

# Drama paper on trifles – susan glaspell

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



Susan Glaspell's one act play Trifles is based upon actual events which occurred in Iowa at the turn of the century. Between 1899 and 1901 she worked as a reporter for the Des Moines News, during which time she covered a murder trial of a farmer's wife, Margaret Hossack. The play was written some years later. (enotes. com, 2005) This essay aims to analyze the themes and ideas presented here by analyzing the central character. The full text of this play can be retrieved from <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/eng384/trifles.htm>

This paper aims to show, by conducting an analysis of the central character, Mrs. Wright (the accused), and discussing her thoughts, feelings and actions, how she is affected by events, other characters and environmental culture and values. Mrs. Wright is a farmer's wife at the turn of the century, at a time when feminism was beginning to come to the fore, but many years before the active burning of bras, in the 1960s, without children.

Moreover, she is married to a man who is not known in the outside community for his social skills - to quote Mrs.

Hale, one of the female characters in the play, to pass the time of day with him would be like a raw wind that gets to the bone. We never actually meet Mrs. Wright in person, but it is from the conversation of the others that we learn about her. For instance, from the women's observations, and despite the comments of the men, we learn that Mrs. Wright is in fact a good homemaker - she quilts well, is diligent about her preserves, the pans were neatly arranged under the sink, and the roller towel was in fact clean prior to Mrs.

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Wright's departure (it was dirtied by the man who came in later). She also had bread set ready to be baked. This attitude displayed by the males in the play is indicative of unfair judgements made by men at the time. Even the title of the play, *Trifles*, indicates that what women worried about at the time was considered unimportant. Thoughts, feelings and actions Mrs. Wright, prior to her marriage, was a singer. We learn also that later in her marriage, she buys a bird. It becomes apparent that Mr. Wright cannot tolerate the bird's singing and kills it.

The women deduce that Mrs. Wright has begun to equate herself with the bird - initially feeling caged, stifled and killed - prior to her marriage, she went out, sang and had fun, and in the very last act, the cage broken, symbolizing freedom, if not of the bird's body, at least of its spirit. Unwittingly, in one of the opening sentences, Mr. Hale contributes to this image of Mrs. Wright being oppressed by commenting that he didn't think that what his wife wanted mattered much to Mr. Wright. Having lost everything prior to this, Mrs.

Wright could not tolerate the loss of the one thing that she loved. This death of the bird was the act of anger that the men did not find. Her marriage has been similar to a caging, killing (of herself), and in the final act of killing her husband, she has in fact set herself free - although ironically she is now in jail. Mrs. Hale hits the nail on the head when in hindsight she realizes indirectly that Mrs. Wright was lonely - the unpleasantness and coldness of the place which kept her away kept others away too. With the death of the bird the one thing that was fun had now gone too.

Interestingly, the bird died of strangulation - and Mr. Wright also died because of being constricted around his neck. Environmental culture The men have gone there with their minds made up and to them it is just a matter of trying to find the proof. The women have gone there with no such convictions, through going about their business they find the truth and yet are still able to show compassion - they decide to take Mrs. Wright the quilt, so that she can undo the last untidy square and complete a nice piece of work. Doing this, they find the dead body of the bird.

Having been constricted and confined in life, the bird has been laid to rest in the most beautiful place Mrs. Wright can think of. They also find good fruit and decide to take this to her to convince her that after all her fruit did not rot. Instinctively, they know that this will make her feel better about herself. It is interesting that although it is the men who are there to investigate the case and get to the bottom of things, it is the women, through their observations and insight, get to the truth of the matter.

They are the ones who notice, and understand, the erratic sewing of the last quilted square, for instance. The men believe that everything is clear, except for a reason for doing it - which they have not discovered despite having occupied the same premises as the women for the same amount of time. The women think briefly about disclosing this - their eyes meet - but they say nothing. They do not discuss it with the men - it would not be their place. Women at the time were considered inferior, the men where the authority.

Thus, although some do know the truth, in fact, because of environmental cultures and the norm of the time, it is never discovered fully. Over 100 years later, one must believe, and be grateful that this would no longer

happen. We have learned through trial and error and instances such as this that there are a variety of viewpoints and insights that can help us get to the truth. Works Cited Enotes. com, 2005, retrieved 10 April 2006 from the website <http://www.enotes.com/trifles/> Trifles, Susan Glaspell, 1916, retrieved 10 April 2006 from the website <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/eng384/trifles.htm>