thumb and forefinger, crushed out the glowing end.'


Creating engaging characters

| Protagonist | Antagonist |
|---|---|
| The protagonist is the main character in the story. At the end they are usually the hero. | The antagonist is the bad character in the story. They are usually involved in conflict with the protagonist. |
| <i>In mystery novels, this is the detective or amateur sleuth (someone who is not a professional detective but ends up investigating a crime and solving it).</i> | <i>In mystery novels, the antagonist is the criminal, usually a murderer.</i> |

| Indirect Characterisation | |
|--|---|
| Indirect characterisation is always preferable because it involves the reader, forcing them to draw their own conclusions. You can help your readers to infer or deduce things about a character's personality in five different ways, represented by the acronym STEAL . | |
| S | Speech (dialogue) What is the character saying? How are they saying it? Is there a dialect (accent)? |
| T | Thoughts (& feelings) What are the character's innermost thoughts? Are they good or evil? Think about what you can reveal by focusing on a character's thoughts and feelings. |
| E | Effect (on others) Consider what can be revealed by writing about the way the character affects other people. How do other characters feel or behave in response to the character? |
| A | Actions (& behaviours) What does the character do? How does the character behave? How does the character move? The character's true nature will show through the way they act. |
| L | Looks (appearance) What does the character look like? How does the character dress? Think about the physical features of your character and what they reveal about their personality. |

REDMOOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: KEY KNOWLEDGE

| TiPToP Paragraphing |
|--|
| Paragraphs are just a group of sentences sharing the same idea. They structure your writing to make it easier for readers to follow. Always start a new paragraph when you change the focus of your writing. |
| When writing about a new TIME or about a different PLACE . When writing about a new TOPIC or about or as a new PERSON . |

| Varying your Paragraphs and Sentences |
|---|
| <p>Effective, engaging writing is not thoughtless. Paragraphs and sentences must be used for effect: to guide the reader and develop the narrative.</p>  |
| <p>Shorter sentences can alter the pace of your writing. Description can alter the rhythm.</p> |
| <p>For single, sudden ideas you want to draw attention to, (a single sentence or single word paragraph works brilliantly.</p> |

| Key Punctuation to Revise |
|---|
| Apostrophes, colons, commas, dashes, semicolons and speech marks. |
| You can use the BBC KS3 English Punctuation Guide to revise and practice your punctuation. You need to know how to use each of these punctuation marks accurately. |

| Language | Definition and Example |
|------------------|---|
| Adjective | Adjectives are describing words. In the phrase 'the red balloon', the word 'red' is an adjective. |
| Adverb | An adverb is simply a word that describes a verb (an action or doing word). In 'he ate his breakfast quickly' the word 'quickly' is an adverb. |
| Noun | A noun is the name of a thing, such as an object, place or person. They are often named as naming words and are split into 4 categories: common nouns, abstract nouns, collective nouns and proper nouns. Table, Wednesday and love are all nouns. |
| Pronoun | A pronoun takes the place of a noun in a sentence. Examples are him, her and they . |
| Verb | A verb is a word used to describe an action (doing something), a state of being (feeling something) or an occurrence (something that's happening) Examples are: <i>the rabbit was jumping in the field; the monster likes rollercoasters; the caterpillar became a butterfly.</i> |

| Sentence | Definition and Example |
|--------------------------|---|
| Simple | Have just one verb, for example: He walked quickly back to the house. These sentences are important for making clear points and for building tension. However, too many make your writing disjointed!. |
| Compound | A compound sentences has more than one verb and clause. The two or more clauses should make sense on their own. They often use coordinating conjunctions, such as but, and and so . |
| Complex | Have at least one subordinate clause that adds more detail and information to the sentence. A subordinate clause needs a main part of the sentence to make sense. <i>George wanted to stay outside, despite the driving rain.</i> |
| Embedded clause | Here, the subordinate clause goes into the middle of the sentence. <i>Sam, even though it was getting dark, wanted to go for a walk.</i> |
| Fronted adverbial | Is when the adverbial words or phrase is moved to the front of the sentence. Adverbials give more information to the sentence. earlier today. The full sentence might be: Earlier today, I ate three pizzas. |

