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“ I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wall-paper!” This quote sums up the entire story and the period of time in which it took place.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was a female sociologist who served as role model for women. “ The Yellow Wallpaper is her most famous piece. She was inspired to write it after she started going through depression. She faced similar challenges to the narrator of the story. Using feminist Criticism, the reader can analyze Charlotte Perkins-Gilman’s The Yellow Wallpaper through the narrator Jane, dialogue, and symbols Every person in the story has their own unique character.

John is a unique character who may easily be mistaken for the villain in the story while he really is just a typical man who thinks he is doing what is best for his woman. John often ignores the narrator’s feelings because he doesn’t think her feelings are real. He treats her like a child rather than an adult: “ Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down to the cellar, if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain” (Gilman). Here John is trying to comfort his woman (the narrator) by telling her that they can go down and live in the basement if she wished. While doing so, he is very reluctant and he is talking to her like a little kid.

Talking to a woman like a child is an example of feminist criticism. The narrator is a somewhat strange character who changes throughout the story. She changes from a conformist female to a strong female. She is a conformist female in the beginning and it shows when she says, “ John

laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage” (Gilman). A woman being content with male dominance represents feminist criticism.

Feminist criticism is expressed through dialogue in the story. John had little respect for the narrator’s opinions: “ That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don’t care—there is something strange about the house—I can feel it. I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a “ DRAUGHT,” and shut the window” (Gilman). These are the narrator’s own words except she is writing them on paper and not speaking them. John often disregarded the narrator’s feelings and this is a perfect example of him doing so. Blaming her true feelings on a “ draught” shows that he feels it is almost impossible for her to have inner feelings (only physical).

At this time, many men did not recognize women’s feelings as being real. John also insists that his opinion is always right and he does this through the use of dialogue. When the narrator claimed that she still didn’t feel right, John was not buying it: “ you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you” (Gilman). Right here John is speaking to the narrator.

He is insisting that she is better even though she claims that she isn’t. John is feels that being a man and a physician means that he knows what is best no matter what his woman tells him. If John believes it to be true, there is no doubt it is in his mind. A male insisting that his opinion over a woman’s is right is another example of feminist criticism. In addition, the story also has hidden meanings and symbols. The yellow wallpaper may be ugly but it is

something much more than just ugly wall paper: “ The front pattern DOES move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it! Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.

Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard” (Gilman). The wallpaper really does bother the narrator. It eats her up inside and she is constantly trying to figure out what the pattern means. She eventually draws the conclusion that there is a woman trapped behind bars within the pattern. The woman represents the narrator herself. She is trapped in a world dominated by John where she has little power.

The narrator wants to be free and have an impact in the real world but John would not allow of it. Also, many women at this time were okay with male dominance: “ There comes John’s sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing. She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick” (Gilman)! Jennie, John’s sister, is the housekeeper who is happy with her life and she has no problem with male dominance.

She acts as John’s watchdog while he is away. Everything she sees the narrator do, she reports to John. Jennie symbolizes a conformist female. She goes along with society’s typical belief that women are subservient to men. All in all, “ The Yellow Wallpaper” is a work of art that represents women’s rights and inspires women to stand up for themselves in real life.

There are many hidden meanings in the story for the reader to find. The more hidden meanings the reader finds the more interesting and meaningful the story gets. Using feminist criticism, a reader can analyze “ The Yellow Wallpaper” using the aspects of character, dialogue, and symbols.