

Literary analysis paper  
from a  
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## Literary Analysis Paper on the play Trifles from A Psychoanalytical

Perspective Susan Glaspell's play Trifles permits the reader to think about the dilemma of female identity and patriarchal dominance from a psychoanalytical perspective. Psychoanalytic approach focuses on the significance of unconscious mind and the exponents of psychoanalytic theory hold that human behavior is determined by one's past experiences that lie dormant deep in one's unconscious mind. Psychoanalytic perspective in literature is based on the assumption that the individual is very often unaware of these past experiences that are left in the unconscious mind (Psychology Glossary, 2010). The play puts forward certain questions about the status of female identity and reader can find that the male dominating society treat females as mere trifles. They expect only a submissive life among from the women folk. The whole play is based on Mrs. Wright and her survival as a 'woman' in a male dominated society. Mrs. Wright's past experiences, her earlier life and her perspectives about men have played a vital role in her present status of being a criminal who killed her husband. The playwright has very well employed a psychoanalytical approach to reveal the motive for the crime through the characters of Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale. The reader can comprehend the fact that Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale explore the murder mystery and take conscious effort to justify the crime. From a psychoanalytic perspective the reader can understand that it is Mrs. Wright's suppressed feelings that force her to act as a murderer. In the play one finds Mrs. Hale commenting on Mrs. Wright's life that "not having children makes less work - but it makes a quiet house". Similarly, in their investigation Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters find a fancy little box covered with silk having a dead canary. The reader understands from their

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conversation that Mrs. Wright's husband did not like the canary's song and he strangled the bird. Through killing the bird Mr. Wright pulled his wife in to a world of solitude and Mrs. Wright chose the murder attempts as a fitful revenge. Information about her past life like her cheerful appearance, colorful dress and her sadness after marriage throw light on the problem of identity crisis in Mrs. Wright's life. Mrs. Hale also reveals that Mrs. Wright in her youth had been an active member of town girls singing in the choir. After the marriage Mrs. Wright's life becomes very much monotonous and Mrs. Hale's comments justify the above statement. As she observes: " She—come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself—real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and—fluttery" (Trifles). Thus, the reader understands that Mrs. Wright's life after marriage resembles the caged bird itself. The elements of psychoanalytic feminism also play an important role in this play which explores man's psychological needs to subjugate women. The play exposes Mrs. Wright's emotional life and her cold and oppressive behavior force the reader to think about the blackness of her life. Elements of psychoanalytic feminism are portrayed through the efforts of Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters by revealing the mystery. Even though, their findings were expelled by the males they find some significant information such as ruined fruit preserves, unfinished quilt, half clean table top and the empty bird cage. Mrs. Peters's says, " it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us" (Trifles) Here reader cannot ignore their conscious efforts to hide the crime and their reactions against the male dominating society. Susan Glaspell portrays her male characters as followers of self importance and they often act as tough, serious minded and skilled observers. Their ostentatious approach prevents them to admit the observations conducted by Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters. As <https://assignbuster.com/literary-analysis-paper-from-a-psychoanalytical-perspective-from-the-story-trifles/>

Ward Bradford rightly observes, " Not only do Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters bond, but they choose to hide evidence as an act of compassion for Mrs. Wright" (Bradford, 2011). Suppressed feelings about their submissive status in the male dominating society motivate Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters to justify Mrs. Wright's action. Images of empty bird cage, unfinished quilts and unclean table top offer powerful examples of symbolism in Susan Glaspell's play Trifles. The killing of the bird symbolizes male intolerance and dominance. Mrs. Wright wishes a life of a free bird in the endless sky. But her unhappy married life with Mr. Wright forces her to lead a submissive life. To conclude, it is evident that Susan Glaspell's play Trifles portrays the issue of female identity and patriarchal dominance. Reader can find elements of psycho analytic perspectives through the inner psyche of Mrs. Wright, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters. The dramatist makes use of various symbols to explore the submissive status of women folk in the contemporary social scenario. Through their efforts to conceal their findings regarding the death of Mr. Wright, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters inspire the reader to think about the significance of psychoanalytic feminism in the play. References Bradford, W. (2011). 'Trifles' by Susan Glaspell - Plot and Character Analysis. Retrieved Jan 26, 2011 from About. com website: [http://plays. about. com/od/plays/a/trifles. htm](http://plays.about.com/od/plays/a/trifles.htm) Psychology Glossary. (1998-2010). Retrieved Jan 26, 2011 from AlleyDog. com website: <http://www. alleydog. com/glossary/definition. cfm? term= psychoanalytic%20perspective %20%28psychoanalytic%20approach%29>