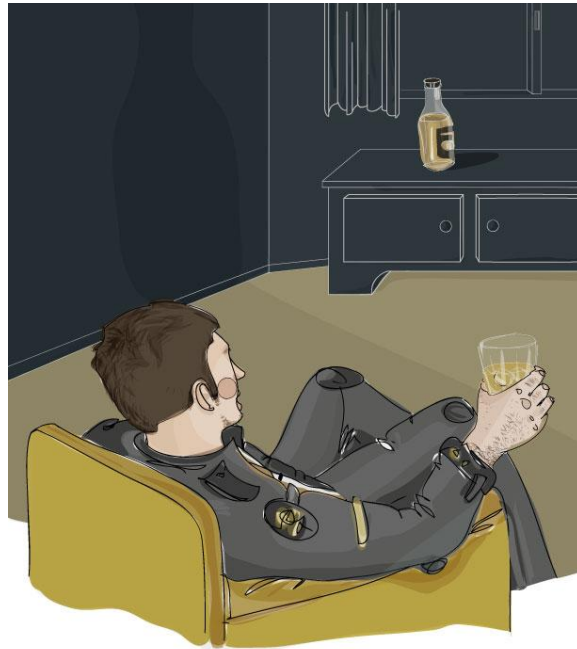


# Lamb to the Slaughter by Raold Dahl

Prepared by M. MacDonald



# Plot Chart: Exposition

## Characters are introduced:

- Patrick Maloney- a policeman who has not been promoted in spite of many years of service.
- Mary Maloney- a dutiful housewife, six months pregnant.

## Conflict(internal/interpersonal):

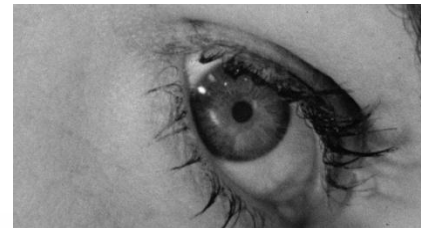
- Patrick seems to have something on his mind and is acting coldly toward Mary.

## Setting:

- Cinematic description of the Maloney household.

## Mood/Atmosphere established:

- The normal routine of the household is disrupted by the nervous actions of Patrick Maloney.
- Mary's jumpy/nervous reaction to her husband's cold uncaring attitude toward her all work together to establish a tense atmosphere.



# Plot Chart: Rising Action

- Suspense is created by the nervous actions of both characters. Mary's determination to please her husband and Patrick's cold reaction to her.
- The author also uses description to build suspense.
- Patrick's gulping of the whiskey and the sounds of ice cubes clinking against the glass indicate that he is troubled about something.
- The reader becomes curious about what he plans to say to his wife.
- The short dialogue exchanges between the husband and wife increases tension and builds suspense.
- In addition to dialogue, the author's physical descriptions add tension and increases suspense. Patrick's "absolute motionless" head lowered, "the little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye."



# Plot Chart: Rising Action

- The reader is still left in the dark about the specific information Patrick has just shared with his wife. “And he told her.” “It didn’t take long, four or five minutes at the most.”
- The reader must continue reading find out what Patrick told Mary until he tells her that he’ll give her money and see that she’s looked after.
- The wife is shocked and is in denial. She copes with her stress by doing housework—preparing supper.
- The author’s description of Mary’s reaction “everything was automatic now” and her preparation of supper.
- Patrick’s cold angry reaction to her nervous actions triggers a sympathetic reaction toward Mary just as she is about to murder her husband.



# Plot Chart: Climax

- The turning point in this story occurs when Mary hits her husband in the back of the head with a leg of lamb.
- The author's cinematic description of the murder, Patrick's gentle swaying before hitting the floor, the sounds of tables overturning.
- Mary holding the murder weapon in both hands is very effective.
- We also begin to see another side of Mary's personality.
- Her unemotional reaction to the murder. "All right...So I've killed him." adds to the shock experienced by the reader.
- Mary immediately becomes very calculating as she weighs out her options (she is no longer the lamb).





