

"trifles" and "the story of an hour" essay



" Trifles" by Susan Glasspel and " The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin have a common strong theme based on marriage. Both stories show that the females have lost their identity in marriage. " Trifles" focuses on a woman, Mrs. Wright, who is suspected to have killed her husband, Mr. John Wright, under unclear circumstances. On the other hand, " The Story of an Hour" focusses on an oppressed woman, Louise Ballard whose husband, Brently Ballard is suspected to have died in a tragic accident. These two stories show how two women, who are both oppressed, react to the ' supposed' loss of their husbands. This essay seeks to relate themes in those two stories.

A trifle in general terms refers to something or someone who is of little importance. In the play " Trifles", the title is symbolic as it refers to women as being of little importance in the society. Men feel that all important decisions are to be made by them (Gilligan 34). The men, in the play, betray a character of self-importance. They look at themselves as tough, serious-minded detectives while in real sense they are not as observant as the female characters (Belenky et al 16). When the men reach Mr. Wright's home, they view the house as a crime scene while the women look at it as a home. The men start searching from room to room for evidence while the women slowly pretend to be gathering Mrs. Wright's household while in real sense they too are searching for evidence, which eventually they find and hide from the detectives. The men, considering they look down upon the women, do not expect the women to gather any evidence but to their shock, they do. The women steal the box containing the dead bird, which would have acted as a good source of evidence (Glaspell 8). This shows loyalty between the women gender as we expect Mrs. Peter, being the sheriff's wife,

to present the evidence to his husband but that is not what happens. This shows that men and women think differently (Kolodny 458). Men deal with situations according to given rules while women are keen to details and are not procedural.

These two stories show severe cases of oppression. For instance, in "The Story of an Hour", when Mrs. Mallard is informed that her husband is dead, she insinuates that her body and soul were free (Chopin 23). This shows a woman who had been troubled and the news of his death is good news to her. She thinks of how she is going to live her life to the full with no one to control her.

On normal occasions, the news of death of a loved one is supposed to bring grief and sadness to an individual (Gilligan 64). But to the shock of many, Mrs. Mallard rejoices. This is strong evidence that she was oppressed by the husband and his demise was a good riddance to her. In "Trifles", we see a woman who is greatly oppressed until she cannot handle it anymore and opts to do away her oppressor. To show that Mrs. Wright was being oppressed by her husband, Mrs. Hale suggests that the strangled bird in the cage could have been killed by Mr. Wright just to hurt his wife. Moreover, Mrs. Peter feels that Minnie's life was parallel to hers as she compares situations that have occurred in her life. She vividly remembers how a boy had murdered her kitten long ago. "If they hadn't held me back I would have hurt him" (Glaspell 21). This clearly shows that since long ago, women have always been oppressed by their male counterparts in the society.

In both stories, we can conclude that women lose their identity in marriage. This is evident in the marriages of Hale, Wright, and Peters. While speaking to Mrs. Peters, Mrs. Hale asserts that she had heard that Mrs. Wright was fond of wearing pretty clothes that made her look beautiful while she was still known as Minnie Foster (Glaspell 17). This means that Mrs. Wright had been changed into a different person since she got married. The cheerful, well-dressed person was long gone. Later on, Mr. Peter, the county attorney, says that since Mrs. Peter is her wife, she is obviously "married to the law" (Glaspell 22). It is an indication that his wife had to lose her old self and identify herself as a part of the law. When Hale collaborates with the rest of the women to hide evidence from the men, it demonstrates the start of her rebellion to her husband's domineering behaviors. In "The Story of an Hour", Louise Mallard's reaction after the news of her husband's death shows that this is a woman who had lost her identity and her life had changed as a result of being married (Chopin 24).

As much as the two stories have similar themes, there arises a difference in the end result. In "Trifles", Mrs. Wright became free from her husband's repression as the husband was dead and the men had no evidence to prove that she was responsible for the murder (Linda 147). On the other hand, in "The Story of an Hour", Mrs. Mallard does not get to enjoy the fruits of living without being oppressed.

As illustrated above, both stories have women that are being oppressed in their marriages; moreover, they have lost their identity and are being looked down upon by men, hence the term 'trifles'. The women are tired of being oppressed and would gladly embrace freedom. However, one of the women,

Mrs. Mallard, does not get freedom but dies instead (Holstein 283).

Moreover, men are not keen to detail and that is why they failed to get evidence at Mr. Wright's house. Things that are considered to be unimportant can prove to be very important.