| Sentence Upgrades | |
|---------------------------|--|
| -ing | Grabbing her bag, the woman stormed out of the shop. |
| Similes | Like a predator stalking its prey, the thief approached the boy. |
| Preposition | Under the dark clouds, the lamppost gleamed. |
| Adverb | Cautiously, the girl reached out to grab the gun. |
| Connective | Despite the weather, the girl went outside. |
| -ed | Petrified, the woman stood fixed to the spot. |
| Pair of adjectives | Strong and bright, the sun shone onto the forest below. |
| Verb adverb | Perched precariously on the branch, the bird sang. |
| Triple noun | Owls, crickets, mice: the woods were alive with noise. |
| Triple adjective | Thin, bare, skeletal: the trees hung over her. |

| Technique | Definition and Example |
|---------------------------|--|
| Simile | A simile compares two things using the words 'like' or 'as'. A simile describes something by comparing it to something else, using like or as. The snake moved like a ripple on a pond. |
| Metaphor | A metaphor is a word or phrase used to describe something as if it were something else. For example, A wave of terror washed over him. The terror isn't a wave, but a wave! |
| Personification | Personification is giving an inanimate object human feelings or actions. The thirsty flowers seemed to reach out and beg for water. The flowers cannot 'reach' or 'beg'. This makes their need seem human and emphasises how badly they needed water. |
| Pathetic fallacy | This is the personification of nature to give it feelings. This can help suggest a suitable atmosphere or imply what the mood of the characters is at a certain point. |
| Symbolism | We grow up learning lots of symbols and these can be used in stories to convey meaning and feeling from single image. E.g a red rose can symbolise romantic love. |
| Flashback | Flashback is a device that moves an audience from the present moment in a chronological narrative to a scene in the past. |
| Foreshadowing | Is a hint at something that will come later and have greater importance. |
| Cliffhanger | A cliffhanger is when a story or plotline ends suddenly or a large plot twist occurs and is left unresolved. |
| Cyclical structure | This is where your writing comes 'full circle' and ends with a link back to the beginning. |

REDMOOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: THE RUBY IN THE SMOKE

An Overview

Written:
1985

Genre:
Mystery Detective

Set:
1872

Summary:
After the sudden death of her father, Sally Lockhart is forced to go to live in London with an obnoxious cousin. There, she receives an anonymous letter containing a warning so dire that it makes a man die of fear at her feet. Determined to discover the truth about what happened to her father, Sally is soon plunged into a dangerous and terrifying adventure that takes her to the dark heart of Victorian London.



Philip Pullman
Born in Norwich in 1946, father was in the RAF - died when Pullman was 7. Brought up by his mother & stepfather in Wales.

Spent a lot of time as a child with his grandfather who was a kindly clergyman - Pullman is now 'technically agnostic'.

Became an English teacher in Oxford after leaving Oxford University in 1970, he also began writing stories for children.

Knighted in 2019 for his services to literature he is now Sir Philip Pullman

Pullman believes authors should not comment on the meanings of their texts - he strongly believes it is up to readers to interpret & read these meanings.

His work often presents strong female protagonists.

Key Context: Victorian England

Life in Victorian England
Women were considered the 'property' of their fathers and later, when married, their husbands. They had no rights to property, personal income or to sue in court. They could not vote. Their role was considered domestic and ornamental.

There was a strict class system in place: upper class, middle class and working class. The working class were considered a criminal underclass and there were slums and little in the way of help or sympathy. After the 1834 Amendments to the Poor Act the workhouse or prison were considered the correct treatment for poverty.

A police force was introduced in Britain in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel, the first policemen were called 'Peelers' or 'Bobbies' after him

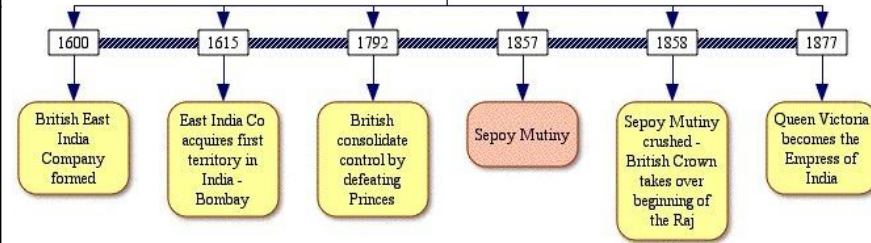
The Industrial Revolution 1760-1840
During the Industrial Revolution, Britain moved from a mainly agrarian, rural farming society to an industrialised, urban society

The Industrial Revolution brought about phenomenal change to all areas of the British way of life: the way we lived was changed forever.