# Plot Chart: Falling Action

- Mary begins to plan her alibi acting in front of the mirror. Purchasing supplies at the local grocery store.
- Disposes of the evidence (the leg of lamb) by placing it in the oven.
- Mary calls the police, they check her alibi. They search for the murder weapon “get the weapon, and you’ve got the man.”
- Mary offers the police officers drinks and leg of lamb for supper.



# Plot Chart: Resolution

- Mary, in an adjoining room, listens to the police officers discuss the murder.
- They feel the murder weapon must be on the premises, “probably right under our (their) noses.”
- Mary begins to giggle at their ironic statements. (dramatic irony—the speakers are unaware of the irony in their statements)



**The characters in this story are a collection of stereotypes and clichés.** Mary is the “little woman,” Patrick is the “cheating husband,” and the police are “blundering detectives.” **How do these stereotypes help Mary get away with murder?**

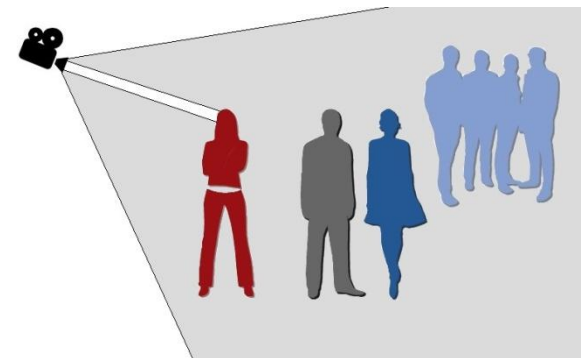
- **The characters in this story are a collection of stereotypes and clichés.**
- Mary is the “little woman” obediently pleasing her husband.
- Patrick is the “cheating husband” self-centered and selfish.
- The police are “blundering detectives” who underestimate Mary.
- **How do these stereotypes help Mary get away with murder?**
- They all underestimate Mary.
- The self-centered Patrick is caught off guard by Mary’s reaction to the news and loses his life.
- Mary’s gentle “lamb like description and personality” influenced the police and their perception of her. A weak pregnant woman like Mary couldn’t possibly murder a big well trained police officer.





What is the **narrative point of view** in this story? How do you know? Why would the author choose this point of view?

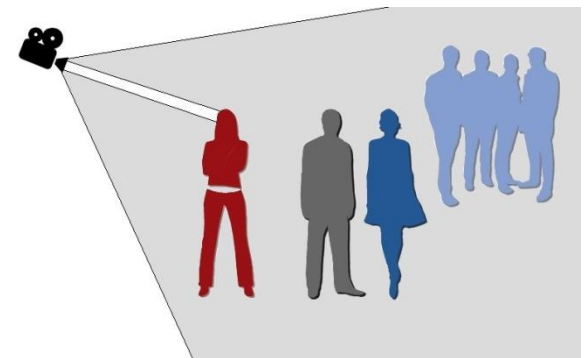
- **Third Person Limited Omniscient**
- **Allows the narrator to make commentary about the inner thoughts of one (I) of the characters and the events of the story.**
- “For her this was a blissful time of day.”
- “She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man...”
- “Her instinct was not believe any of it...”
- “She couldn’t feel her feet touching the floor...she couldn’t feel anything at all...Everything was automatic now...”
- It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden...”
- She didn’t feel too good at the moment, she really didn’t...”



What is the **narrative point of view** in this story? How do you know? Why would the author choose this point of view?

