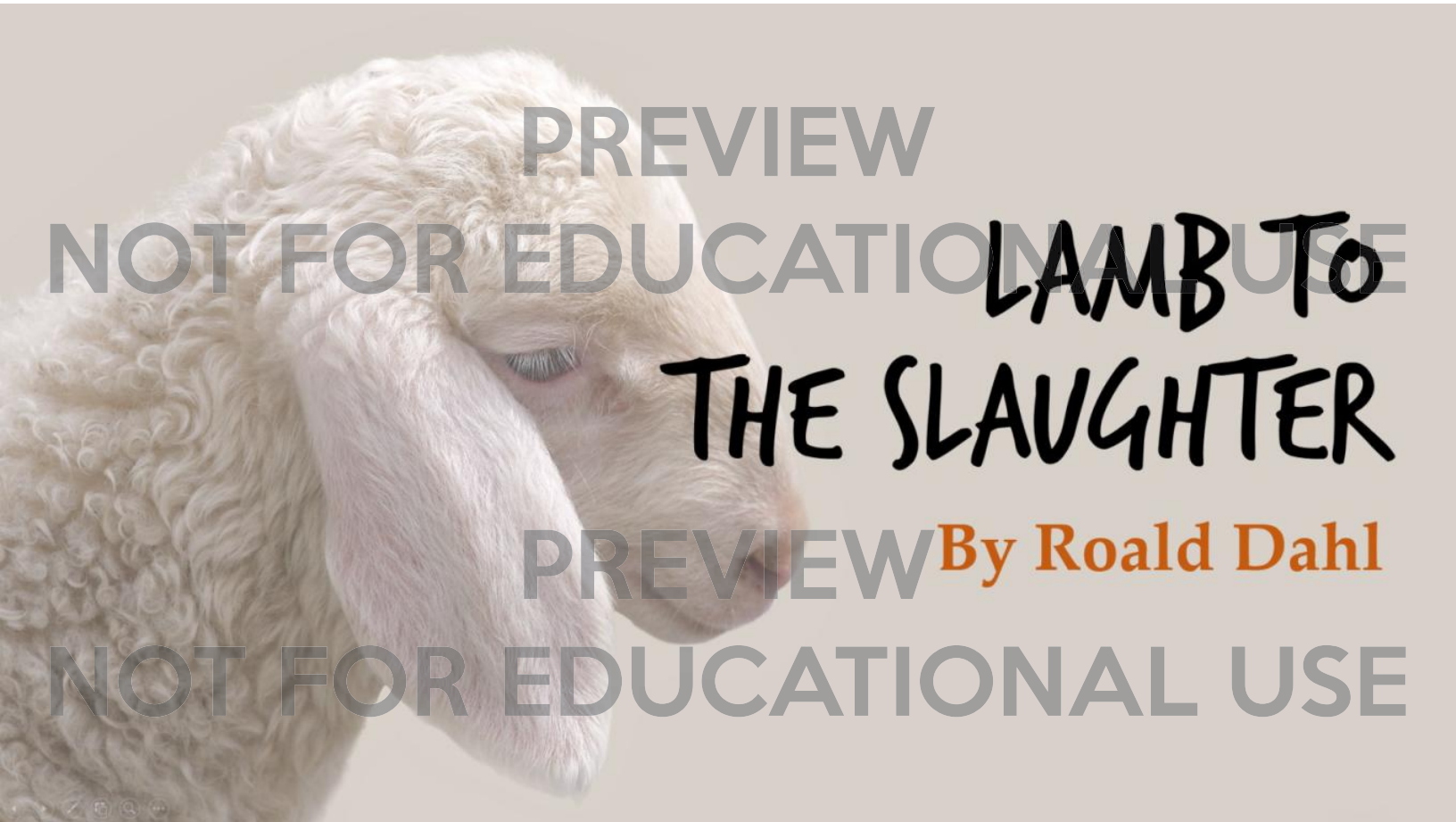


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**LAMB TO
THE SLAUGHTER**

PREVIEW **By Roald Dahl**
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WORD SORT

Consider how the words below are related.
Sort them into different categories by creating lists.

cooking	steel	mirror	grocer
detective	freezer	potatoes	sledgehammer
lamb	cheese	head	vase
carpet	leg	peas	sewing

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VOCABULARY

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TRANQUIL

(adjective)

describes quiet, peaceful, and calm

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VOCABULARY

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TRANSLUCENT

(adjective)

describes glowing or permitting light to
pass through

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VOCABULARY

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PUNCTUALLY

(adverb)

in a way that is prompt and on time

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VOCABULARY

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LUXURIATE

(verb)

to enjoy oneself and indulge oneself; to
thrive or flourish

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VOCABULARY

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BEWILDERED

(adjective)

describes confused and very puzzled

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VOCABULARY

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PECULIAR

(adjective)

describes strange, odd, and unusual

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VOCABULARY

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SPANNER

(noun)

a wrench (British)