Although the novel is set in 1872, after the first Industrial Revolution, many of the changes of this way of life can be seen in the novel - mainly in the slums, poverty and crime witnessed by Sally in London.



Timeline of British India



Key Context: Victorian England

The Indian Mutiny 1857-1858

- A mutiny against the ruling of the East India Trading Company which was ultimately successful. The Company acted as a sovereign power in India on behalf of the British Crown - Queen Victoria later went by the name Empress of India
- The rebellion began on 10th May 1857 in the form of a mutiny of Sepoys who were in the Company army, it then spread across the country leading to other revolts and rebellions against the Company.
- Both sides committed atrocities with British women and children being murdered by rebelling Indians - but also whole villages of women and children being wiped out by British reprisals.
- It led to The Government of India Act of 1858 which led to the British Raj and India being governed by the British Government and not the Company.

The East India Trading Company and the Opium trade

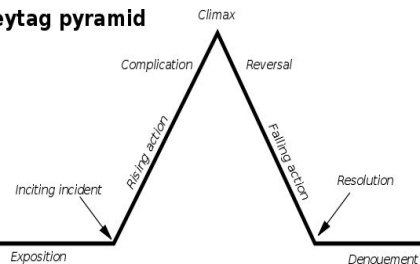
- The East India Trading Company, began in 1600, was a trade company which established British Imperialism around the World, it had huge influence and power - even having its own army in India twice the size of the British army - and is associated with a time of past glory when 'Britain Ruled the World'. It was at the height of its power and influence during the early 1800's
- In order to trade with China, uninterested in trading manufacturing goods, & who produced tea and other goods that were very popular in Britain, the Company traded opium grown in India. This had a terrible effect on Chinese society & way of life & led to several Opium Wars with China that Britain eventually won - leading to Hong Kong being given to the British for 156 years.
- The Company was dissolved in 1874 after the Indian Mutiny of 1858 effectively brought about the abolishment of the Company in India.

Imperialism and our Empire Building past

- Britain, like Japan and Russia, pursued an aggressive empire building policy of Imperialism from the 1870's onwards
- Empire building countries exploited the resources of the countries they subjugated and added to their empires
- The 1980's - when Pullman wrote Ruby - was a time when Britain was entering a new post-colonial phase in its history. 1982 saw the last Imperial war with Argentina over the Falklands Isles.
- Recently, in 2020, as a consequence of the death of George Floyd in America, campaigners such as Black Lives Matter have once again raised the spectre of British Imperialism - questioning the statuary that honours the lives of slave-traders, white oppressors or white supremacists such as that of Cecil Rhodes in Oxford and Edward Colson in Bristol.

REDMOOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: THE RUBY IN THE SMOKE

Freytag pyramid



This pyramid is named after Freytag, a German playwright in the 1800s, who believed that storytelling could be broken down into 7 parts.

Freytag's Pyramid

Exposition: Sally's father's ship is sunk he writes a letter warning of the Seven Blessings. There is a mysterious ruby.

Inciting incident: Sally's room is robbed.

Rising action: Sally is attacked twice she fears for her life. Frederick and Bedwell break into Mrs Holland's house to free Matthew, they escape with Matthew and Adelaide

Climax: Mrs Holland attacks and recaptures Adelaide. Sally and Mrs Holland meet on the bridge and the ruby is thrown away.

Falling action: Sally is kidnapped by Ah Ling. Sally shoots him and lives.

Resolution: Sally finds the ruby and uses the money to set up her own agency and help out invest in Frederick's business.

Denouement: Sally's father was Major Marchbanks and he exchanged her for the ruby.

Archetypal Plot Structure / Conventions of Genre

The same old story? In 2004, Charles Booker wrote a book in which he claimed that there were only seven basic story plots and that all literature, films, video games and plays use. Knowing these plots will help you think about archetypal stories (typical ones) and the way that we humans like familiar narrative structures.

1. Overcoming the Monster

The protagonist (hero) sets out to defeat an antagonist (enemy) which threatens the hero or their homeland.

2. Rags to Riches

The poor protagonist acquires power, wealth, loses it all and gains it back, growing as a person as a result.

3. The Quest

The protagonist and companions set out to acquire an important object or to get to a location. They face temptations and other obstacles along the way.

