

# Racism, materialism, and sexism in revolt of the evil fairies, a perfect day for ...

[Environment](#), [Air](#)



Revolt of the Evil Fairies”, “ A Perfect Day for Bananafish”, and “ Trifles” each have an unseen presence that is so prevalent that it might as well be a character. “ Revolt of the Evil Fairies” indirectly discusses the topic of racism, while “ A Perfect Day for Bananafish” alludes to materialism, and “ Trifles” mentions the subject of sexism.

In “ Revolt of the Evil Fairies” by Ted Poston, a young African-American boy is denied the role of Prince Charming in the school play. Not because of a lack of ability or talent, but for his skin color. Evidently, the unseen presence in this short story is racism. While the narrator, a sixth grader, talks about the play and the events that occur itself, the short story is indirectly discussing racism and the fact that it is almost always swept under the rug and ignored. Like many other situations in real life, where it doesn't matter how hard he or another person of color worked, “ it was an accepted fact that a lack of pigmentation was a decided advantage” (Poston). The play is ironically called, “ a modern morality play of conflict between the forces of good and evil,” by Miss LaPrade, while she and the other teachers discriminate against their students based on skin color alone (Poston). After the narrator is denied the role of Prince Charming he can see that “ the teachers sensed my resentment. They were almost apologetic,” (Poston). Meaning they knew what they were doing was wrong but didn't entirely regret it. The play is interrupted by a fight between the narrator and the boy who was chosen to be Prince Charming. Eventually, the entire stage breaks into a fight, resulting in the curtains being momentarily closed. Shortly after, “ they rang the curtain back up fifteen minutes later, and we finished the play” (Poston). This epitomizes how the issue of racism is dealt with in

society. When a problem arises, it's tucked away until it calms down and can be forgotten again. Each of these points are relevant because just like today, racism is usually ignored or accepted without question.

J. D. Salinger's "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" symbolically deals with the issue of materialism. There are two main symbols for materialism in this story: greedy "bananafish" and sunburns. It begins with a phone call between a woman, Muriel, and her mother. The conversation constantly goes from idle gossip to Seymour, Muriel's husband, and quickly back to gossip. Though the two can't stray from the gossip for long, what Muriel's mother says strongly suggests that Seymour has a serious mental health issue. During the phone call it is important to note that Muriel states that she is "so sunburned she can hardly move" and Seymour is "pale" and "won't take his bathrobe off" (Salinger). Though it is apparent that Seymour isn't well, the severity of his illness is not because Muriel does not seem worried in the slightest. When they are about to hang up she says, "Call me the instant he does, or says, anything at all funny - you know what I mean" to which Muriel replies, "Mother, I'm not afraid of Seymour" (Salinger). At the beach, a little girl named Sybil is being slathered with sun tan oil by her mother. The action of the mother putting sun tan oil, which will probably result in a sunburn, on her daughter represents how materialism is passed down in an almost natural way by our parents or people we look up to. Sybil is innocent and only allows her mother to use the sun tan oil because she doesn't know any better. She runs along on the beach and finds Seymour, who tells her a story about bananafish. Seymour says the bananafish, "lead a very tragic life," "

they swim into a hole where there's a lot of bananas. They're very ordinary-looking fish when they swim in. But once they get in, they behave like pigs. Why, I've known some bananafish to swim into a banana hole and eat as many as seventy-eight bananas," (Salinger). The bananafish represent people in society who start out ordinary and become materialistic. Sybil says she sees a bananafish, but it only had six bananas in its mouth. This bananafish represents Sybil - she is young and innocent for the time being but is becoming a materialistic person just as the sun tan oil symbolized before. The two go their separate ways and Seymour heads to his hotel room where he suddenly commits suicide next to his sleeping wife. In the beginning of the story it is obvious that Seymour Glass is psychologically damaged from the war, but as the story goes on it becomes clear that he not able to cope with the materialism of society among other possibly unnamed things.

"Trifles" by Susan Glaspell revolves around the subject of sexism. A woman, Mrs. Wright, is jailed for murdering her husband and while the sheriff and county attorney investigate her home, their wives accidentally solve the entire crime while "worrying over trifles" (Glaspell). The two wives, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale, wait downstairs while the men investigate and begin discussing a quilt Mrs. Wright had begun to piece together. Mrs. Hale says, "I wonder if she was goin' to quilt it or just knot it?" just as the men come downstairs (Glaspell). The sheriff interrupts with "They wonder if she was going to quilt it or just knot it," to which the men laugh (Glaspell). This was an attempt to degrade the women who were only there to help. The men go

outside, and Mrs. Hale continues examining the quilt, “ look at this one,” “ look at the sewing! All the rest of it has been so nice and even. And look at this! It’s all over the place!”, “ what do you suppose she was so nervous about?” (Glaspell). They then find an empty bird-cage and a fancy box. Upon opening the box, Mrs. Hale finds a bird which has had its neck-wrung, like how Mr. Wright had been with a rope in his sleep. It is apparent that the bird was special to Mrs. Wright and it was murdered. The men interrupt again, and Mrs. Hale hides the bird. This time it is the County Attorney who decides to be rude towards the two women, “ well, ladies, have you decided whether she was going to quilt it or knot it?” (Glaspell). They then leave once more to continue the investigation upstairs. With the men gone, Mrs. Hale continues the conversation about the bird, “[Mr.] Wright wouldn’t like the bird - a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too,” (Glaspell). After marrying Mr. Wright, Mrs. Wright became reclusive, so much that her friend didn’t even know about her pet bird and she stopped singing. Mrs. Hale says, “ I might have known she needed help! I know how things can be - for women, I tell you, it’s queer, Mrs. Peters. We live close together and we live far apart. We all go through the same things - it’s all just a different kind of the same thing,” meaning most, if not all, women experience some level of sexism in their lifetime. The men return to the kitchen for the third time with nothing new of the murder except for the rope. The County Attorney says. “ at least we found out that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to - what is it you call it, ladies?” (Glaspell). This shows that even after three times, he didn’t care or pay enough attention to remember what he was talking about when degrading the two women. While the men were ironically being rude,

sarcastic, and sexist, they didn't come up with anything new for the murder case while the two women who were "worrying over trifles" solved the whole case (Glaspell).

Each story has had at least one unseen presence that is so prevalent that it might as well be a character. "Revolt of the Evil Fairies", "A Perfect Day for Bananafish", and "Trifles" each touch on major subjects such as racism, materialism, and sexism. These stories were all written before the 1950's and the topics mentioned in them are still relevant today because they have either gotten worse or stayed the same.