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VOCABULARY

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EXASPERATED

(adjective)

describes intensely frustrated

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(CREATIVE WRITING) OPTIONS

- **Option A:** Write a police report from a detective's perspective using first person point of view. What evidence do you collect? What is the time, place, and nature of the crime? Who are your suspects? Alibis? Witnesses? Motives? Weapons? Statements taken? What actions will you take next? Include any other details regarding the investigation.
- **Option B:** Write the omitted conversation between Patrick and Mary using first person point of view, where you will write as if you are Patrick Maloney. Explain to Mary why you want the divorce and include any other details that may have contributed to this happy couple's demise.

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"Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl — Suggested Lesson Procedure

1. Before reading, project the list of "Word Sort" words for the entire class to see using the Powerpoint presentation, and pass out the accommodating worksheets to each student. Direct students to identify the meaning and properties of each word and then "sort" the words into any categories they see similarities between. This "sorting" process links students' prior knowledge and builds anticipation. It allows students to associate words with one another and make personal connections. Students will wonder how can all of these words go together in one story, thus preparing them for the text. Students can sort the words in as many lists as they see fit and categorize the words however they feel the words are connected. For example: *cheese, peas, and potatoes* are food items. *Carpet, vase, and mirror* are items that can be found in a living room. There are no right answers. You can facilitate the word sort in two ways:

- a) Put students into groups and then give each group one worksheet to write their answers on.
- b) Make this an independent activity and each student completes their own worksheet.

2. Provide students with the academic vocabulary from the story using the Powerpoint presentation. Students will copy the definitions down on their graphic organizers.

3. Give a copy of the reading questions to students and read the story together as a class. It takes about 20 minutes without stopping; however, I prefer that students stop to answer the reading questions during reading. These questions are mostly recall to ensure students are understanding the text. Depending on your students, you may choose to review the correct answers with them or not.

4. Give a copy of the discussion/literary analysis questions to students. Students can complete these individually if they do not work well in groups—but I recommend having students work in groups of two or three. Require groups to discuss and answer questions; they should record all of their answers on their worksheets. Discuss each question as a class while reviewing all of the correct answers. This important step will solidify students' understanding of the literature as well as model important skills for literary analysis.

5. Assign students the extended response worksheet for homework or classwork to be completed individually.

6. Assign students the creative writing options for homework or classwork to be completed individually. Students should only pick ONE option to write about.

Note to teachers: Due to copyright law, I am unable to offer a full text version of the story. If you enter "Lamb to the Slaughter Roald Dahl" into any search engine, you will find a copy of the story available for you to print and use in class. Here is the link I used: [Full Text Lamb to the Slaughter](#)

Name:

Date:

“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl
Word Sort

Directions: Consider how the words below are related. Sort them into different categories by creating lists.

cooking
detective
lamb
carpet

steel
freezer
cheese
leg

mirror
potatoes
head
peas

grocer
sledgehammer
vase
sewing

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Name:

Date:

“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl
Vocabulary

tranquil	adjective	
translucent	adjective	
punctually	adverb	
luxuriate	verb	
bewildered	adjective	
peculiar	adjective	
spanner	noun	
exasperated	adjective	

Name:

Date:

“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl
Reading Questions

1. What is Mary Maloney doing in the beginning scene? Why do her eyes seem larger and darker?

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2. How does Mary feel about her husband?

3. What is Mr. Maloney’s profession?

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4. How can readers sense something is wrong with Mr. Maloney?

5. What news does Mr. Maloney tell his wife? How does she immediately respond?

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6. What violent event takes place next?

7. How does Mary establish an alibi?

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8. Why does Mary insist the officers eat the cooked lamb?

Name:

Date:

“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl
Literary Analysis

1. What point of view is the story told from? How does it affect the plot?

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2. What is the story’s main conflict? How is the conflict revealed, developed, and resolved?

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3. How might Mary’s pregnancy impact the story?

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4. Why does Dahl choose to omit the dialogue where Mr. Maloney tells Mary he wants a divorce?

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5. How does Dahl build suspense in the story?

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6. How does Patrick's profession impact the story?

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7. What is the dramatic irony in this story? What is the situational irony?

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8. What are Mary's motivations and values? How are they revealed throughout the story?

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9. What is Dahl's main message (the theme)?

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10. What is the symbolism of the lamb? Why not have Mary kill Patrick with a turkey leg?

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11. Do you think Mary intended to *kill* Patrick? Does she feel remorse? Explain.