4. Voyage and Return

The protagonist goes to a strange land and, after overcoming the threats it poses or learning important lessons unique to that location, they return with experience.

5. Comedy

Light and humorous character with a happy or cheerful ending; a comedy is a dramatic work in which the central motif (recurring idea) is the triumph over adverse circumstance, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion.

6. Tragedy

The protagonist is a hero with a major character flaw or great mistake which leads to their downfall (ruin / death). Their unfortunate end leads to pity.

7. Rebirth

An event forces the main character to change their ways and often become a better individual.

Plot Summary

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Sally Lockhart has struck a man dead with just three words: The Seven Blessings. They were sent to her in a message from her father, just before he drowned in the South China Seas. Sally meets Jim at her father's offices. Sally lives with her Aunt Caroline who is not kindly. |
| 2 | Sally receives a letter from Major Marchbanks, a friend of her father's, inviting her to visit. When she arrives, he tells her that a woman named Mrs Holland is in his house and she is extremely dangerous. He hands Sally a parcel and tells her to leave immediately. Sally escapes the seaside town with the help of a young photographer, Frederick. On the train home, Sally opens the parcel and discovers Marchbank's diary. She falls asleep & a man steals the diary from her leaving behind a single page containing mysterious instructions hinting at the location of something. |
| 3 | At Mrs Holland's house in London, a man named Matthew Bedwell comes to stay. Mrs Holland is drugging him with opium to keep him in the house. Bedwell manages to persuade Mrs Holland's servant, Adelaide, to take a message to Sally. Mrs Holland hires a man to attack Sally and steal the missing paper from the diary. He does - but is immediately attacked and killed. Sally realises she is not safe. She withdraws all of her money from her account and finds Frederick, who offers to let her live with him and his sister Rosa. In exchange, Sally can help them with their business. |
| 4 | Frederick and Sally go to London to help Matthew Bedwell, seeking out his brother. The three of them go to an opium den in order to secure a supply of the drug to wean Matthew off the drugs Mrs Holland has been giving him. Sally accidentally breathes in the fumes and has a vision of her childhood, hinting that her father was more than just a businessman. Mrs Holland learns of the whereabouts of the man who stole the riddle from her thug and sets out to retrieve it. Bedwell's brother and Frederick break into her house to rescue Matthew, taking Adelaide with them. Matthew tells Sally that her father was murdered by a criminal called Ah Ling, who is the head of a Chinese triad known as The Seven Blessings. Sally gets a gun. |
| 5 | Mrs Holland solves the riddle, but the ruby has already been taken. She kidnaps Adelaide and Frederick and Jim go to rescue her. There is a fight and although Jim and Frederick escape - Mrs Holland takes Adelaide. Sally takes more opium in order to have more visions. Jim admits that he found the ruby and hid it, thinking this would keep Sally safe. Sally arranges to meet Mrs Holland on a London bridge, she tells Sally that she was promised the ruby by the Indian Maharajah but her father gained it instead and gave it to Mr Marchbanks in exchange for his daughter - Sally. Sally throws the ruby into the ruby and Mrs Holland dives in after it. |
| 6 | Sally is kidnapped by a mysterious man who reveals he is Ah Ling. He tells Sally that he murdered her father because he was trying to interfere with his business selling opium. He attacks Sally with a knife, but she shoots him with a gun & escapes. At home, Sally receives a message telling her where to find the profits from her share of the business and discovers a fortune hidden away. She uses the money to help Frederick with his business & to launch a search for poor Adelaide, who sadly remains missing. |

REDMOOR ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: THE RUBY IN THE SMOKE

Propp's 7 Characters

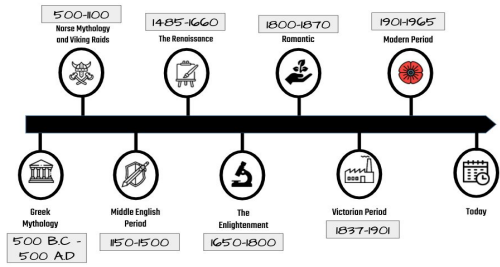
Vladimir Propp was a folklorist researcher interested in the relationship between characters and narrative. Propp argued that stories are character driven and that plots develop from the decisions and actions of characters and how they function in a story. Propp claimed characters could be classified into certain roles that progress a story. Many of these characters have become stereotypes of storytelling.

