

# Example of essay on female freedom

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Literature has always had various functions depending on the time when it was written, but it has always had a peculiar feature of diverse meaning and subsequent messages the author would be able to send to the target audience. In this context, literature serves as a means of communication with potential triggering of certain ideas and even actions. In terms of feminist discourse, literature is viewed as means of expressing one's experience and also triggering diverse and often unpredictable and unexpected interpretive experiences of the target audience. One of the best examples of an interpretive literature is a short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Gilman. The aim of this essay is to show the complexity of interpretations of the message sent in this story and its subsequent interpretation.

After finishing the story, the most common interpretation of its meaning is that woman was insane or driven insane by being isolated from the social environment because her husband considered it best for her. His failure to cure her resulted in her final insanity and him fainting when he faced his mistake. In this case, the casual audience would consider that the aim of the story was to show the inefficiency of medicine in Victorian times and that sometimes the closest people are more of enemies than allies (Crewe, 276). So, placing the events the story into the time when it was written, it can be argued that the author aimed at showing the world how women were fragile under the power of male medicine and that the status of depression was equal to being insane (Schumaker, 592). Thus, from a first glance, it may seem that the author's message is in criticism of medicine.

On the other hand, looking into specifics of time, social environment of 19th

century America and Gilman's biography, the interpretation will be different. Having suffered from an unwanted marriage and post-birth depression, Gilman was practically reflecting her own state of mind when she was locked in four walls (Crewe, 284). Just as the heroine of the story, Gilman could not fully express her-self as an individual in marriage with the man she did not actually love, and did not want to be with, on the first place. In the short story, it is reflected through the lack of understanding and trust between the main heroine and her husband, who thinks about social appearance of her behaviour and not about reasons for that or what would have been better for her (Schumaker, 598). The main heroine argues:

**" You see he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do?"**

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression - a slight hysterical tendency - what is one to do?" (Gilman, 4).

In this regard, it can be argued that the whole story is about a female emancipation struggle but not in a sense of one's job performance or even equality of genders. The message sent by Gilmore was more about emancipation of one's inner self and listening to one's heart irrespective of dogma's and prescriptions of biased society (Schumaker, 594). The heroine of the story was unravelling her own identity under the layers of the yellow wallpaper, trying to find out who was that woman behind making that noise.

In this regard, just as Gilman was trying to find herself in understanding whether she could endure an undesired marriage, the main heroine was trying to find her own reflection behind the yellow wallpaper - the object which was out of order in the room just as she was out of order in that society (Crewe, 289).

Thus, the story follows the author's life story. Having reached the point when normality of socially-accepted behaviour could no longer satisfy her inner self-perception and desire to emancipate, Gilman could no longer stay married to Charles Stetson, just as the main heroine could no longer stay under her husband's control. She chose insanity over submission to socially imposed norms, yet in her insanity she gained the power to overrule her seemingly logical and sane husband:

**"I've got out, in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you**

can't put me back!" Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right

across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!"

(Gilman, p. 23)

The whole impression from the final paragraph is that Gilman aimed to say to her audience that pretending and denying one's true nature makes people vulnerable and weak in front of society which aims at unification and standardization of all. In this regard, she suggests that by not having enough strength to be himself and let his wife be free next to him, John was actually weak by nature while his wife had the courage to give up her sanity in order to be free of him and his society (Crewe, 276). Gilman also had the courage

to be herself - she divorced and married again to the man she actually loved. Therefore, the message of the story can be read completely only in terms of autobiography of the author, which gives a context for interpretation. In this case, it was a desire and necessity for a woman to be her natural self - creative, unpredictable, full of life and passion - to be free.

Overall, from all mentioned above it can be concluded that in order to analyse any literary work, simple contemporary understanding of the context is not enough. The historical pretext and author's biography are keys to understanding their driving forces of writing a certain literary work, which again help to understand its meaning and purpose. From the author's perspective, there is only one way to interpret the work, on the other hand, each reader brings his/hers background into the picture and judges read the context on the basis of personal experience and perception of reality and posed issues. This makes literature unique.

## **Works Cited**

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