

Discuss and or
compare the role of
women in society
in `trifles` and `death of
sale...

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



An American woman's life in the early 1900s when one-act play "Trifles" was written by Susan Glaspell was a whole lot different than what it is today. During that time, women were expected to stay at home while their husbands go to work and earn a living for their families, a noble task which society deemed fit for men in as much as cleaning house, hanging clothes, cooking food, washing dishes, and taking care of children were noble tasks meant for women. Women were educated, but the education or semblance of which merely served as a superficial credential to make them more attractive potential mates.

Society was undoubtedly patriarchal, with wives' submission to their respective husbands' taken both as the norm and the biblical good. (Mitchell 23) It was during this time that Glaspell wrote the play about a murder and that crime's subsequent solution through a series of trifles. Even at the start of her play, Glaspell showed the disparity of social class between men and women. One example is the scene at the start of the play where the three male main characters enter the warm farmhouse first before the two women do despite the fact that it was freezing cold outside.

This signifies the priority that men assert of their needs over the needs of their women. It also signifies a sense of women being beholden to their men, the wives did not complain about the shabby treatment of their husbands of them in the scene, they considered it quite normal to wait until your husband enters a house before you yourself can do so. Another was one of the male characters constant mockeries of female concerns. That character, Mr. Hale, trivialized the many details of the tasks that women in that era were

responsible for by using the words “ women are used to worrying about trifles”. By trifles, Mr.

Hale meant the small, seemingly nonessential details that his wife and all other wives as can be concluded from his disposition are always fussing over. He complains that his and Mr. Peters’ wives worries about unkempt state, pots, bread, and other kitchen items scattered about, about Mrs. Wright’s preserves being frozen and cracked are of no significance to the problem at hand, which was the murder of Mr. Wright. Here we see that not only were women being expected to be obedient, to stay at home and do the chores, but they were being ridiculed by men for being careful and mindful of the very things that husbands expect their wives to do.

Mr. Hale never takes into consideration that it is his wife’s worries over the things that he considers as “ Triffles” that lets him go home to a warm meal and a clean bed every single day, that gives him fresh, neatly ironed clothes every morning and not to mention a home cooked lunch. This mockery and ignorance show how little of a value society at that time actually placed on the tasks of a woman that it has expected of her. Another important detail that could be observed in the play was how women were indeed smarter than men gave them credit for.

The wives of the two main characters eventually solve the mystery of the murder where their husbands failed. The women do so through investigating the very same “ trifles” that the men ridicule them for. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale found the quilting that Mrs. Wright was working on, and takes note that the sudden change in the quality of the stitching may connote that

something had happened that upset Mrs. Wright. They found a broken bird cage and wondered if there was a bird, and then finally they found a small box upon looking for sewing supplies to take back to Mrs. Wright.

The small box contained a bird with its neck wrung. The women put the clues together and decide not to tell their respective husbands, this last part somewhat connoting their preference to deny their husbands solid proof regarding the murder of Mr. Wright to which Mrs. Wright stood accused. The play portrayed the men as blind to the clues that the women were able to find, this stressed the inequality between men and women even more, showing that although women could be just as smart as or even smarter than their male counterparts, their roles in society were still below those of their husbands'.

The final aspect of the play that is connected with women at that time was the portrayal of Mrs. Wright. From the discussions among the other characters it was apparent that Mrs. Wright lived a stressful existence under the rule of her husband. Her husband was described as a difficult man, and the character of Mrs. Wright was implied to have endured years of abuse because of it. This last portrayal concretizes the marginalization of women during those times.

It leaves to the viewers to connect the irony of how a woman who had been subjected to years of degradation from a man who supposedly vowed to love and cherish her is in danger of suffering one last injustice, to be held intrial for the murder of the very man who had drained the life out of her. Decades later since the first showing of " Trifles" in 1916, Arthur Miler wrote what

would be later known as a classic of American Theater. "Death Of A Salesman" which was first shown in 1949 was not primarily about women, but about how one man's delusion and desperation caused the degradation of his family and his dignity.

However, this man's wife who was the main female character in the play showed very vivid portrayals of whether the concept of woman had evolved. Linda's characterization in the play fares women no better than the women characters in "Triffles". Linda Loman from "Death Of A Salesman" was yet another disheartened housewife who still kept fulfilling the usual tasks due to an American housewife. She is loving, caring, understanding and ever obedient to her husband, Willy Loman who never fails to tell her to "shut up" whenever she puts a word out of line.

Linda's insights and intelligence are a lot more than Willy is characterized as having, but her unfaltering devotion towards him prevented her from using her wits to save her family because she knew that such an act would rob her husband of the glory that in that era made men, men. The scenes that involve private conversations with her sons showed Linda's brilliance and common sense, a common sense that diminishes in scenes of Linda speaking with her husband wherein she plays stupid with her responses usually limited to "Yes Dear." or "what, Dear?". In conclusion, we say that both plays had feminist ideals embedded in them.

Both plays portrayed the injustice being done to women and how these women of the past coped with such injustice. The time between the releases of these two plays connotes the period when these literature were written as

struggling times for women. These years marked the birthing of a generation of women who would finally wise up and begin to take their rightful place in society as men's equals. The plays were evidence that some women already knew what was happening, and that these women were eager to spread the word of female liberalism which would later be known as feminism.

These plays exposed that the treatment of women as housebound cleaners, babysitters, and cooks while at the same time failing to give proper recognition for these tasks and the women who did them was unacceptable. (Mitchell 85) The play showcased a woman's abilities and strengths despite living in a man's world. It showed that a woman can and will exceed a man if she chooses to. It scolds the women who have not yet awakened by portraying characters that resemble them. The battered and abused who are the Mrs. Wrights, and the smart, loving and caring yet neglected, unappreciated and frustrated Linda Lohans.

These women represent those who cannot fight back, or those who think that what is being done to them is proper. These characters call out to those women and show them how pathetic they've become in an attempt to jolt them out of it and make them take a stand. American women have come a long way since these two pieces of literature; they have made countless others and are continuing to make them to date. They have gained much ground in their battle for rights and would do all that they can to push ever harder, reach ever higher, and make it ever clearer that no man has a right to make any woman feel that she is below him.