

The yellow wallpaper
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gilman essay



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The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is a story of repression of women. In the story the husband's domineering nature has imprisoned the wife into a domestic prison. It is the tale of insanity. In this sad story, the narrator the young woman is driven to insanity by her dominating husband. Even though her husband John was very much caring and loving, he never realized that his wife is a human being.

He was blind to her desires, longings and wishes. John the husband-doctor was too mechanical and never allowed his wife to come to her self. We can see that even though the wife was in a real prison, she never forget to acknowledge her husband's love and care as she says, " He takes all care from me, and I feel so basely ungrateful not to value it more. . .

. He took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose. . . .

He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well. " She is however sad that her husband is not able to understand her. She says that " he does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him (Gilman, 1997). " The interior wall with floral decoration itself signifies the female repression or imprisonment in the novel. The narrator was confined to the world of wallpapers.

She sadly explains her struggle as " I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her. I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper (Gilman, 1997). " The narrator was overprotected by her husband John was not allowed to work <https://assignbuster.com/the-yellow-wallpaper-by-charlotte-perkins-gilman-essay-essay-samples/>

during her illness. The wife but wanted to write in order to be free from her literal captivity. She says that " I must put this away-he hates to have me write a word (Gilman, 1997). " John does not find any reason for her illness.

He even doubts her illness and treats her like a child. Even though the wife wanted to explain her feelings to her husband he was not listening as he does not believe that she is sick. She was forced into a world of inactivity and was confined to the house prison. She was more or less like a prisoner in that house.

Her thirst for independence made her quite unhappy with her life though she had a loving husband. Her opinions were of no value to John as he disregarded it. The narrator was so disappointed that her husband was not able to understand her. She says that " You see, he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do? If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression - a slight hysterical tendency - what is one to do? " She could never convince her husband about her illness.

The depression slowly pulls her to madness. The narrator wanted to write and probably wanted to have interaction with others. She was however not allowed to write and was also not permitted to have visitors. She sadly says that " It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work.

.. but he says he would as soon put fireworks in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people about now. " She was confined to the room.

Her feelings increase daily as she remarks “ I’m getting really fond of the room in spite of the wallpaper.... perhaps because of the wallpaper.

It dwells in the mind so! ” She wanted to visit her cousins and says it to her husband. He however rebukes her as he says “‘My darling, ‘ I beg of you, for my sake and for our child’s’ sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so? ‘ He was too mechanical and was least understanding. The subjugation that prevailed in the society made women treated as subhuman. They were just considered as vessels of fertility and had the mere privilege of a set of ovaries and a womb.

The novel is all about women’s rights. We can infer from the theme of the novel that the author of the novel is a strong Feminist as he created characters that fought for the rights of women. The central character of the novel, the narrator fought for the same cause. The narrator attempts to become a strong individual even though she was being locked in a male dominated world. Her husband John’s dominating nature was the one that was preventing her from become self motivated.

She appeared inexperienced, naive and vulnerable till the end and finally lost her mind. The narrator’s world appeared to be so childish, the way her husband treat her. Even though the narrator is constructed as immature, we can see that this nature is enforced by the society around her. The narrator is found to be an independent woman who was restricted within the house

by her husband. Her life was like that of a butterfly that is trying to get out of the cocoon to show its true colors.

We can see the narrator striving, throughout the play, and finally losing control over her self. She falls into depression and eventually becomes mad. She was submissive to her husband and was enthusiastic and smart. We can say that the narrator was always right in her attitude as this was the best she can be towards her dominating husband.

Towards the end of the play however she is not able to control any more and get lost in the pressure. The feminist ideologies of the narrator are evident throughout her talk. She was found subordinate to her husband John who believed that women are frail and can never make decision of their own. The narrator's great passion for life and her strong feministic beliefs do not allowed her to be in the controlled world of her husband. Her house appeared as a prison for her all through these days.

The narrator was always under the care of someone, her brother and then her husband. Both of them being doctors do not understand her mind. They are least flexible and only look for her physical recovery. They do not allow her to indulge in something that she wanted to indulge in. She wanted to write; may be she wanted to pour out her depression into words. She was of the belief that more mental and physical activity would solve her problems.

She never desired to have physical rest. However her husband and brother were not able to understand this and compelled her to be under complete rest that would make her free from any activity. They were not able to

comprehend their self and did not even attempt to understand her. The male dominated world never wanted the husbands to understand their wives.

The narrator's husband and brother did not have any plan to listen to the narrator. The period in the novel represents the period when women are inferior to men physically, mentally and intellectually. The cultural, racial, religious and other pressures subdued women to a good extent. Young girls were supposed to follow their mother's path of cooking, cleaning and child caring and are supposed to become good house wives as they grow up.

Women were considered as feeble compared to men. They were confined to the jobs that require less labor. Maternity, the biological and natural role of women has been considered as their one and only role. In the novel the narrator was confined to her and was not permitted to have any outside contact. This pushed her to depression and finally made her mad. We can see that this mental depression was enforced into the narrator by the society around her.

Her life was like that of a butterfly that is trying to get out of the cocoon to show its true colors. We can see her striving, throughout the play, and finally collapsing. Even though the husband John loved her very much, the narrator was not happy with the false or restricting union of marriage and the burden of motherhood. The narrator can be considered as the upholder of women's rights in the novel. She was not happy in the male dominated world. She was struggling with the selfish, stifling, oppressive and dominating attitude of her Husband John and the society which he represents.

The narrator journey leads to her self-discovery as she mentally fought against the exploitation of women by men. John represents the orthodox society and the narrator is the advocate of feminism. John did not give any privilege to his wife and considered her as a silly being throughout the story. He was also very possessive and always tried to maintain his wife in his control. John never considered his wife equal to him. He thought that she is inferior to him.

The feminist beliefs of the narrator rose up as she realizes that she has been a foolish doll in a toy-marriage. This makes her depressed and finally mad. Wife was just considered like any other possession of John. She was not given any humane privilege. The feminist beliefs of the author hated this attitude of John as she always wanted to reveal her self. The narrator recognizes her rights at last and is awakened.

She stops pretending to be what she is not. She wanted to be a strong woman and desired to take control of her own destiny. John considered his wife as a status symbol and had a very narrow definition about marriage. He thinks that it is the duty of the wife to be good to her husband.

She deems women as helpless creatures separated from reality and moral force. The author highlighted the self realization of the main character the narrator and the way she becomes an example to feminist ideology. Even though the narrator reached a bad end, she is a good example of feminist women. The novel thus becomes an extraordinary work in which the depressed, mad or failed character portrays strong feminist ideologies. The attitude of the narrator reveals the strong feminist views of the author.

The narrator always wanted to get out of the clutch of her husband. She was not happy with all her social and traditional commitments and obligations and wanted to become free. She is such a classical character that our hearts are with her even she failed in her attempt to control her self. She can be called as a hero as a fought for a good cause, the freedom for the weaker sex.

The position of women during the period of the setting of the novel was too low. They lived as housewives with no right to vote, own property, and make any significant transactions. The narrator recognized her slavery and preferred to break away and live a life with freedom. It is nothing but her courage to fight against oppression made her the most admirable stage heroine of the century. What she has done is perfectly justifiable in the light is modern ideology and culture.

She was just being a model to the women of modern days. She wanted to step out into a wider world and wanted to convince her husband to understand that she is not the noble person that she expected him to be. She understands that she can no longer continue as a shadow of her husband. She turned out to be a classical hero in the contemporary male dominated society that oppressed women to the core and considered them as a second-class citizen. She can be considered as successful feminist even though she personally failed in her life.

She just initiated an awakening and made a classical turn in history.