- 1) *The Princess Prize*
- 2) *The Villain*
- 3) *The Hero*
- 4) *The Father;*
- 5) *The Dispatcher*
- 6) *The (magical) Helper*
- 7) *The Donor.*

Propp's ideas are interesting with regards to 'The Ruby in the Smoke' because Pullman plays with the stereotype of the Princess Prize and the Hero as well as including other roles like The Villain, The Father, The Dispatcher and The Helper.

| Structure | How it is used |
|-------------------------|---|
| Flashback | Sally has flashbacks to a time when she was a young child. This is later revealed to be the moment when the ruby/baby exchange took place during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Each flashback reveals a bit more of the story to the reader and helps us to work out the mystery of the ruby in the smoke. |
| Protagonist | The protagonist is the heroine and main character of the novel - the protagonist is Sally Lockhart. |
| Antagonist | The antagonist is the character who tries to stop the protagonist, the villain in this novel is Mrs Holland and, later, Ah Ling |
| Mystery/detective genre | A genre that is revealed to contain 7 main elements: a mysterious death; several possible culprits; a detective who investigates the case; detective collects evidence; detective interviews possible culprits; detective solves the case; culprit is brought to justice or is dealt with justly. |
| Language | How it is used |
| Apronym | Sally Lockhart - lock and heart. Like Dickens, Pullman has used an apronym of Sally's name to tell us something about her character - she keeps her feelings and emotions locked away. |
| Imagery | Visually descriptive language. Often helps the reader to visualise (picture) the scene, character or description in their mind. |
| Symbolic | The ruby is a symbol of British Imperialism and the way that resources and riches from foreign lands were seized and mistreated by the British. |
| Semantic Field | Word groups. Writers often use synonyms or groups of words or phrases to produce an accumulative effect on the reader. |

| Character | Analysis | Key Quotations |
|------------------|---|---|
| Sally Lockhart | Sally is not a typical Victorian girl: she has been brought up to be resourceful, independent and astute with figures. She has been trained in the use of guns by her father. Sally finds it hard to show her feelings and is quite reserved and not easy to get to know. | "Her upbringing had given her an independence of mind that made her more like a girl of today than one of her own time |
| Frederick | Frederick is a bohemian photographer who is also very independent and free-spirited. He has a very likeable personality and people instinctively trust and warm to him. He is open and extrovert. | 'He looked an amiable young man.' |
| Jim | Jim is a working class lad who works initially for Sally's father's company. Jim reads Penny Dreadfuls and is canny and resourceful, he is loyal, likeable, funny and warm. Jim is also clever and sharp witted. | "Jim looked up and released a jet of language that might have blistered a battleship.' |
| Mrs Holland | Mrs Holland is the main antagonist or villain of the novel, she was a beautiful woman in her younger years but is now a bitter and cruel criminal mastermind. She keeps Bedwell hooked on opium and treats Adelaide very cruelly; she also intends to kill Sally. | "She was a wizened old woman, with sunken cheeks, pinched lips and glittering eyes.' |
| Adelaide | Adelaide is a working class orphan servant of Mrs Holland. Even though she is terrified, Adelaide is very kind to Bedwell and at great risk to herself takes a message to Sally. Adelaide's fate is unknown at the end of the novel. | '...a child whose only feature seemed to be...a pair of enormous dark eyes.' |
| Matthew Bedwell | Matthew is addicted to opium and is captured and kept prisoner by Mrs Holland as she believes that he has information that will lead her to the discovery of the ruby. Matthew has a twin brother who is a vicar. Comparison with the twin brother allows the reader to see the damage that opium has caused. Bedwell is later murdered after his escape. | He was delirious, alternately sweating with pain and raving at the visions which crowded in from the dirty walls. Mrs Holland listened patiently; supplied a little of the drug; listened again, and provided more opium in exchange for details about the things he said in his madness. |
| Major Marchbanks | Major Marchbanks was also addicted to opium when he was younger, so obsessed was he - and so greedy for money - that he swapped his young baby daughter for possession of the ruby. He lives the rest of his life in deep regret at this exchange. | 'His complexion was shallow, and his clothes hung loosely on him. His eyes were dark and fine, though sunk in deep hollows.' |



Key Themes

Mystery genre
 The 'Ruby in the Smoke' is a homage to Victorian mystery writers such as Wilkie Collins (one of Dickens' best friends), who wrote arguably the first two detective mystery novels, 'The Moonstone' and 'The Woman in White'. 'The Moonstone' in particular shares many features with 'The Ruby in the Smoke' and both include many of the features of the mystery genre. Pullman uses setting cleverly to create mystique and threat - whether this be an opium den, a Victorian slum or a darkened sinister Victorian street. The rich settings of the Victorian urban landscape provide Pullman with plenty of fertile descriptions for our imaginations.

