

Charlotte Perkins: 'the yellow wallpaper'

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“ And woman should stand beside man as the comrade of his soul, not the servant of his body,” once said Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Lewis). Gilman lived in a time period where there was a women’s suffrage movement happening (Merriman). During this time, women were expected to stay home and care for the family and listen to the husband.

Gilman thought differently. She knew that women had the same rights as men and they should stand together, not one above the other. Her short story, “ The Yellow Wallpaper,” was her own life’s story. Jane, the main character, was sick and was told to live a plain, domestic life. She went against this and continued to write and tried to break free of her conformist ways. Using feminist criticism, a reader can analyze Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s, “ The Yellow Wallpaper” by using the aspects of character, dialogue, and symbols.

First, one aspect that is visible in “ The Yellow Wallpaper” is character. Jennie, John’s sister, “ Is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession” (Gilman). The conformist female during this time period has a few qualities. One is they stay home all day and make sure that everything is right in the household. A second is they have low expectations of themselves and don’t really look to get anywhere.

Jennie takes on both of these qualities. As she sees Jane start to change, all that she can think is that Jane is possibly going insane. At one part in the story, Jane states that John told her, “ The very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition” (Gilman). John tries to tell her that there is nothing

to worry about. She should continue to trust him which allows him to stay in control.

John takes the role of the typical male in the story. Next, another aspect that can be found in this story that pertains to feminist criticism is the dialogue. When they first get to the new house that they are staying at, John tells Jane, " You know the place is doing you good" (Gilman). In her mind, Jane knows that she doesn't like this house. She gets this feeling from it and wants to move to another room.

John tells her otherwise. He tries to convince her that the room and all of the alone time are doing her good. He is trying to put these thoughts into her head so, he can be in control. When John had caught Jane up late at night, he tried to calm her down by saying, "" bless her little heart!" with a big hug, " she shall be as sick as she pleases!" (Gilman). He treats her as if she is a child. All of this attention gives her a special feeling.

This feeling keeps her hanging on in her conformist ways. Last, the final aspect that can be seen in this story are the symbols. Jane notices that there is a faint figure that, " seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out" (Gilman). As Jane begins to question her motives, she notices this figure in the wallpaper. The further she grows apart from conforming, the easier this figure becomes to see.

This figure is her and the wallpaper that has her trapped is John. John is keeping her from being her true self. Near the end of the story, Jane states, " Then I peeled off all the paper I reach standing on the floor" (Gilman). Jane tears off all of the wallpaper that she can. She frees the woman who was
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caught behind it. When she does this, she realizes that what she had done was free herself.

She no longer had to be the conformist woman whom she was expected to be. In conclusion, "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a story that captures the feminist suffrage movement time period. Feminist criticism can be used to analyze this short story with the aspects of character, dialogue, and symbols. Charlotte Perkins Gilman lived in a time period where women had very low expectations. She uses her writings to tell her own story.

Gilman broke free from her conformist ways and kept writing even though she was told not to by her doctor. Gilman became the hero of her own story. Works Cited Gilman, C. P. (1892). "The Yellow Wallpaper.

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