

Christopher Moore's books; Lamb, Fool and A Dirty Job are vicarious rides through familiar stories but with someone who is sarcastic and funny. His next book could be: *Little Red Riding Hood* "a ninja with a gun".

His motive is to retell familiar stories from the viewpoint of an unlikely, sarcastic hero, who gets the woman of his dreams and makes fun of the ignorant people around him. His motifs are supernatural love stories with prophetic foreshadowing.

Lamb is the gospel of Joshua (Jesus is Greek for Joshua) told by his best childhood friend Biff. Biff has a crush on the Virgin Mary, gives Josh a hard time about being the Son of God and is in love with Mary Magdala. This new Gospel tells the story of Jesus' missing years when he went to track down the three wise men that brought him gifts at his birth.

In Fool, Pocket is the court jester to King Lear. Like Biff, Pocket talks truth to power and takes chances with people, ghosts, mystics, witches, and kings that can destroy him, but with wit, guts and luck they both prevail.

Charlie in A Dirty Job becomes a gutsy and somewhat lucky during the course of the novel and he is also absolute irreverent in the face of his new job, Death. He learns that as a Death Merchant he retrieves souls from the departed and resells them in San Francisco thrift shop.

Moore's stories are telling the reader what he would have done if he were a character in these tragic stories. (My ideas of what Moore must have said)

"oh yeah well if I was an apostle I would have killed Judas myself." (Biff does)

"If I was in King Lear I would get the older sisters to kill each other and then marry the youngest and be king myself." (Pocket does)

"If I were death I would put the soul of my dead wife in a hot sexy woman and live happily ever after." (Charlie almost does, but you get the feeling he'll be ok)

The narrator and the heroes in each book know what is going to happen, or think they do in the case of Charlie; it is kind of cheating, like skipping ahead, or peaking behind a curtain. When Biff is talking to Joshua about his affection for Mary mother of god,

" I don't mind that she's mad. I like her blue cloak. And her smile. I'll be a good father, I'll teach you how to be a stonemason, and I'll only beat you when you are a snot . . . Wait be nice to your father, Joshua bar Biff" then Joshua (Jesus Christ) replies, "It's Joshua bar Jehovah" and shuts Biff down fast. (Lamb 15)

It is an obnoxious repartee with the Son of God, I am going to marry your mother and you'll be my son. The farcical nature of their conversation and the sheer lack of reverence for the whole family is hysterical.

In similar fashion Pocket gave the King Lear a hard time, constantly casting aspersions on the King's daughters' motives. After Goneril tells her father how much she loves him, Pocket gets up and says,

“Well, sirrah, lovable as thou art, the lady's profession strains credibility. It's no secret how much the bitch loves pie” too. The King: “Silence, fool” . . . “he then shot me his best Must I chop off your head? Look and I fell silent.”
(Fool 47)

This court jester walks a delicate line between talking truth to power and sleeping with all the king's daughters. Moore's motive is coming out here he presents a character that has so much guts and brazen disregard to consequence of his actions.

Charlie is just as obnoxious, despite being a beta male when he meets another “Death” or “Death Merchant ” named Minty Fresh a 6 foot 8 inch, 300 pounds black man in a mint green suit he gives him a hard time.

Charlie took the tall man's hand, his own hand disappearing into the Death Merchant's grip.
“I'm still sure I have questions. Can I call you?”
“No” said the mint one.
“Okay, then, I'm going now,” Charlie said, not really moving.
“Take care,” said Minty Fresh
“No idea of what the hell I'm doing, . . . the wait of the world is of all of humanity on my shoulders, by the way are you gay?” Charlie said
“What I am is alone, slap you up side the head I should,” said Fresh. (A Dirty Job 91)

Charlie handles stressful situations by giving people a hard time; he messes with Minty Fresh despite his situation. Later he talks about thread count with a demon. Lots of guts or just obnoxious behavior, Charlie like the other heroes has obeisant confidence in tight situations. Because Moore writes it that way, they always beat the consequences.

These three heroes are completely irreverent, because the author is on their side. Bad things happen to them but it works out. Biff is irreverence comes from him growing up with the Son of God. Having god as your BFF would seem normal after a while. His gospel tells of the 20 or so years the other gospels don't. Biff and Joshua travel east to meet the three wise men and gain their knowledge. At on point Biff says,

Josh, but still I am guessing that these people think differently than we do. They call the Buddha a heretic, and he was one of their princes. How do you think they'll receive a scrawny brown kid claiming to be the Son of God who doesn't live in their area? (Lamb 267)

It is funny to read someone talking to the Son of God that way, oddly irreverent. Joshua does from time to time get very angry with him but more disappointed, even Christ may have been self deprecating, he was Jewish.