Name:

Date:

Extended Response

“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl

The original use of the phrase “lamb to the slaughter” is found in the Bible. This phrase is located in both Jeremiah and Isaiah (shown below).

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Jeremiah 11:19 I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying, "Let us destroy the tree and its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more."

What is the literal meaning of the phrase “lamb to the slaughter”? How is it used metaphorically in literature or scripture? Why does Dahl allude to the phrase in the title of this story?

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Name:

Date:

“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl
Creative Writing Options

Option A: Write a police report from a detective’s perspective using first person point of view. What evidence do you collect? What is the time, place, and nature of the crime? Who are your suspects? Alibis? Witnesses? Motives? Weapons? Statements taken? What actions will you take next? Include any other details regarding the investigation.

Option B: Write the omitted conversation between Patrick and Mary using first person point of view, where you will write as if you are Patrick Maloney. Explain to Mary why you want the divorce and include any other details that may have contributed to this happy couple’s demise.

Name:

Date:

“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl
Vocabulary

tranquil	adjective	describes quiet, peaceful, and calm
translucent	adjective	describes glowing or permitting light to pass through
punctually	adverb	in a way that is prompt and on time
luxuriate	verb	to enjoy oneself and indulge oneself; to thrive or flourish
bewildered	adjective	describes confused and very puzzled
peculiar	adjective	describes strange, odd, and unusual
spanner	noun	a wrench (British)
exasperated	adjective	describes intensely frustrated

Name:

Date:

“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl
Reading Questions

1. What is Mary Maloney doing in the beginning scene? Why do her eyes seem larger and darker?

Mary is waiting for her husband to come home from work. She is pregnant.

2. How does Mary feel about her husband?

Mary loves her husband very much. She will do anything to make him happy and comfortable.

3. What is Mr. Maloney’s profession?

Patrick Maloney is a police detective.

4. How can readers sense something is wrong with Mr. Maloney?

Mr. Maloney is drinking more alcohol than usual; he is quiet and non-responsive.

5. What news does Mr. Maloney tell his wife? How does she immediately respond?

He probably tells her he wants a divorce and perhaps there is someone else. Mary walks away to get supper ready. She is completely confused and shocked—unsure of what just happened.

6. What violent event takes place next?

Mary kills her husband with the leg of a frozen lamb.

7. How does Mary establish an alibi?

Mary goes to the grocery store to buy vegetables and cheesecake in a cheerful mood. She has a light conversation with the grocer named Sam.

8. Why does Mary insist the officers eat the cooked lamb?

The leg is the murder weapon and by eating it, the detectives are destroying evidence that can’t be used against Mary in the future.

Name:

Date:

“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl
Literary Analysis

1. What point of view is the story told from? How does it affect the plot?

The point of view of the story is third person LIMITED. This greatly impacts the plot because readers are limited to only Mary's perspective even though she is not the one narrating the story. This creates mystery and suspense in the story because readers only know how Mary is feeling. Readers do not know if the police officers are suspicious of her or what evidence they may have found. Readers also feel that Mary is the protagonist in the story even though she committed a heinous crime. If readers were provided the thoughts and feelings of Patrick, maybe he would earn sympathy from readers too. Because we only get to know Mary, readers are more likely on her side.

2. What is the story's main conflict? How is the conflict revealed, developed, and resolved?

The main conflict in this story is Mary against Patrick. Mary adores her husband, but he does not reciprocate those feelings. Their dispute leads to the murder of Patrick. Their conflict is revealed when Patrick asks for a divorce. Their conflict is further developed as Mary continues to make dinner and her husband yells at her to stop. She is stricken with anger and the impulse to attack him. Mary resolves this conflict by killing Patrick.

3. How might Mary's pregnancy impact the story?

Mr. Maloney is leaving his wife while she is pregnant, which makes his decision to ask for a divorce more severe and painstaking for Mary. Her condition also makes her less suspicious to detectives when they are investigating Patrick's murder. People tend to view pregnant women as weak in addition to being maternal and soft, so for Mary to commit such a brutal murder seems unlikely to detectives. Also, the other officers probably pity Mary *more* because her husband was just murdered and now she is a widow who will have to raise a child alone.

4. Why does Dahl choose to omit the dialogue where Mr. Maloney tells Mary he wants a divorce?

Often when someone is reporting bad news, the listener will zone out or stop paying close attention because it is too painful or they are processing the information. By omitting this conversation, Dahl helps readers understand the disorientation and detachment of Mary in this moment. She can't comprehend what is being said, so like Mary, we are left to wonder if Patrick's words were all a part of her imagination. Additionally, by not knowing exactly what he said, readers are left to interpret Mary's actions later on in the story; was she justified in killing him or not?

