

Prosperity and social justice essay

Literature, American Literature



Charlotte Gilman is mostly known for her contributions to the early feminist movement. This is why her story “ The Yellow Paper” was confusing to most of her readers. Most of her other works champion for the place of a woman as an active contributor to the economy. However, “ The Yellow Paper” is arguably Gillman’s most significant contribution to classic literature. The short story was also the subject of debate when it was first written because it failed to fit in any particular genre at the time.

“ The Yellow Wallpaper” was mostly considered a horror story when it was first published because of the manner it unnerved readers at the time. The story details the experiences of a mentally disturbed woman who believes that there are women trapped in the wallpaper of her house. The story is borrowed from Gilman’s own experience when she suffered from post partum depression and had to be put on resting cure.

Modern day literature classifies this story as a psychological horror story with strong elements of gothic literature. The horror elements in the story are similar to those used by Edgar Allan Poe. Just like in Poe’s “ Tell-tale Heart”, this story is narrated by a seemingly insane narrator. Poe is considered a pioneer writer in the horror-literature genre. The story uses the gothic genre of the 1700s that usually featured scary old mansions and young heroines. This story uses both of these elements.

Gillman used this story as a tool for furthering her feminist campaign. The story depicts the place of women in the society and likens it to being trapped in wallpaper. The episode described by the narrator in this story is eerily similar to Gillman’s experience when she was put under resting cure. Gillman

likens resting treatment to being reduced to utter inactivity and thereby being subject to mental disorders. Today, post partum depression is treated by releasing anxiety instead of piling it up by subjecting a patient to inactivity.

Man always believes he is in control until he comes face to face with the unforgiving and uncaring nature. Various writers have addressed such unfortunate turns of events in various avenues. In his story "To Build a Fire", Jack London details a traveler's battle with freezing temperatures.

On the other hand, Stephen Crane's short story "The Open Boat" details the efforts of a group of sailors who are trapped in open sea in a small boat as they battle strong ocean currents. Although these stories were written in different contexts, they both detail the powerlessness of humans in their efforts to control nature.

In both stories, the main characters are overwhelmed by the uncaring nature of the elements. In "To Build a Fire", the traveler ignores the old man's advice not to travel in freezing temperatures. However, the traveler ignores the nature of the cold weather to his own peril. In Crane's story, four men are trying to overcome the ocean's tides using a boat that is the size of a bathtub after their ship sinks.

The men in the boat are disappointed because even after hours of hard work, when they come near safety the tide still blows them further back into the sea. This is similar to the traveler's disappointment that in spite of the fact

that he can make a fire, the cold weather still gets the best of him. This naturalistic literature was popular during the 17th and 18th centuries.

This was a time when human beings were at war with each other, diseases, and harsh climatic conditions. However, the strength of the human will never wavered until the end as demonstrated in the two stories. Whether human beings make it or not in such situations is a matter that is beyond their control.