

Essay on the yellow wallpaper

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Marge Piercy once said, “ A strong women is a women determined to do something that others are determined not to be done.” “ The Yellow Wallpaper” shows exactly that. As a feminist critic, it can clearly be seen that during the late 1800’s, early 1900’s, women had a very hard time being able to freely express their opinions.

They were meant to be housewives and mothers, not independent and free spirited. The Gilman uses this story to challenge that idea. “ The Yellow Wallpaper” written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is about a woman named Jane who is tied down by her husband John and society. Her husband makes her believe she is sick and locks her in a room. Eventually she goes crazy.

Gilman uses characters, dialogue, and symbols to show that women wanted to become more independent during that time. To begin with, Gilman uses characters in the story to show that Jane is tied down. Her husband John is the one who is restricting her the most. ““ John is a physician and perhaps—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—Perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster” (Gilman 1). Since John is a doctor he is supposedly superior and has the power to tell people what is wrong with them.

John makes Jane believe she is sick when she really isn’t. He takes it so far as to lock her up and remove her from society because she is acting like an individual. He doesn’t want her to become independent. He is the typical male of that time and believes women should focus on being housewives and mothers, not independent people. In the story Jane also writes, ““ John

does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him'" (3).

John truly doesn't care how she feels. It seems like he is trying to make it as hard on her as possible so she will eventually go insane. He picks things that don't bother him but things she can't stand to make her supposed illness seem more realistic. Society during that time was reluctant to allow women to become free. Jane having a husband who took it to this extreme to prevent her from becoming more independent was ridiculous. He couldn't accept change and since he was such an important man, he knew it would be easy to get away with.

Jennie is John's brother in the story. She is a role model of how women should act during that time period. "' She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession'" (5). It seems Jane almost feels bad for her because she is so tied down. Jennie is happy with what she is doing because she is accepted by the people around her. Jennie is brainwashed to believe that housekeeping is the only way a women can live.

Society and the people in her life, such as John, have made it seem like a sin to do anything else. Continuing on, the author uses dialogue to show how hard it was for Jane to challenge society's views on women. Jane describes the room John is keeping her in with a lot of detail. She says, "' I lie here on this great immovable bed—it is nailed down'" (6). The room John kept Jane in was only meant to hold her back.

By Jane saying how the bed was immovable she means she can't break out of the pattern of oppression. The nails holding the bed down represent John

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in her life. He is holding her back along with society. Society has put restrictions on married women of that time. Although they are not a law or anything, someone would be considered crazy not to follow them. The bed being nailed down shows what these expectations do to women who don't want to just be a wife, but more self sufficient.

Throughout the story the narrator refers to herself as I. “‘ I don't feel able. And I know John would think it absurd. But I must say what I feel and think in some way—it is such a relief’” (7). The author uses the word I in places where Jane is able to positively relive her sanity and when Jane is referring to what her husband would think.

In this quote she is talking about how writing is her only outlet. That is the only way she is able to express herself freely and she will continue to do that. She always has the thought in the back of her mind though, how John would not be pleased with what she is doing. Because Jane is unable to speak to John about her problems, writing is her only outlet. The author uses the word I when Jane is contemplating what John would think of her actions.

In this case, John would be very unhappy, but she is so depressed she needs to do it anyway. Lastly, Gilman uses symbolism to show the way women were expected to act during the early 1900's. The color yellow is used frequently throughout the story to describe things both good and bad. An example is, “‘ It is the strangest yellow, that wall-paper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw—not the beautiful ones like buttercups, but the old foul, bad yellow things’” (12). The color yellow during that time

meant that someone was strange, ugly, and backward. Jane was strange only because John, the doctor, made her seem that way.

She was just trying to be independent but he took it off as sick. According to society, Jane defiantly was backwards. She didn't want to take on the role as just a wife and mother. She wanted to be something more. The color yellow was not a good thing to be referred to as during that time.

In many ways though, it did describe Jane. She was abnormal because she wanted to be independent and see and do things for herself, but society felt as if this was the wrong thing to do. Another great use of symbolism in the story is the wallpaper in the room she is locked in. She says, "' There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will. Behind that outside pattern that dim shapes get clearer every day.

It is always the same shape, only very numerous. And it is like a women stopping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here'" (8). The wallpaper symbolizes the person Jane is becoming. It shows the ugly truth about her life and she doesn't want it to be that way.

The woman she sees in the wallpaper is a horrid image of what her life is becoming. She wants to be independent and break free of the women she sees. She hopes to destroy that person before that is what she becomes. All in all, as a feminist critic, it can be seen in the story " The Yellow Wallpaper" that women had a lot to overcome if they wanted to challenge the views of society. In today's society, women have jobs and play the role of mother and wife.

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They do not have to be completely dependent on their husbands though. They can express their opinions freely without being criticized by all of society. The author uses characters, dialogue, and symbolism to show what the expectations of married women were of that time. Works Cited Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. “ The Yellow Wallpaper”