

Gendered space in susan glaspell's play "trifles" essay

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Susan Glaspell's play "Trifles" is a real example of feminist writing that addresses significant matters worth a debate. The setting is significant to the meaning of the work of writing as it influences its outcomes, the characters, viewpoint, and plot since it is connected to the principles, ideals, and feelings of characters. In her play, Susan Glaspell has employed tender, but successful aspects in the setting to build suspense as an effort to unravel the strange murder that has happened in John Wright's farm. Glaspell uses three men (county attorney, sheriff, and a neighboring farmer) who enter and leave the stage in an attempt to search for proof and intention of the murder (Glaspell 169).

The men discuss the little matters pertaining women, especially how Mrs. Wright was considering building the coverlet. The author puts across the setting in three spheres: time, geographical, and kitchen field. Together, the three features depict the characteristics, morals, and feelings of the characters imparting richer meaning to the play's effect. The time frame in which a work of writing is cast significantly influences the implication of the writing since principles, morals, and feelings of individuals vary with period and circumstances. Trifles was set and printed in 1916 during the period when women in America were not accorded the permission to make their own choices or chair any judicial panel (Cisneros 64).

Men commanded all areas of life during the period, apart from the domestic duties. Glaspell creatively applies the ideals and feelings of gender of this period where men view themselves as mentally superior in their effort to crack the assassination mystery. The three men further fail to grant the two

ladies the chance to contribute their ideas and opinion in the inquiry. As a matter of truth, when women think of trifles, the men brush them off as irrelevant (Glaspell 170). It is during this era when the woman's field was reduced to the house and principally the kitchen, where she spends all her time cooking, ironing, and talking with relatives as they visited.

Ironically, it is a woman who discovers the proof of the intention for the assassination in her kitchen, one place where men never bothered to inspect. Therefore, the setting feature of time fixes the stage for the dealings of all characters and the author moulds the events of the play in firm contrast to the gender view and mindsets of the day. Glaspell perfectly demonstrates the aspect of women perception in this play when the two women notices domestic items, which men consider as trifles that eventually contribute to the establishment of a plan for Minnie's offence. She attempts to suggest that women have powers that can match and enhance those of men, and a culture that restricts women's utilization of their gifts is inferior (Keller 127).

The geographical setting of a work of writing is significant than even the aspect of time and Glaspell applies geographical scenery that matches to the seasonal period. While she prepares the play in the cruel and dead chilly atmosphere of winter, she also places the farm in a dead and abandoned situation. This setting suggests the significance of characterizing Mrs. Wright's life as meaningless and solitary on her companion's farm. Glaspell supports this when she indicates that because there was a lot of work to be

finished in the farm, Mr. Wright spent long hours in the farm whereas Mrs. Wright stayed in their home (Glaspell 463).

The author also applies this chilly and abandoned setting to compare some solitude that Mrs. Wright had with that of infertility. Even more definite than the period setting and the geographical setting is the application of the kitchen as a stage aspect. Susan applies the kitchen aspect to illustrate the structure of mind-sets toward femininity and masculinity. The kitchen aspect plays as a cage for Minnie Wright where she is pinned by her dominating husband and secluded from the world. Glaspell uses symbolism when the three women discover a birdcage and the dead canary (Glaspell 172).

The bird represents Minnie's character while the cage represents the domination of her free will by her husband. Glaspell also uses the stove, cold house, and broken jars to represent the miserable lives of Wright's family. When the stove's flames extinguish, temperatures decrease below sub-zero point and everything apart from one of the preservation jars crack. The flames seem to symbolize Wright's marriage, and possibly they extinguish prior to or soon after the assassination.

The zero point temperatures that break the preservation jars signify Minnie's intellectual ability. The jar that is left unbroken is metaphorical of the little piece of intellectual well being left to her, and the expectation for a brilliant future that these two women envisage for her. Glaspell uses the symbol of a rope to represent Mrs. Wright's violation of male authority since strangling is a man's technique of murder. This leads to her revolt against her

authoritarian husband when she masters the strength to kill like a man, thereby defiantly affirming her equality (Glaspell 173).

Cisneros, Sandra. *The house on Mango Street*. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010. Print.

Glaspell, Susan. *Trifles*. California: D'arts Publishing, 1991. Print.

Keller, Mathias. *Symbolic Realism in Susan Glaspell's 'Trifles'*. New York: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.