

# *Feng Chia University* *Outstanding Academic Paper by Students*

Title : Book Review of “American Crime Stories”

《美國犯罪故事》書評

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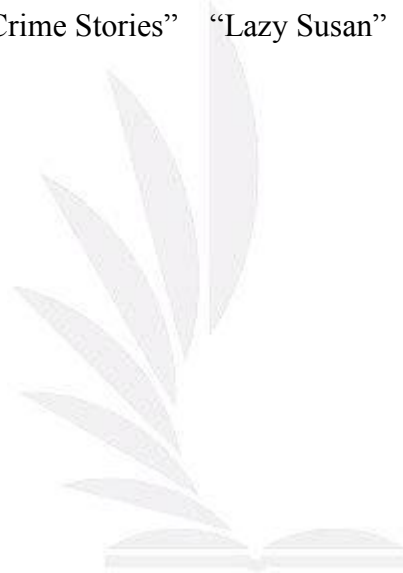
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## Abstract

This paper is to review some short crime stories in “American Crime Stories” collected by John Escott. It has found a theme that laziness can change a crime victim into a criminal in some cases. The book mentions this mainly in Chapter Six “Lazy Susan”, which narrates a story of a lazy woman called Susan who was very angry about being robbed but later became a mugger herself since she found that it was easier to make money in that way. This paper will first show the value of the book by focusing on analyzing this short story in two aspects: how laziness influenced the character Susan and how the plot developed. Then it will conclude that “American Crime Stories” is a very interesting book worth reading because it reveals many facts of crimes and allows us to explore the inner world of criminals.

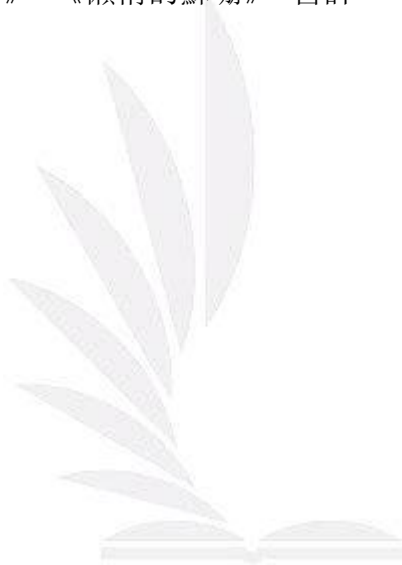
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## 摘要

本篇論文是對約翰·埃斯科特所收集并重述的《美國犯罪故事》所做的書評。文中主要探討關於犯罪的一個有趣的事實——有時懶惰可以使一名犯罪被害人變成罪犯。這一主題主要體現在本書的第六章《懶惰的蘇珊》的故事中。該故事講述的是一個名叫蘇珊、非常懶惰的女人在她被搶劫以後非常氣憤，於是進行了一系列的自衛訓練，然而到最後卻自己變成了一名行兇搶劫者。在本篇論文中，首先，筆者將重點從懶惰的性格對主角蘇珊的影響以及故事情節的發展兩方面分析《懶惰的蘇珊》這一故事，並通過詳細的分析該故事來展現此書的價值。最後，得出結論為：《美國犯罪故事》這本書揭露了很多關於犯罪的有趣事實，通過閱讀它我們可以深入探索罪犯的內心世界。

**關鍵詞：** 《美國犯罪故事》 《懶惰的蘇珊》 書評



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## **Book Review of "American Crime Stories"**

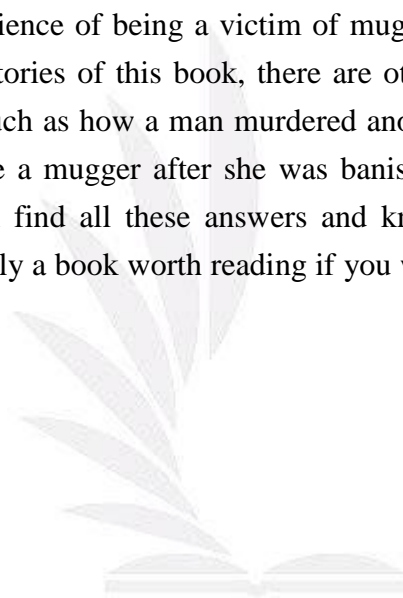
"American Crime Stories" contains seven plots written by well-known American writers and collected by John Escott in Oxford Bookworms Library. These stories show us some facts of crime such as mystery death, suicide, mugging and so on. However, the combination of mugging and laziness interests me most. In Chapter Six (PP.69-73) "Lazy Susan", a lazy woman who had been robbed became a mugger herself later. How did a victim of mugging convert into a mugger? In the following part, I am going to write about how laziness influenced main character Susan and analyze the process of Susan's change by dividing the whole plot into four parts.

The author Nancy Pickard suggests the main character and her characteristic in the title "Lazy Susan" clearly -- our main character in this story is a woman called Susan and laziness is a main feature of her. How lazy is Susan? There are some more supporting details in this article. In the beginning of the story, there is an interesting description about how Susan ate breakfast in paragraph four (P.69): "It seemed to her a silly waste of effort to eat only one thing at a time." commented the author. Except for being lazy in daily life, Susan was also very lazy in her work which is mentioned in paragraph ten (P.70). Susan worked in a sales office, "but there was more of her work that didn't get done than did." From these descriptions, we can see that Susan was a very lazy woman who always failed to finish her work and even ate only one thing at a time was a waste of time to her. Therefore, it's not very hard for us to understand why Susan became so angry after she was robbed. Although she didn't do much work, working was "hard" for her because of her laziness. She was very angry about the money she had earned by "hard" working was easily taken by the mugger. That's why she said "I have to work hours to earn that much money, and he takes it just like that! Fifty hard-earned dollars!" (Para.9, P.69) It was because of her anger that she decided to learn shooting and attend self-defense courses. Did she already develop the idea to become a mugger at that time or she just wanted to protect herself at first? Next, I will write about the plot and analyze more about the whole process of Susan's change.

Although this story is quite short, I found its structure is very complete and well-arranged. The story begins with Susan asking her husband to teach her how to shoot during the breakfast. Why Susan, a woman, wanted to learn shooting? This beginning can interest readers to read more. We can find explanations in the following paragraphs -- it was because Susan was robbed and she was so angry about it. Then in the second part, Susan learnt shooting and went to self-defense classes. She put a lot

of efforts to these things which was a surprise to her husband. Then the story developed in an unexpected way in the third part. Susan went to watch a movie alone and went back to the place she was robbed before. Instead of feeling afraid of being robbed again, Susan immediately got ready and robbed a poor old man after she saw him. The whole story ends during another day’s breakfast. Susan’s husband talked about “another mugging” reported by newspaper and had no idea of his wife Susan was that mugger. Susan just listened, stirred her coffee lazily and thought maybe she can find an easier way to make money. The author left an open ending to let readers imagine -- Susan’s “easier way to make money” might be mugging.

All in all, both the character’s changing process and the plot development in this story are all very interesting and exciting. Moreover, it can make me think about the motivation behind a crime. In this story, it might be the combination of the laziness of the character and her experience of being a victim of mugging that motivated her to commit a crime. In other stories of this book, there are other reasons for crime and also other facts of crime, such as how a man murdered another man because of envy and how a princess became a mugger after she was banished from her country. By reading this book, you can find all these answers and know more about the inner world of criminals. It is really a book worth reading if you want to find out more facts about crimes.



## Reference

- 1、John Escott (2008). *American Crime Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

