

Lamb to the Slaughter - Worksheet

Lamb to the Slaughter was a short story which was written by Roald Dahl in 1953. He wrote this as a part of five stories and he submitted it to the Harper's Magazine in September 1953. Interestingly it was adapted for an episode of Alfred Hitchcock Presents. Roald Dahl also included it in his world famous short story compilations.

The worksheet below contains a few questions and answers which will test your understanding of the short story.

Worksheet Questions - Lamb to the Slaughter

1. What is the story Lamb to the Slaughter about?
2. In the story Lamb to the Slaughter, why does Mary Maloney kill her husband?
3. What weapon does Mary Maloney use to kill her husband?
4. What does Mary Maloney do after killing her husband?
5. Do the detectives suspect Mary Maloney of the crime?
6. What is the main message of Lamb to the Slaughter?
7. Is Lamb to the Slaughter a true story?
8. What is the theme in Lamb to the Slaughter?
9. What is the irony at the end of Lamb to the Slaughter?
10. Why does Mary giggle at the end of the story?

Answers to the Worksheet

1. It is the story of a dutiful wife who is informed by her husband that he is leaving her. In a fit a rage she kills him and makes a simple yet effective plan to escape and dispose the evidence.
2. Her husband, a policeman, informs that he is leaving her for someone else. In a fit a rage she kills him.
3. She uses a frozen leg of lamb. She carried it high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head. It was like being hit with a steel club and kills him instantly
4. She goes to the grocery store to purchase some groceries so that it would look ike she just came back and discovered the crime scene.

5. They suspect Mary from the onset but are unable to prove the crime as they are unable to locate the murder weapon.
6. The main message in 'Lamb to the Slaughter' is about with how one tends to overlook the true nature of a person or situation when preconceived notions cloud their judgment.
7. The short story, however realistic it may be is not a true story. It was inspired when Roald Dahl had a meeting with the famous mystery and murder short story writer Ian Fleming.
8. The three main themes in the short story are gender and its impact on marriage in a patriarchal society, the consequences of role reversal, betrayal and how one can overlook the simplest of objective facts when looking for details.
9. The irony in the short story is that the leg of lamb which is the actual weapon used to commit the murder is eaten by the detectives. The bigger irony is that they are persuaded to do so easily by Mary Maloney, the murderer whom they are searching for.
10. Mary Maloney, the murderer, giggles at the end of the story because she knows she has gotten away with the murder of her husband very easily. She giggles at the irony that the detectives are eating away the murder weapon, the only evidence that connects her to the crime. By doing so they remove the last link between the murderer and the crime.