

Character analysis of john in "the yellow wallpaper"

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



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John is the typical Victorian husband. He is authoritative, strict, head of the household. He is a physician of "high standing". He is very controlling and expects his wife to obey his orders which was quite normal for the time. He is a doctor but only understands physical illnesses. He cannot relate to any mental problems particularly as far as women are concerned. For him, it is something she will get over, mind over matter: "You see he does not believe I am sick!"

He dictates how his wife should be treated and says she needs lots of sleep and quiet.

He forbids her from writing her feelings down or from seeing anyone. We get the feeling this is more about him hiding her away rather than it being for her own good. He shows no empathy of how she is feeling and dismisses it as nervous depression or hysteria. He is very stiff and buttoned up:

"John is practical in the extreme.

He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures." He is undoubtedly fond of his wife and loves her in his own way. However, he treats her like a child or a pet and sees her as something fragile to be protected: "He took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose." He does not see her as an equal but as someone who should look up to him, to be meek and mild and not to be taken seriously: "John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in a marriage."

John is rather a cold character showing no understanding or even wanting to understand his wife's illness. He does not see it even as an illness but rather

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as her needing to pull herself together. He is almost fearful of any mention of mental illness and when she suggests her body is well but not her mind he gives her “ a stern reproachful look” and describes it as a “ false and foolish fancy”. His prime concern is to keep his standing in society and does not want his wife to be an embarrassment to him.