

## Foreshadowing in Howard Steele's *To Be a Blight*

Charles Dickens, arguably one of the greatest novelists of the Victorian era, once said that "men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead" (Smith 220). In other words, there is a natural progression from acts taking place in the present that ultimately lead up to a predictable ending in the future. Through force of habit and experience, people are often able to interpret these acts and arrive at conclusions about the future. Many readers have no doubt witnessed a car speeding by them on the highway, only to see that same car in the ditch several kilometers down the road. This is foreshadowing in action and often occurs in literature. In Howard Steele's *To Be a Blight*, shadow play on walls, stressful background noises, and a progressively compressed timeline foreshadow the protagonist's murder.

The first precursor to Ken Frobiser's— the main character's untimely demise are the shadow forms that appear on walls throughout the story. To begin with, shadows in literature are representative of repressed desire. For example, in Looney Tune's *Bugs Bunny*, it is often possible to see the coyote's true desires through his shadow-play on the ground (Crisp 17). In the case of *To Be a Blight*, the stabbing motion of a knife on the walls mere seconds before the antagonist's arrival betrays his innermost desire to kill the protagonist. Secondly, the shadows are symbolic of the obscurity that shrouds the antagonist. The shady forms are described as "hazy" and "opaque"—both antonyms for "clear" and "lucid". The shadows that follow the antagonist, therefore, are quite literally the opposite of the saying "clear as day" and suggest to readers that Markus may not be all that he is pretending to be.

While shadows visually allow readers to predict the story's ending, the irritating background noises heard by the story's characters also serve to predict a gory ending. [...]

[...]

[...]

The progressively compressed timeline is but one in a series of artistic devices employed by Howard Steele to suggest that something ill will befall Ken Frobisher in *To Be a Blight*. In addition to a progressively condensed timeline, readers feel an intensification of the plot through eerie shadows playing out on the victim's walls and harsh, irritating sounds. Steele follows through on these foreshadowing devices by scripting Frobisher's death—an event which is no doubt interpreted by readers as a natural and anticipated conclusion to the story.

[676 words for 5 paragraphs: introduction, 3 x body, conclusion]

## Body Paragraph Hierarchy