Pocket is an orphan living in a convent, where he meets an anchoress (a woman who is supposed to be so wholly that she is walled up into a crypt and pays all day and night, and can only get food, water and get rid of waist through a arrow loop in the crypt) He starts to talk to her everyday and then, "Aye, mistress," said I, wedging my cheeks into the arrow loop. "Present the rascal for punishment" (Fool 73) and has sex with the wholly woman who is walled up. This got him a death sentence from the bishop, but he escaped because the nun that was to take him to the executioner, had slept with him too. That is irreverent and impulsive, but if the writer is on your side it is a good risk.

Charlie too is irreverent, when he meets a beautiful yogi who can take souls from the dieing and put them into anything that once lived so that the people can live on. He says to the woman,

"So you're some kind of monstrous reanimator," Charlie said. Then quickly added, "In the nicest way". (A Dirty Job 337)

Charlie doesn't act like any beta male I have ever seen, he has way more guts to say things that would really get him into trouble. Moore portrays all three heroes this way. This is his motive to show how these powerless everymen can be obnoxious, sarcastic and irreverent and still live and succeed on their wits.

These stories are like that old Daffy Duck cartoon, Duck Amuck by Chuck Jones, produced by Warner Bros. 1953. The animator tortures Daffy and draws him wrong and crushes him with anvils. Then the camera pulls back and Bugs Bunny is the animator and he say, "ain't I a stinker?" Moore's the stinker, and his heroes are his boys, and he has their backs. He sets his stories, animates these motives, in supernatural love stories of our literary past. Why not, he is the writer and in control, if these three wimpy guys with no powers can be godlike heroes, why not prove Jesus was really the Son of God, that ghosts exist and that the underworld is real. His motives are as preposterous as his motifs.

At the end of "A Dirty Job" two lines that sum up all three stories Motifs, Charlie says,

"I'm blessed or something. The prophecy says,"
"and yeah, I understand the line between reality and fiction
seems a little blurred here lately" (A Dirty Job 359)

In all three stories the hero is supernaturally blessed, and there is a prophecy that they are guided by. It makes for easy foreshadowing, and you really don't worry that the hero might die. Although in Lamb, Biff is brought back to life by an angel, and in A Dirty Job Charlie's soul is transferred into a 14 inch crocodile faced, web-footed animal wearing a purple silk robe, with a "ten-inch schlong" (A Dirty Job 384) but he still gets the girl.

In the beginning of Lamb an angel named Raziel gets the assignment to reanimate Biff and have him write a new gospel. The angel knows who Biff is and gives us an idea of what kind of guy he is or was.

“A Gospel, after all this time? Who?
“Levi who is called Biff.”
Raziel dropped his rag and stood.
“This has to be a mistake.”
“It comes from the Son.”
“There is a reason Biff isn't mentioned in the other books
you know? He is a total – “
“Don't say it.”
“But he's such an asshole.” (Lamb 2)

In a half a page you get that: Angels are real, Jesus lived and is the Son of God and that his best friend is a total asshole but has a story to tell. That sure is some supernatural foreshadowing. And in the next chapter they meet Mary Magdala, or Maggie and you find out how much Biff really loves her. However it is not till the end when he finally finishes his Gospel that he realizes that Maggie was brought back too, and was in the motel room next door writing her Gospel.

“It is the will of the Son that you two go out together into
this new world” (21st century it took two thousand years to
revive him)
They kissed for a long time until the angels cleared their
throats and murmur “Get a Room” under their breaths.
“You know, you're with me, and you love me and
everything, but it's only because you can't have Josh?”
“Of course.”
“That's so pathetic” (Lamb 437)

The motif of Lamb is of the story of Jesus told by his best childhood friend and despite the sacrifices that the Son of God made on earth and the death of his closest friend, and the besmirched name of their closest girl friend (That Mary was a whore, not true) it is rewritten into a happy ending.

In Fool, Pocket is told but a ghost "with grave offense to daughters three, alas a king a fool shall be" (Fool 13) I had know idea that the fool would end up as king. I just thought that the king would prove to be a fool for hating the daughter that loved him and trusting the daughters that did not. There is a lot of unclear prophecy going on, witches and ghosts seem to speak in riddles. The best example upon my reread is, “you put your titles aside, a fool still shall there reside, and

now and forever, you are my fool.” (Fool 58) said Cordelia the king’s youngest daughter before she leaves with the king of France.

Even at the end of the Fool with the two other sisters and the King dead, I still did not get that they were in love, with a capital L.

“Pocket, I’ve taken quarters in my old solar. I’d like you to visit after supper tonight.”

I bowed. “Does my lady require a story and a jest before bedtime to clear her head of the day’s tribulation?”

“No, fool, Queen Cordelia of France, Britain, Belgium and Spain is going to shag the bloody bells of you”

“Pardon?” said I, somewhat nonplussed. But then she kissed me. The second time, with great feeling, and she pushed me away.