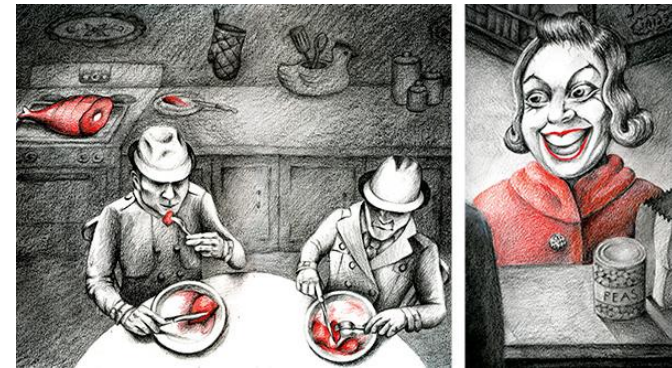
- **Third Person Limited Omniscient**

- **Advantage:** We see everything happening. We know more than the characters in the story.
- The reader is a step ahead of the detectives.
- This adds suspense and tension we read to find out if Mary gets away with murder.
  
- **Disadvantage:** we know who the murderer is and we don't get a chance to solve it ourselves.
  
- This is the most common way of telling a story.



**Suggest a possible theme** for this short story. What lesson is the author trying to teach the reader?

- **Appearances can be deceiving.**
- We change the way we see the characters throughout the story.
- Patrick is someone we do not like, but we end up feeling some sympathy for him.
- Mary is introduced as very kind and loving, we feel sympathy for her because of what her husband tells her.
- We are shocked when we see that she is capable of killing her husband.
- We think that this is out of character. We learn she is very cunning when she takes control.
- The way she treats the detectives shows contempt—she enjoys making fools of them.
- Do we sympathize with her? Is this a crime of passion or is Mary's character actually much darker?



What is the **irony in the title** “Lamb to the Slaughter?” Explain.

- **The title usually refers to a sacrificial slaughter or an unaware victim.** The lamb unknowingly being led the slaughterhouse.
- **The lamb (leg of lamb) does the slaughtering in this story.**
- **This is an unexpected result given the usual explanation of the title.** (Situational irony)



What is the **irony in the title** “Lamb to the Slaughter?” Explain.

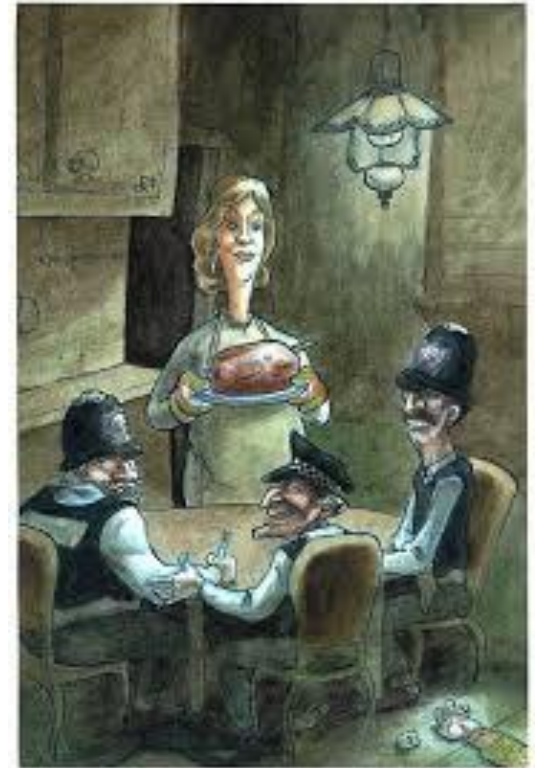
- **Who is the lamb? Patrick? Mary? The Police?**
- The lamb (leg of lamb) does the slaughtering in this story. This is an unexpected result given the usual explanation of the title. (Situational irony)
- Who is the lamb being led to the slaughter?
- The lamb like Mary or the unsuspecting Patrick. Both are unsuspecting victims (sacrificial lambs)
- Perhaps the police are unsuspecting victims as well.
- Depends on your point of view. (Situational Irony—unexpected result)





There are many examples of irony in this selection. Give at least **one example of each type of irony** in the story and **explain how it was ironic**, and **how it added to the appeal** of the story.

- **Verbal (rhetorical) Irony: Using a word of phrase to mean the opposite of its normal meaning.**
- After the murder (pg. 16) “She didn’t feel too good at the moment, she really didn’t.”
- Speaker is the author-narrator—understatement is a form of rhetorical or verbal irony—she just killed her husband.
- Persuading the police to eat the leg of lamb (pg. 17) “It’d be a favour to me if you’d eat it up.”
- Mary deliberately deceives the police—understatement.
- This is also dramatic irony—the audience is aware of the irony.



