

Charlotte Gilman through the yellow wallpaper illustrates

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



Charlotte Gilman through “ The Yellow Wallpaper” illustrates personalities connected with old American views. During this time in history, women were commonly observed as belongings. Although a number of specifics have been altered, there are similarities amongst Gilman and the narrator of the story. The short story revolves around a woman who has a newborn baby and is now struggling with an illness. As a result, her husband, baby, and sister-in-law accompany her to a summerhouse to acquire peace and rest, ultimately hoping to restore her health.

Ironically, the very opposite effect appears to occur. By analyzing different themes in “ The Yellow Wallpaper,” it’s evident the characters surrounding the narrator aided in her creating a second self to satisfy her desolation and wish to regain power over her life.

Women’s historical responsibilities in society and in literature are often described in a position of submission. Women were commonly repressed and controlled by their husbands and other male figures. As Kathleen Wilson points out, the financial and public dependence of women on men was a common relationship during the time Gilman wrote this story.

The narrator is going through a challenging time in her life, and she is seeking a method of solace. Instead, her husband proceeded by forbidding his wife from doing any work to the point of alienating her from her baby. Greg Johnson notes the narrator’s husband is portrayed as a powerful repressive male antagonist, and he enforces his will and power upon her. The everyday world of masculine order and domestic routine subjects the narrator to find comfort in an imaginative world. Linda Wagner-Martin cited

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women who grew up in the 19th century struggled with the position of being a mother and a wife while maintaining lucidity. Eventually the narrator chooses a life of madness over repression, refusing a life of unhappy silence. Her performance can be seen as a manifestation derived from long suppressed anger, an anger that ultimately leads to a mental breakdown.

A clear example of a woman's role is demonstrated through the narrator's sister-in-law Jennie. She is portrayed as a pure and avid housekeeper. Johnson states, during this time in history women were viewed useful in the realm of housekeeping and child rearing. Jennie agrees with these thoughts and beliefs and followed these guidelines completely. Likewise, when the narrator is unable to care for her newborn child, Jennie without hesitation steps in. Jennie is accepting of the rigid hierarchical and imaginatively sterile repression of women. Similarly, Jennie agrees with the idea that mental stimulating activities such as writing have the potential to aggravate a woman's health. Therefore, the acceptance of women's weakness is evident, while reinforcing the belief that men are more powerful and controlling than the opposite sex.

On the other hand, the narrator demonstrates a stance against the norms and establishes characteristics of rebellion. Wilson gives notion; the unnamed protagonist is confined to a room that's away from the rest of the family. Her husband has forbidden any type of mentally stimulating activities, to the point that she is unable to interact with her young child. Ironically, John is an individual who has proper education and knows more than the average human being. However, he still finds belief in women being delicate

creatures and that they have little to no capability outside the territory of the domestic sphere. The new mother finds compatible comfort in her newfound fantasy world. As time passes, and she realizes that her voice is not being heard she becomes quieter each day, sinking into her anger and despair. Therefore, solitude becomes boring, and it encourages the narrator to find comfort in analyzing the yellow wallpaper that covers the walls in her room.

As a result, a common theme of mental illness is presented by the author, it is derived by the continuous restriction and confinement women had to endure. Rena Korb explains that John physically and spiritually traps the narrator. He decides which activities are acceptable and which are not; he simply knows what is best for his wife. As a result, the wife assumes her role as a submissive creature and asks permission to initiate the activity of writing. John responds by denying her request. Consequently, the narrator feels a need to escape, to do more with her life, and she begins to feel irate. She is aware of the limited control she has over her life and is desperate for a change, but there is little to nothing that she can do about it. Therefore, the narrator begins to imagine a figure that is trapped in the wallpaper. Ironically, the figure represents the protagonist's build up emotions and resentment, leading to an expression of insanity.

On the other hand, John, the protagonist's husband, is portrayed to be a caring, a well-educated individual who wants nothing more than for his wife to become healthy. Upon further examination of his actions, it is evident he is nothing but a villain. As Johnson declares, the husband depicts the typical

male characteristics of power and repression. Every decision he makes demonstrates actions of masculine order.