

Unseen irony: an
interpretation of
susan glaspell's a
jury of her peers



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Throughout Susan Glaspell's "A Jury of Her Peers" there were many instances of irony mostly caused by the men, which ultimately prevented them from completing their goal of solving Mr. Wright's murder. Glaspell wanted to emphasize the men's lack of respect for the women's intelligence as being the main reason why they were unable to solve the murder by having the men address the women "with good natured superiority" and say things such as "Women are used to worrying over trifles." or "well, can you beat the women! Held for murder, and worrying about her preserves!". In another ironic turn, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters ultimately find power in being devalued, for their low status allows them to keep quiet at the play's end. The women are able to go about their own investigation unhindered by the men because of their perceived lack of ability to use any of the information gained. This is what allows them to go through the house and see Minnie's old clothes, proof that her husband was stingy and didn't think a woman needed nice or new clothes. The jars of preservatives, to show that so much work needed to be done on a farm and that Minnie wasn't sheltered from any of it. The unfinished quilt, made with a particular technique called "knotting, this could also be a metaphor for Mrs. Wright tying a knot around her husband's neck, which is why the women are so confident, after realizing that she did indeed kill her husband, that she was going to knot the quilt. The final piece being the canary with the broken neck, which the women realized was so much like Mrs. Wright. The women remember how much she liked to sing and how free she used to be, but now she was just locked in the house every day just like the bird. Because the men were walking around absolutely sure of their superior detective skills, they were none the wiser. '

A Jury of Her Peers,' Susan Glaspell reveals obvious sexism which leads to <https://assignbuster.com/unseen-irony-an-interpretation-of-susan-glaspells-a-jury-of-her-peers/>

the women's sense of justice being altered and ironically preventing the men from solving the murder.

Mael Phyllis points out how "women share their experiences" which could allow them to "act out of a new respect for the value of their lives as women, different from, but certainly equal to, the world of men". Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters are able to share memories of their own lives, which were similar to Minnie's, just different in her own way. All of the women lived on a farm, they all had to work to make it through the next week, they were all married, some had kids. But Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters weren't so downtrodden, their husbands loved them and treated them well enough. The two women talk about how Mr. Wright and how he could be a rough around the edges individual, how he had suppressed Minnie's naturally vibrant personality and turned their home into a cold place. Going through the same general lives on different properties bring the women together in a way that the men could not understand and showing their open sexism to the women only strengthen this bond, ironically making it more and more difficult for the men to solve the murder. Phyllis Mael goes on to say that Glaspell understood when women are brought closer through their experiences they could be empowered to make decisions that they otherwise would not be able to. This empowerment is what possibly helped Mrs. Peters the most. Since she was "married to the law" the men had no doubts as to what side she would pick if she found any evidence, they thought that her sense of justice and right and wrong were just as strong as theirs because of the man she married. The men never could have anticipated that their open arrogance would completely and so easily sway a person from their own

moral code in just a few minutes and actually push her to aid a murderer, just another ironic outcome of their sexism.

In 1917 most states still did not allow women to sit on a jury, which meant Minnie would almost certainly been judged by an all-male jury and stereotypically an all-male jury would deliver a guilty verdict to a woman accused of a crime. The women wanted to make sure Mrs. Wright was truly judged by her peers, people who knew her struggles and life. The two women couldn't stand the sexism and the way Minnie was treated, so much so, that they didn't even need to have a conversation beforehand, it was just silent agreement. They needed to know that in their eyes she was being given a fair chance, not by men in a courtroom, not by the same type of person that had already pushed Mrs. Wright to murder and gotten her into this situation in the first place.