5. How does Dahl build suspense in the story?

Dahl builds suspense in the story firstly by having Mary anticipate her husband's arrival home. She watches the clock in excitement for Patrick to arrive and readers anticipate meeting this character. As Patrick quietly drinks his drink and sits down, readers again are eager to hear what he has to say and how he will behave, especially as the room grows with tension. Mary's response to Patrick's news of divorce is unexpected. Her calm response intensifies the suspense. She quietly says that she is going to get the supper. Readers wonder when and how Mary will break down as she is stuck in a trance. Will she scream, cry, faint, vomit, plead, question or demand answers? Then once the police arrive, readers are left in even more suspense because the police search the house to look for evidence.

Readers know the murder weapon is in the kitchen, cooking in the oven, and that at any minute, a detective might figure out what has happened.

6. How does Patrick's profession impact the story?

The officers are less likely to suspect Mary because they know her on a personal level. Because the officers know Mary, they felt comfortable having a drink and eating dinner in her house, whereas they wouldn't do that if she was a stranger. This decision is great for Mary because now they have unknowingly destroyed evidence by sloppily eating the murder weapon. Another way Patrick's profession may impact the story is that Mary's closeness to the police force may allow her to have information vital to getting away with murder; she may have insight about what detectives are looking for that could help her cover up her crime more easily. Lastly, readers might assume that the detectives are likely to investigate Patrick's death in more depth because Patrick was one of their colleagues.

7. What is the dramatic irony in this story? What is the situational irony?

Dramatic: Mary has called the police and the detectives are in her house. As they are eating the leg of lamb, one of the officers says in relation to the murder weapon that it is "probably right under our very noses." Readers know that Mary is the killer and that the weapon is the lamb, but the police officers have no idea. Situational: Mary is a perfect housewife who never does any wrong. She is timid, pregnant, and loves her husband tremendously; readers do not expect her to kill her husband.

8. What are Mary's motivations and values? How are they revealed throughout the story?

Mary's motivations at first are pleasing Patrick. She is driven by making him comfortable and happy. She values their marriage and being a good wife. After Patrick reveals that he is leaving her, Mary's motive to kill him is out of rage. She seems to do everything for him and it still was not enough. Mary's motivation for covering up the crime and lying to officers is to protect her unborn child. Mary cannot go to prison because she must mother her baby.

9. What is Dahl's main message (the theme)?

Sometimes even good people do bad things if triggered or pushed in the wrong way.

10. What is the symbolism of the lamb? Why not have Mary kill Patrick with a turkey leg?

The lamb is known as a gentle animal. Lambs are pure and innocent; often they are the prey of fierce predators like the lion. Lambs are also connected to lullaby songs associated with childhood and innocence. (*Mary had a little lamb...*) By choosing the lamb as the murder weapon, Dahl adds another layer of irony because you wouldn't expect the most gentle animal of all to be the weapon of choice in a brutal murder. Lambs are usually the victims, not the culprits. In a way, Mary was like a lamb because she was such a docile, sweet, loving character. This emphasizes the theme that even people like Mary (lambs) can be pushed to a breaking point and are capable of extreme and vicious behaviors.

*Teachers—see more about this topic on the extended response worksheet.

11. Do you think Mary intended to *kill* Patrick? Does she feel remorse? Explain.

Answers will vary.

Name:

Date:

Extended Response
“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl

The original use of the phrase “lamb to the slaughter” is found in the Bible. This phrase is located in both Jeremiah and Isaiah (shown below).

Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Jeremiah 11:19 I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree and its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more.”

What is the literal meaning of the phrase “lamb to the slaughter”? How is it used metaphorically in literature or scripture? Why does Dahl allude to the phrase in the title of this story?

The phrase “lamb to the slaughter”’s literal meaning refers to how lambs are slaughtered for their meat. Lambs are the sacrifice for humans (and other animals) to eat and survive off of. This conveys the message that lamb symbolizes innocence and they are often victims to those stronger than them.

The metaphorical meaning of this phrase refers to someone who goes innocently and unconcernedly into a dangerous or life threatening situation—usually because they are misled or tricked (a consequence of their trusting nature).

Dahl uses this allusion for multiple reasons.

Mary represents a lamb because she is an innocent woman that is unsuspecting and ignorant. As Mary patiently waits for her husband’s arrival home, he blindsides her, ending their marriage and their life together.

Patrick represents a lamb as well. Patrick is unjustly murdered by an unsuspecting person, Mary. Mary’s betrayal of her husband is equivalent to the lambs who are unsuspecting up until the moment they are slaughtered. Patrick probably never thought Mary could behave in such a violent way.

Lastly, Dahl uses dark humor by titling his story “Lamb to the Slaughter” and having the literal weapon that slaughters Patrick Maloney be a lamb leg.