

# Good susan glaspells trifles literature review example

[Art & Culture](#), [Symbolism](#)



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## **Background and Setting**

“ Trifles” is a one-act play written by Susan Glaspell in 1916. Glaspell brought base for her play from a real murder story of a former John Hossack, the case that she had covered when she was a journalist with Des Moines Daily News Paper. In that case, the victim’s wife, Mrs. Margaret, was suspected as a murderer. Based on this story, she built a story for her one-act play, “ Trifles.” The action of the play revolves around a murder of a farmer Mr. John Wright. Someone put him to death by strangling him by a rope. His wife was sleeping next to him when he was murdered, but she convicted that she had a sound sleep, which made her to unaware of the murder of her husband. The same was the case with the real story, but Mr. John Hossack was severely beaten to death by an axe. In both the situations, it is often suspected that the murders were happened all because of their unhappy married life. The setting of the story itself speaks about the gloominess of the situation where the murder happened. Even at the very beginning of the play, the kitchen of Mrs. Wright was portrayed as a dirty

and molested condition. Everyone could feel the filthy and chaos over there that itself showed that something might have happened wrong. The lonely farmhouse and the bare kitchen showed the emptiness of the dwellers' life. Glaspell effectively presented the settings that is more important for a one-act play to make the readers or audience to understand the situation evidently.

## **Plot Construction and Characters**

The plot of the story moves with the characters of the play, which are the driving force to bring a clear idea about the story. Unlike novels or short stories, here the characters are the storytellers. Glaspell depicted the whole situation through five main characters and the two characters played from off-stage as the plot revolves around the murder they involved as victim and murderer. County Attorney and Sheriff came to the abandoned farmhouse of MR Wright where his murder took place to look for evidence to prove that Mrs. Wright is the murder, along with Mr. Hale, witness of the murder, Mrs. Hale, and Mrs. Peters. Mr. Hale was the first person who had seen the corpse of Mr. Wright other than Mrs. Wright. He explained the behavior of Mrs. Wright when he entered the house as if she did not bother about the death of her husband; instead, she was laughing and rocking in the rocking chair that made the police to suspect her, as she might be the murderer. Two men who were searching for evidence searched everywhere except kitchen as they left it the kitchen would have nothing but the trifles things on which women used to worry about. However, they were mistaken and they missed the strong evidence, the dead canary, which the two women found from the

sewing basket of Mrs. Munnie Wright. They did not reveal the truth to the two men because they could empathize from the situation of Mrs. Wright who was once a happy bird singing beautifully and she lost everything when she was married to Mr. Wright. From the words of Mrs. Hale, it could be understood that even before the death of Mr. Wright, the farmhouse was not so cheerful and she herself never liked to visit once. It is clearly visible that the story had a background of a feminism where the feelings of women were considered as trifles and often were ignored by the so-called society of men. This is the fact that made the two women to hide the dead canary that might help them to conclude the murder case.

## **Themes and Symbolism**

Feminism played a vital role in this one-act play. The world of women is often ignored by the men society. It is true that their world is different from men's, but it is filled with love and happiness, which is often deployed by the men world. Glaspell used the real murder story to depict the mental health of women and described how they are mocked by the men world for worrying about trifles. Glaspell has used several symbols in her one-act play "Trifles." First, the shattered kitchen in the abandoned kitchen shows the chaotic condition of the situation. Secondly, the dead canary is a symbol of Mrs. Wright herself that expressed that she got her spiritual death even in the next moment of her marriage with Mr. Wright. The carcass of the bird speaks everything about the murder, which was failed by the two men to find as evidence. The lonely and collapsed farmhouse is the symbol of emptiness in the life of Wrights. Even though there was a gun, Mr. Wright was murdered

by strangling in a rope to death as if the bird met its death. The bird, dirty kitchen, lonely farmhouse, dirty towels, and dead canary are a few symbols used in the play. Glaspell uses all the symbols effectively to describe the gloominess of the situation.

## **Trifles, a Crime Story**

It is obvious that Trifles is a crime story. Glaspell skillfully moves the suspense of the story throughout and revealed the truth only through symbols. By showing the dead canary in a pretty box that met its death like Mr. Wright, she portrayed the situation of the murder as well as the mental health of the murderer. Mrs. Wright might be the murderer as she met her fate and lead her unhappy life with Mr. Wright. She might be or might not be the murderer, but she was happy about the death of Mr. Wright as she found some hope of singing in future, which she did not do in her life Mr. Wright. Glaspell simply enacted the story of Mr. John Hossack's murder in this one-act play. Further, she tried to put forth the idea of feminism through the female characters. "Trifles" is a crime story that revolved around the story of the crime that had been committed.

## **References**

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