Gender Stereotypes
 Sally Lockhart does not conform to the stereotypical idea of a girl during the Victorian period, she is strong, independent person and knows about how to invest money and how to shoot a gun. Pullman is retrospectively exploring the world of Victorian society through a more modern vision of a female role model. In 1985 when Philip Pullman wrote the novel there was a female Prime Minister for the first time in Britain - when the book is set, women did not even have the right to vote in General Elections. Sally does not conform either to Propp's idea of the Princess/Prize and is more like the stereotypical idea of the hero.

Opium and British Imperialism
 The British exploited the addiction of millions of Chinese to opium in order to set up a trade deal with China that provided them with tea, silks and porcelains for their homes. This is British Imperialism at its worst. It ultimately destroyed the Qing dynasty in China. The novel explores the role that British Imperialism has played, including exploring some of the effects of the Indian Mutiny in India. The ruby itself could be said to be a symbol of British Imperialism - stolen as it was from an Indian maharajah: it is representative of the resources and goods that the British have plundered India and China of in the past.

Why Philip Pullman wrote this novel

Philip Pullman wrote this novel for a purpose and uses the story and characters to send a message to his readers / audience.

To encourage... readers of children's literature to see girls as strong leading characters - not just the Princess waiting to be rescued by a male.

To reveal... Pullman reveals the impact of the opium trade and the consequences of drug addiction. This trade was cynically encouraged by the activities of the East Indian Trade Company.

To celebrate... the imagery and richness of the Victorian setting, nostalgically writing in homage to writers such as Wilkie Collins in 'The Moonstone.'

To explore... the features of the mystery detective genre in an exciting Victorian context

To expose... the injustices of British Imperialism during the 1870's and the effects of the exploitation of the opium trade by the East Indian Trade Company

The text is relevant today as... The British Imperialist past is still a contentious issue as we saw during the Corona Virus Lockdown...it is important to present female protagonists in strong, heroic roles subverting the stereotype of girls as weak and passive.

| Word | Definition | The word in use |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Novel | A piece of prose writing of length that contains a story and characters. | Philip Pullman wrote the novel 'The Ruby in the Smoke.' |
| Orientalism | The representation of Asia (and China) in a stereotypical way | The fact that each and every Chinese character in 'The Ruby in the Smoke' is somehow associated with the opium trade is orientalism. |
| Wizened | Shriveled or wrinkled with age | Mrs Holland was a wizened old woman. |
| Stereotype | A commonly accepted but fixed and overly simplified image or idea of a certain person or thing. | The stereotypical idea of a hero in a story would be a young, handsome man. |
| Imperialism | A policy of extending a country's power and prestige through colonisation and other means. | The British had pursued a policy of Imperialism from the 1600's but this had been one of mainly trade. From the 1870's onwards, this pursuit of Imperialism became more aggressive and ambitious. |
| Monopoly | The exclusive possession or control of the rights of or trade in a commodity or service | The East India Trading Company (the Company) had a huge trade monopoly with all trade with India and China. |
| Context | The circumstances that form the background, the setting for an event, story, idea and in terms of which it can be fully understood. | We need to understand the context of Victorian England & British Imperialism in order to understand completely 'The Ruby in the Smoke.' |
| Feminist | A person who advocates women's rights and the equality of the sexes. | 'The Ruby in the Smoke' could be described as a feminist novel. |
| Genre | A style or category of art, literature or music. | 'The Ruby in the Smoke' is a novel that fits into the mystery detective genre. |
| Gender Equality | When access to rights or opportunities is not adversely affected by one's gender (by what sex you are) | 'The Ruby in the Smoke' could be said to promote gender equality as Sally Lockhart is a strong female protagonist. |
| Archetypal | A typical example. | Sherlock Holmes is the archetypal detective. |
| Bohemian | A socially unconventional person, especially someone who is involved in the arts. | Rosa and her brother Fred lived a Bohemian lifestyle together. |