The demon barber of Fleet Street

SYNOPSIS

This story takes place in 19th century London. Benjamin Barker is an innocent barber who is punished for a crime he did not commit; the corrupt Judge Turpin sends him to a faraway country to do hard labour as a convict. Fifteen years later the barber returns to his London home with a new identity, and he is seeking revenge!

Taking on a new name of Sweeney Todd, Benjamin Barker goes back to his old barbershop on Fleet Street, located above Ms Lovett's Meat Pie Shop. Ms Lovett tells Benjamin how, after he was sent away, Judge Turpin forced himself on his wife, Lucy, and how Lucy then poisoned herself. Benjamin and Lucy's daughter, Johanna (who was then a baby), now lives with Judge Turpin, who made himself her guardian.

In the meantime, a young sailor, Anthony, who was on the boat with Sweeney Todd (i.e. Benjamin) as he returned to London, sees Johanna, who is now a young lady; he falls in love – and she with him! They plan to run away, but Judge Turpin sees what is happening. Wanting to marry the beautiful Johanna himself, Turpin foils their plan by locking her away in a psychiatric hospital. Sweeney Todd wants nothing more than to have revenge upon the judge and recover his daughter, so he decides to help Anthony. However, various unexpected things start happening, resulting in Sweeney Todd turning into a serial killer!

EMAIL
flip@flipeduca.com

WEB
www.flipeduca.com

PHONE
0034 936 555 677

Sweeney Todd has a rival barber, an Italian called Pirelli, who recognises him as Benjamin Barker and blackmails him, threatening to tell Judge Turpin who he really is. Sweeney Todd's killer instinct erupts and he murders him. Ms Lovett then has the idea of getting rid of the body by using it as filler in her meat pies. This is the start of a trend whereby Sweeney Todd kills client after client, his serial killing providing the meat for Ms Lovett's pies. The pies are a great success, and their small tavern becomes hugely popular. Ms Lovett is helped by Toby, a twelve-year-old orphan who had been working for Pirelli and who, at the end of the story, discovers the terrible truth.

As this goes on, Ms Lovett tries to interest Sweeney Todd in living life as a happily married couple, but he has just one thing on his mind: revenge. In the end Ms Lovett's plans fail calamitously, as Sweeney Todd discovers that she had tricked him into believing Lucy had died, when in fact she is still alive, now a mentally disturbed beggar woman who wanders the local streets. Inevitably, an awful end soon befalls them.

DIFFERENT VERSIONS

Sweeney Todd is a legendary character from 19th century Victorian London. There are claims that the legend is based on a true story, but no evidence to prove it.

EMAIL
flip@flipeduca.com

WEB
www.flipeduca.com

PHONE
0034 936 555 677

The storyline was the inspiration for a famous Broadway musical by Stephen Sondheim, which won widespread acclaim when it was first performed in 1979. Since then numerous versions of the story have been produced in theatres all around the world.

A film version of the musical was made in 2007, directed by Tim Burton, and starring Johnny Depp as Sweeney Todd and Helena Bonham Carter as Ms Lovett.

CHARACTERS

Benjamin Barker / Sweeney Todd: the barber who is the main character of the story. He was a happy man with Lucy, his wife, and Johanna, their baby daughter, until he was sent away as a convict for fifteen years by Judge Turpin and his cruel bailiff, Beadle Bamford, who wanted to separate him from his family. Having finished his time as a convict he returns to London seeking revenge.

Lucy Barker: Benjamin Barker's innocent and beautiful wife. After her husband is wrongly punished, the judge gets her drunk and sexually assaults her. Throughout the story we think that she then killed herself, but in the end we find out that she is a mentally disturbed beggar woman who roams the London streets.

Johanna: Benjamin Barker's teenage daughter. She lives with Judge Turpin, who has made himself her guardian and wants to marry her. But she is in love with Anthony, a young sailor, and wants to marry him.

EMAIL
flip@flipeduca.com

WEB
www.flipeduca.com

PHONE
0034 936 555 677

Anthony: a young sailor who met Sweeney Todd during his time away from London. He falls in love with Johanna without realising she is Todd's daughter, and he asks Todd to help them escape the judge and run away.

Pirelli: an Italian barber who is also a fraudster. He recognises Sweeney Todd and tries to blackmail him, asking for money to keep Todd's true identity secret, but Todd then kills him (his first murder).

Toby: a twelve-year-old orphan who had been working for Pirelli until Todd murdered Pirelli. He then starts living with Ms Lovett and Sweeney Todd, helping serve the pies. He loves Ms Lovett very much and believes she is good until, finally, he discovers the truth.

Beadle Bamford: a low, corrupt and mean character who helps Judge Turpin carry out his ugly plans.

Mrs Lovett: owner of the pie shop below Benjamin Barker's barbershop. She loves the barber and, when he returns from his years away, she does not tell him the full truth about what happened with Lucy while he was gone, wanting him for herself. She convinces Sweeney Todd to use the bodies of his victims as the filler in her meat pies.

Judge Turpin: a corrupt and amoral judge. Early in the story he tricks Lucy and then rapes her. As the story goes on he plans to marry Johannna, the daughter of Lucy and Benjamin Barker, who is just a teenager.

EMAIL
flip@flipeduca.com

WEB
www.flipeduca.com

PHONE
0034 936 555 677

VOCABULARY

bailiff: (*name*) an officer who keeps order in the court, makes arrests, etc.

barber: (*name*) a person whose job is to cut the hair of men or boys.

barbershop: (*name*) the place of business of a barber.

befall: (*verb*) to happen to (someone), especially by chance.

beggar: (*name*) a penniless person, a person who begs.

(to) blackmail: (*verb*) to frighten someone into making a payment of money, as by revealing secrets.

bloodthirsty : (*adjective)* having a strong desire for blood.

clue: (*name*) anything that guides or directs in the solving of a problem, game, puzzle, etc.

envelope: (*name***)** a flat paper container, as for a letter.

filler: (*name*) a substance used to fill something.

(to) **foil:** (*verb*) to prevent the success of something.

fraudster: (*name*) a person who commits fraud, especially in business dealings.

(to) get rid of something: (*phrasal verb*) to remove something that you do not want any longer.

(to) **grind up:** (*phrasal verb*) to crush into powder or small pieces.

guardian: (*name*) a person legally entrusted with the care of another's person or property, as that of a child or of someone who is no longer capable of caring for himself or herself.

hostage: (*name*) a person given or held as security for the fulfillment of certain conditions or terms, promises, etc., by another.

joker: (name) a playing card used as a wild card.

judge: (*name*) a public officer with the authority to hear and decide cases in a court of law.

EMAIL
flip@flipeduca.com

WEB
www.flipeduca.com

PHONE
0034 936 555 677

kind: (adjective) indulgent, considerate, or helpful.

meat pie: (*name*) a crust of baked dough, filled with meat.

poison: (*name*) a substance that taken into the body can destroy life or cause illness.

(to) **poison:** (*verb*) to kill or injure with or as if with poison.

razor: (*name*) a sharp-edged instrument used especially for shaving the face or trimming hair.

revenge: (*name*) the act of revenging.

(to) revenge: (*verb*) to demand or give punishment for a wrong done to (someone).

rival: (*name*) one who seeks to achieve the same object or goal as another; a competitor.

(to) roam: (*verb*) to travel without purpose, wander.

serial killer: (*name*) a person who carries out a series of murders.

stuck: (*past participle*) unable to advance.

(to) wander: (*verb*) to move around without a definite purpose or plan.