

# What is the setting of trifles?

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



A notable number of literature works in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century focused on the concept of gender equality and role of women in what was apparent patriarchal society. One of such literature works is Trifles by Susan Glaspell. Trifles play was authored in 1916 with a view of highlighting the role played by women during the contemporary society of early twentieth century.

It is a classic illustration of the male dominance that was popular during this period. In the play a murderess is used to depict the role assigned to women by men, most of them being unimportant issues or trivialities as the title of the play, trifle, suggests. It illustrates the little regard that men viewed women as people of lesser value and importance than themselves. The idea of male dominance is repeated in several episodes in the play and the misconstruction of facts just because they were associated with women. The key highlight in the play that supports the major problem of patriarchal dominance in the play are the very ironic consequences when it emerged that a woman is the one who discovered what men had been looking for.

According to the dialogue of the play, the men show they do not deem what the women say important or relevant. It is based on a true trial story which happened in Des Moines and the author had covered it while working as a reporter. The events that culminated in the trial was a murder of Mr. John Wright who had been found strangled even as the wife was dead asleep. In the play, Mrs. Wright is depicted as a helpless and isolated woman who depends wholly on the husband. Although the play is based on a true trial story, the author managed to enhance the theme of male dominance in the then contemporary society. At the start of the play, men are described to be

seeking for a motive at the residence of Minnie and John Wright. At the onset of the play, men are depicted as dismissive of the possible leads in the kitchen that could culminate in the identification of murderers. The sheriff is on record saying with finality that there was nothing in this location other than the usual items of the kitchen. He is provoked by the notion that kitchen belongs to women and nothing meaningful can come out of it, especially if men are the ones in charge of the search. To highlight this perception further, the sheriff makes derogatory statements of Minnie while mocking her for her bother about fruits, yet she was being held for a murder case.

It is a clear indication of the perception of most men towards kitchen that was commonly considered the territory of women and men are not interested in the on goings in there. As a reaffirmation of this perception, the attorney, who is a male, declares that there was little men could do without ladies for all their worries. Although it may sound as glorifying women in the society, it insinuates that the gracious men tolerate the worrying women because of the love they have for them. The reality is not anywhere near this insinuation, because they appreciate and acknowledge the contribution of women only because of their ability to do laundry, cook or clean their houses. In the play, the male characters are such bigots that they characterize women because of their affiliation to men and not according to their intrinsic values as females. All women in the play, save for Minnie Wright, do not have the first name, but instead, they have taken up the last name of their husbands, yet they are the major protagonists in the story. The male dominance in the setting of this play is so prevalent that the men do not see anything wrong by the unfavorable interest of Mrs. Hale and Mrs.

Peters in unimportant things. This has a clear perception that women are small-minded and flighty to be concerned about weighty matters such as the investigation that was going on. When a troublesome kitchen got their attention, they were quick to conclude that the woman of the house must have failed in her abilities as a homemaker.

According to them, the husband, John Wright is a responsible, good man who can only cause trouble because the woman is at fault. In effect they rally behind the fellow man, in order to protect his reputation. This is an explicit indication of a patriarchal society of the early Twentieth Century. The theme of male dominance is further displayed from the meek voices associated with women and the overall disregard of their contribution in finding solutions to the problems in the society. While questioning Mrs. Hale on her relationship with the Wrights, the attorney keeps interrupting her rudely and reducing her contribution to just a wife of a farmer with full hands. In this play, the role of women has been relegated to that of others, who in effect implies that they are not part of the mainstream society. It is clear in this play that women are considered as others and are a representative of what the society would refer to as imperfect or misfit. They are considered as insignificant and are only concerned with their dull trivialities. The boxes of fabric and preserves jars are considered by men as of little value to the investigation because of their association to women. Interestingly, this is a major undoing among the women because their deliberate neglect of these leads is a reason for the case downfall.

Should Mr. Peters and Mr. Henderson had overcome the stereotype of profiling women and all that are associated with them, then the clues from the kitchen could have been of great help in unravelling what befell Mr. Wright. Finally, the play concludes with a discussion of the discovery in the cupboard by Mrs. Peters. While waiting for the male counterparts to examine the crime scene that was located in the upstairs, Mrs. Peters stumble upon a very old birdcage (Gla 1. 1. 85-86). It was strange for such artefact to be found in the kitchen considering that Mrs. Wright never reared birds. As they kept wondering about the possible source of the cage, she recalled that there was a hawker who was peddling canaries and Mrs. Wright must have bought it. It could later be interpreted that the cage was figurative of the married life that Mrs. Wright was in. Under the normal circumstances and objective reasoning, it would be justified to conclude that Mrs. Wright killed her husband but according to the investigation team comprising of men, believes that such crime was either too high or too complicated to have been committed by a woman. This is what the play indicates as the problem when the decisions are arrived at while looking through the lens of gender and with the wrong mindset that women are inferior to men in all aspects of life.