

## Critique Paper on “A Strange Story”

Ryūnosuke Akutagawa was the author of “A Strange Story”, a short story of Japanese origin depicting an odd tale of a young woman who merely went to a train station on a rainy day but came back with an experience unlike any other.

The story, conveniently placed under the category of a “weird tale”, portrays a recollection of Chieko’s constant worry and nervous breakdowns over the well-being of her husband, a commissioned officer in Europe during the war. She adamantly boarded a train despite the heavy downpour to meet up with her friend and thus begins her strange encounter with a porter who somehow knew she had a husband on the battlefield. As her concern over her husband escalated, later on, her second visit to the station had a similarly odd tone to it because the same porter as last time as he reassured her that her husband was safe yet slightly injured—even if the possibility of gaining this knowledge from across the border was unrealistic for a common porter—and will be coming home after a month. His words proved to be true as her husband arrived at the exact date mentioned. Afterward, her husband then shared his similar experience with a Japanese porter who spoke to him and suddenly disappeared after confiding with him about his injury. The couple eventually concluded that they must have been seeing the same porter, although impossible and too ghost-like. However, it is revealed in the end that her determination to get on the train in the first place stems from the fact that she had the intention to meet up with a man whom she almost had an affair with.

Akutagawa, also known as the “Father of Japanese short story”, created this certain story in a manner that managed to grasp the attention of the reader, clinging to every word and possibly eliciting critical thinking among the various readers that may be interested in the metaphorical concepts of weird tales.

Although translated into English—therefore possibly undergoing changes that might alter a few details or words that cannot be fully conveyed through a language other than Japanese—Akutagawa was able to express the human mind’s indecisiveness of the supernatural through portraying a woman who is in a mental state of disarray that makes her doubt herself whether

she is still aware of her reality or not. Also, the author has transcended the limitations of words as he successfully captured the essence of a world full of doubt and uncharted waters.

The ultimate charm of the story is apparent when it manages to be completely up for interpretation and the reader can have the capacity to come up with their explanation for the events or even leave the story as it is. Moreover, the story can reveal not only the inner workings of the author himself but also the personality type of the reader; whether they opt for the more logical possibility or the poetically beautiful explanation. For example, the tale's events will either convince the reader that every scene was a fabricated lie to compensate for the guilt an unfaithful wife must be feeling or make the reader believe that supernatural beings are at play that simply wants to aid the couple in safety.

However, because of how the story is worded and structured, novice or beginner readers may find it difficult to grasp the metaphorical implications. These readers might also not easily understand the ending and how it can change the whole narrative of the story. Moreover, the conversational tone might also confuse some people, especially when arriving at the midpoint, possibly forgetting that it is a casual dialog recollection from a character, not entirely a third-person perspective. The story requires one's full focus and might entail re-reading it to internalize the plot and lesson it conveys.

The author's goal in creating a particular narrative is successfully executed in a manner that is subtle yet staggering, therefore teaching readers to analyze any story in a deeper context to gain more insights and lessons. In conclusion, if one is interested in peculiar narratives or stories that challenge the pre-conceived logical notions of reality, "A Strange Story" certainly is intriguing and worth the read.