**‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ by Roald Dahl**

**TASK:**

**‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ by Roald Dahl is a clever story with an unexpected twist. Explain what it is about this story that you think is ‘clever’ and discuss how this adds to your enjoyment of the story.**

**Introduction**

* Name of text and writer
* Brief summary of plot (mention that she is pregnant)
* Use key words of the question – ‘clever story with an unexpected twist’
* Try to use evaluative words – clever, sophisticated, complex, intriguing, suspenseful etc.
* You could mention the symbolism of the title here.

**Paragraph 2- Characterisation**

* Describe Mary’s character at the start of the play (calm, loving, maybe obsessive, co-dependent etc.)
* Use a quote from story to back this up and explain what it reveals.
* What is the effect of describing Mary like this at the start – what does it make ‘unexpected’?

**Paragraph 3 – Characterisation/Relationship**

* How is their relationship presented to us – Mary = loving, doting on him versus Patrick = cold, detached
* Use a quotation that shows one aspect of their relationship and explain the effect
* What is the effect of showing this one-sided relationship – who is the ‘lamb’ here? How do we feel about Mary?

**Paragraph 4 – Patrick’s news/confession**

* Describe the lead up to Patrick’s news – the unusual behaviour – and how/what he tells her (use evidence/examples from the story to back this up – maybe the symbolism of the ‘oily swirls’)
* Explain why it is effective that Dahl doesn’t tell us exactly what he has said.
* How do we feel about Patrick here – think about what he is worried about?
* How does Mary react/how does she seem – in what way is Mary ‘the lamb to the slaughter’?

**Paragraph 5 – The Murder and aftermath**

* Explain how the murder is carried out – weapon, Mary’s actions
* In what way is Patrick ‘the lamb to the slaughter’ now - unsuspecting
* How does Mary react immediately after killing him – what is her main concern?
* Sum up how dramatically her character has changed and how this helps makes the story enjoyable/thrilling etc.

**Paragraph 6 – The Alibi & Dealings with Police**

* How does Mary prepare for going to the shop and setting up her alibi?
* What does she talk herself into on the way back?
* What advantage does she have with the police/how do they treat her – what is she able to do?

**Paragraph 7- Irony/Ending of the story**

* Explain all the ironies at the end and how the end is made sinister – changes our opinion of Mary
* What effect does the ending have – how does it emphasise the unexpected nature of everything in the story and Dahl’s message?

**Paragraph 8 - conclusion**

* Sum up why this was a clever story and how the techniques, unusual murderer etc. made this enjoyable for you. (Mention similar details to introduction – Title, author etc.)

**EXAMPLE INTRODUCTION:**

*Roald Dahl’s complex and thrilling short story ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ cleverly conveys the protagonist Mary’s dramatic change in character as she transforms from the perfect wife of a policeman, to a cold-hearted murderer who kills her husband with an unusual weapon. Skilfully, Dahl uses many clever techniques, such as, symbolism and irony to make this story suspenseful and enjoyable for the reader, teaching us that we shouldn’t judge a person on first appearance.*

**Paragraph 2- Characterisation**

*STARTER: Dahl clearly introduces Mary as a... character at the start of the story. He does this by...*

**Paragraph 3 – Characterisation/Relationship**

*STARTER: When Patrick arrives home, Dahl makes it evident to us that Patrick and Mary’s relationship is one-sided. Mary appears very...*

**Paragraph 4 – Patrick’s news/confession**

*STARTER: Dahl uses Patrick’s behaviour to indicate something is wrong but Mary remains oblivious. He cannot look Mary in the eye and...*

**Paragraph 5 – The Murder and aftermath**

*STARTER: Patrick’s murder is described in a very unexpected way. Mary’s actions are described as being...*

**Paragraph 6 – The Alibi & Dealings with Police**

*STARTER: The unexpected change in Mary’s character is obvious when she begins to plan her alibi.*

**Paragraph 7- Irony/Ending of the story**

*STARTER: Dahl deliberately uses a lot of irony at the end of the story to emphasise how unexpected everything about the murder is. The police repeatedly speak about the murderer being...*

**EXAMPLE CONCLUSION:**

*Roald Dahl successfully makes his short story, ‘Lamb to the Slaughter’ clever and unexpected by setting Mary up to be a peaceful, kind and loving wife to Patrick. However, when he breaks his shocking and unexpected news, Mary is left shell-shocked and transforms into a cold-blooded killer. Through this, Dahl teaches us that we should not judge people on first experiences and shows what we are capable of when pushed to extremes.*

**More detailed help for planning your essay:**

* **Mary’s characterisation, (how she seems different from a criminal/murderer. Why is this clever/interesting? What does it add to the story?)**
* **Mary and Patrick’s feelings for one another (contrast). (Explain how this makes you feel towards the two characters.)**
* **Patrick’s arrival home (how Dahl builds it up e.g. Mary waiting patiently for him). Patrick breaks the news. (How do you think he feels? How do you feel about him?)**
* **Mary’s reaction to Patrick’s news. (Why is it surprising/unusual?)**
* **Mary’s reaction after the murder (Again why is this clever/interesting?)**
* **The arrival of the police and her phone call to them, (how Dahl creates tension, and how he makes us wonder if she will be caught/get away with it.)**
* **Mary destroying the evidence and your feelings about this e.g. clever, funny. Do you want her to get away with it? Explain why/why not**