“I invaded a country for you nitwit. I’ve loved you since I was a little girl. I came back for you. I knew you would be waiting for me.” (Fool 297)

It was a great way to end a story, the bad guys died and the good guys won, with the help of a ghost, who was the anchoress. And the anchoress turns out to be Cordelia’s mother, the king thought was cheating on him that is why she was entombed alive, she was a witch too.

A ghost came to me at the palace in Paris months ago. Sacred the béarnaise out of the king. She ‘s been advising the strategy since.” (Fool 297)

This is the perfect motif of supernaturally blessed prophetic foreshadowing. Lamb and Fool fit nicely into this category that Moore invented. A Dirty Job does too, however it references many books and legends of Death. The stories from The Tibetan Book of the Dead, bardo stories and Greek mythology of giant demons, ten foot tall black crows and Morrigan; almost every cultures’ Death myths all in one book. Charlie, the beta male, gets quickly overwhelmed with his new reality that spirits do exist. He asks Minty Fresh, the only one he knows from his new life as Death, to explain the craziness that is going on around him.

“I’m sorry Charlie, I don’t know what to tell you. There are a lot of legends portraying Death. Maybe you should head over to Berkeley, see if you can find something in the library.” Said Minty

“But be careful going over there. Don’t take the BART tunnels”

“You think the sewer harpies are in the BART too?” said Charlie (A Dirty Job 145)

In a few chapters he is in the fight of his life against demonic underworld figures. In his, “The Big Book of The Dead” it describes these as fights, as a prophecy, when the underworld will

collect all souls and emerge above and take over the world. The prophecy says that there will also be The Luminatus and they are the only ones that can save the world. Minty and Charlie come to the conclusion that The Luminatus must be Charlie because the underworld demons did not appear till Charlie became a Death Merchant.

“You must be The Luminatus”

“I was starting to realize that too” said Charlie

“Every time you fight one of these monsters you come out fine. These are two dead Death Merchants and my car was destroyed.” Said the fresh one.

“I did get shot in the ass, with a crossbow by a sewer harpies”

“But, I do believe I am the prophecy, I am The Lumintus”

(A Dirty Job 194)

At the end Charlie went alone bravely into battle with the forces of darkness.

Minty shook his head. “What chance do you have down there alone? Let me come with you. We’ll fight this thing together.” “I don’t think so,” Charlie said. “I’m blessed or something. The prophecy says, ‘The Lumintaus will rise and do battle with the Forces of Darkness in the city of Two Bridges.’ (A Dirty Job 359)

It seems at this point in the story, Charlie is favored by the gods, or at least by the author just like Biff and Pocket. When I was reading this quote, 20 pages from the end, the story had shaped up like I thought it would for the hero. He discovered he was supernaturally blessed. Met and slept with the woman of his dreams and through prophetic foreshadowing he would triumph. Which is pretty much what happened except,

“No, honey,” Charlie said. (he was wounded by the head demand Babd and Minty Fresh brought Charlie’s 6 year old daughter down to the underworld at her behest)

Sophie raised her hand and Babd was vaporized like the others - the captured souls rose like embers from a bonfire.

“Let’s go home Daddy,” Sophie said (A Dirty Job 378)

There was a little twist to the motif but the good guys won in the end. Charlie’s body did die but his soul was put into a “14 inch crocodile faced, web-footed animal wearing a purple silk robe, with a “ten-inch schlong” (A Dirty Job 384) by his mystic girlfriend who acquired the soul of his dead wife. It really was like that Daffy Duck Cartoon.

The next step is to find a story and use Christopher Moore’s Motive and Motif on it. Kind of like George Lucas’ Jar-Jar Binks in Star Wars, but sarcastic and more into sex. Moore’s motive takes control of the story and his motif make the read funnier and just in the end. I taught ninth grade English many years ago and had the kids rewrite Romeo and Juliet into a comedy. Basically

Romeo and Juliet would live happily ever after instead of dying tragically in the end. I was tired of the sadness and injustice, what is what I loved about these books, Moore did wanted to be funny not sad.

Here are some suggestions but feel free to edit it as you see fit...

Avoid personal pronouns - "I" "you"

Make sure book titles are punctuated consistently - they should be either underlined or italicized

Introductory paragraph - find an engaging way to bring the essay to 'hook' the reader and then give some brief background about each book you read prior to your thesis statement [so basically - combine a few paragraphs that you already have to make a stronger intro –

maybe use your idea of what Moore would have said as your hook?]

Motive is a verb, an action, being obnoxious, sarcastic and irreverent - make this more clear...not really sure what you intend

After your quotes from the book, add some commentary/analysis - how does it help prove your thesis?

Let me know if you have any further questions or if you want me to get more specific.

Also - bummer about that lady with the museum. Any alternative places where we could exhibit?