There are many examples of irony in this selection. Give at least **one example of each type of irony** in the story and **explain how it was ironic, and how it added to the appeal** of the story.

- **Dramatic Irony: When a character says something, where the audience understands the meaning, but the character does not.**

### **Example #1 Verbal/Dramatic**

- Mary telling the police that eating the leg of lamb would be doing her a favour.
- The audience knows just how big a favour that would be. (Audience is aware—police are not aware)
- Could also be considered verbal irony—the speaker is aware of the irony in her statement)

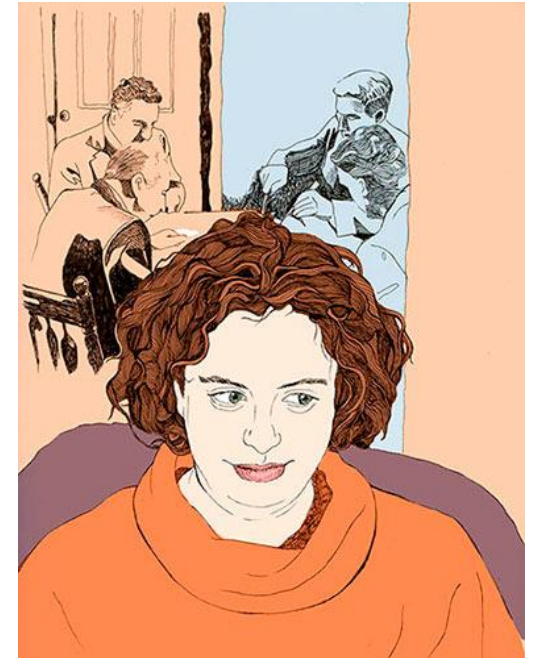
### **Example #2 Dramatic only**

- Police saying “Be doing her a favour” finishing up the meal. (Audience is aware the speaker isn’t—dramatic irony not really rhetorical )
- The murder weapon should be easy to find. “Probably right under our noses.” (Audience is aware the speaker isn’t—dramatic irony not really verbal/rhetorical)



There are many examples of irony in this selection. Give at least **one example of each type of irony** in the story and **explain how it was ironic, and how it added to the appeal** of the story.

- **Dramatic Irony:** When a character says something and the audience understands the hidden meaning of the statement but the speaker himself does not.
- **The audience or reader knows more about a situation than the character.**
- Discussing the murder weapon (pg. 16) “Get the weapon, and you’ve got the man.”
- The reader (audience) knows the murderer is a woman and not a man.
- The speaker in this case isn’t aware of the irony in this statement—so it isn’t really verbal/rhetorical irony.
- The speaker should be aware of the irony for verbal irony to occur.



There are many examples of irony in this selection. Give at least **one example of each type of irony** in the story and **explain how it was ironic**, and **how it added to the appeal** of the story.

### **Dramatic/Verbal Irony**

- Mary talking to the police (pg. 17) “Good friends of Patrick’s...helping to catch the man who killed him.”
- The audience and Mary is aware that the killer is a woman—the police do not.
- Could also be considered verbal or rhetorical irony. The speaker (Mary) is aware of the irony of the her statement.
- The murder weapon should be easy to find. “Probably right under our noses.”
- (Audience is aware the speaker isn’t—dramatic irony not verbal/rhetorical)



There are many examples of irony in this selection. Give at least **one example of each type of irony** in the story and **explain how it was ironic**, and **how it added to the appeal** of the story.

- **Situational Irony:** When there's a difference between what the characters or the reader expects will happen and what actually happens. Expect the unexpected.
- The wife of a police officer murders her husband. An unexpected result.
- There is irony in a situation where a police officer's wife commits a serious crime and murders her husband—someone who is trained to investigate homicides and protect the public from them.

