

Character analysis of katherine ames in “the astronomer’s wife” by kay boyle

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



The character of Katherine Ames in "The Astronomer's Wife" by Kay Boyle exhibits feelings of disparity in her marriage displaced by the connection she has with the plumber. Her disparity is marked in the way they live daily life, and how Mr. Ames refers to Katherine. Because of the substandard treatment from her husband, the plumber intrigues her and a mutual attraction develops between the two of them. The first sign of disassociation between Mr. and Mrs. Ames is at the beginning of the story when Katherine wakes up in the morning. She starts her days with coffee, aerobics, and then daily chores while Mr. Ames stays in bed. The story says she would be absent from him all day. Mr. Ames is a driven astronomer who spends the majority of his time laying still in bed, on the roof behind his telescope, or wandering across the mountains. The story suggests a lack of correspondence between Mr. and Mrs. Ames. She must feel that the silence between them speaks to her more often than her husband actually does. When he does speak to her during the course of the story, he shows a disdain for his wife in a manner that suggests Mrs. Ames and her dutiful concerns are unimportant or not equivalent to him and his work as an astronomer. He says to her, "Katherine! There's a problem worthy of your mettle!" Mr. Ames doesn't do any housework and seems to be uncaring to the reason of the plumber's presence. The plumber seems to resent the tone of the astronomer's words, and recognizes Mrs. Ames as a beautiful young woman starved for attention. He asks Katherine if Mr. Ames would care to give notice to the problem with the drain, and she says Mr. Ames is still in bed. From this point on Mrs. Ames and the plumber become very friendly towards one another. The plumber seems to talk to Mrs. Ames about his job in a way

that she can relate to; where as her husband talks over her head. For example, the story says everything the astronomer had ever said to her was a continuous query to which there could be no response. The plumber spoke to her about the drain saying, " I think something has stopped the elbow", and she could see how the elbow of a drain could be stopped up from daily usage. Mrs. Ames had never experience a man speaking to her so plainly. She saw her husband as the mind, and the plumber as the meat of all mankind. With her husband she watched and listened, with the plumber she interacted. The plumber is a man who has no controlling overtone, and seems to know exactly how to communicate with her. At the end of the story, she follows the plumber to find the drain problem, while he talks to her the whole way. The astronomer's wife just wanted her husband to step out of his vocation and talk to her down to earth as the plumber did.