

Analysis of characterization in the yellow wallpaper assignment

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“ The Yellow Wallpaper” was written at a time when the traditional power structure of marriage was supported. B. Gillian describes the unequal status of a wife, the narrator, who suffers from nervous depression. C. Brief history of interpretations of “ The Yellow Wallpaper. ” D. The chosen interpretation rests on how the narrator’s character is analyzed through her hidden thoughts. E. How does the author use indirect characterization to reveal the narrator’s hidden thoughts?

Body: Part One: A. Gillian uses indirect characterization to reveal the narrator’s private thoughts through the narrator’s secret Journal. B. As a result of her depression, her treatment is a rest cure. C. She keeps a secret Journal as an outlet for her thoughts and imagination. Part Two: A. Writings of Journal show that the narrator is not convinced with her “ rest cure” treatment. B. She believes that the “ rest cure” is one of the reasons she doesn’t improve. C. Her thoughts reveal that the character is skeptical about her prescribed treatment.

Part Three: A. Writings of Journal reveal that the narrator is a highly imaginative woman. B. Her imagination is continuously opposed by John. C. The narrator longs for less opposition and more stimulation. D. Her thoughts reveal that she is not happy with her situation since her needs for stimulation are not met. Part Four: A. Since the narrator’s imagination is oppressed, she directs it to supposedly harmless objects. B. This becomes dangerous since she loses connection between her written and her real world. C.

Writings purvey that keeping her thoughts dined from the outside world, makes her more dissociated from her real life. Conclusion: A. Found interest among different schools of literature. B. One underlying assumption: the narrator is the subjugated party in her marriage. C. Narrator lives in an "Invalidating Environment." "Join laughs at me, AT course, out one expects Tanat In marriage." Nils statement depicts the overall status of John's wife, the narrator, in Charlotte Perkins Sailing's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper." "The Yellow Wallpaper" was written in 1890, a time when people encouraged the traditional power structure of marriage, with the wife as the servant of her husband, the master. And in this short story, Gillian describes the unequal status of a married woman who suffers from a "temporary nervous depression - a slight hysterical tendency" and who is ultimately destroyed because her needs for self-expression are not met. Sailing's story has received a wide range of interpretations. Some have interpreted Sailing's work in "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a horror story, grouping it with the writings of Poe (Dock, 1998).

Others argue that it belongs to the category of ghost stories, but scholars assert that the story is psychological rather than supernatural, and so they classify it as a "psychological horror story" (Dock, 1998). Others have tried to promote it as a gothic tale, where they indicate that the story contains several gothic elements such as: "confinement and rebellion, forbidden desire and 'irrational' fear" alongside such traditional Gothic elements as "the distraught heroine, the forbidding mansion, and the powerfully repressive male antagonist" (Davison, 2004, p. 7). But, Davison argues that the story actually belongs to the "female gothic mode" (2004, p. 48). The

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female ethic mode is characterized by a female's passage into womanhood, where she is confused about her domestic responsibilities in marriage and motherhood. Scholars also point out to an additional dimension of the story which is the feminist dimension (Davison, 2004). When reading "The Yellow Wallpaper" from a feminist perspective, they call attention to the story as purveying corrupted sexual politics (Dock, 1998).

The different interpretations of "The Yellow Wallpaper" rely partly on how the main character, the narrator, is viewed and understood. The chosen interpretation rests on how the narrator's character is analyzed through her hidden thoughts and concerns. In the following paragraphs, we'll look at how the author, Gillian, uses indirect characterization to reveal the narrator's character through emphasis on the narrator's thoughts. Gillian uses indirect characterization in revealing the narrator's private thoughts and feelings through the narrator's secret Journal.

Since the narrator is diagnosed with nervous depression, - "conventional women's disease of the nineteenth century" - her husband John, who is also her physician, recommends that her treatment be a rest cure, where she is not allowed to do anything active, especially reading and writing (Thriller, 1984, p. 61). Thriller writes that during that time, doctors dictated this therapy because it was believed that too much intellectual stimulation would cause women to experience mental illness (BIBB).

But, because the narrator insists that the freedom to read and write would improve her condition, she decides to keep a secret Journal as an outlet for her thoughts and imagination (Gillian, 1892). First, the writings of her Journal

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show that the narrator is not convinced with ere “ rest cure” treatment. Her writings depict that her husband, John, continuously belittles her condition and concerns while she knows that her illness is real and more severe than he believes (Thriller, 1984). This leads her to acknowledge in her journal, but not to a “ living soul,” that perhaps that is one of the reasons that prevents her from improving. Because she doesn’t feel free to speak truthfully “ to a living soul,” she confides her thoughts to a Journal - “ dead paper” - instead. The only safe language is dead language” (Thriller, 1984, p. 61). Therefore, these thoughts veal that the character is skeptical about her prescribed treatment. Second, the writings of the Journal reveal that the narrator is a highly imaginative woman, as she opens up her Journal by acknowledging that as a child, she enjoyed scaring herself with imaginative monsters, and actually finds the thought that the house is haunted rather amusing (www. Parasites. Com). Sadly, her imagination is continuously opposed by the “ socially constructed forms that confine it” (Crew, 1995, p. 273). Crew writes that the imagination of the male is accepted as being the authoritative imagination, and hence, its sovereignty lends it the permission to change and adjust the social forms according to its benefit and purpose (1995). In contrast, the imagination of the female is left as a servant to the rules that the men lay down, with any opposition to these constricting forms deemed as provoking disorder and chaos (1995).

This assumption is evident in “ The Yellow Wallpaper” when the narrator writes that John asks her to exercise self-control and “ not let any silly fancies run away with me” (Gillian, 1892, p. 10). This conveys the fact that John considers the narrator’s ancient or imaginations as being somewhat

confusing for his wife and hence emphasizes the need for keeping them in check. On the other hand, the narrator writes in her Journal: " I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus" (Gillian, 1892, p.). This reveals that this character is not happy with her situation, as her needs for self-expression and intellectual stimulation are not met. Third, since the narrator's imagination is oppressed, she directs it to " seemingly neutral objects, such as the house, the bedroom and the leaper" (www. Sparseness. Com). However, what is thought to be a " safe outlet" turns out to be a rather dangerous one (Thriller, 1984), because as her interest with the wallpaper deepens, she becomes more detached from her daily life (www. Parasites. Com). That is, the start of the narrator's secret Journal marks the beginning of the process of her detachment from her real life. As her thoughts and concerns remain distant from the outside world, she begins to lose connection between her real world and her written world. In other words, because the narrator mutinously hides her thoughts, she develops a split in her consciousness where she doesn't understand that she was the cause of some of the effects she finds in her life (www. Sparseness. Com).

For example, the narrator fails to see the link between the long smooch on the yellow wallpaper and the yellow stains on her cloths (Gillian, 1892). Also, when the narrator finds the sub pattern in the yellow wallpaper of a woman trapped Deanna ten oars AT ten mall pattern AT ten wallpaper, seen doesn't realize that the caged woman is actually a representation of her own situation (Gillian, 1892). Hence, the thoughts of this character purvey that as she is keeping her thoughts hidden from the outside world, she is becoming

more dissociated from her real life. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a short story which has received nothing short of great literary attention. The different concepts it conveys found interest among a wide audience that sought to capture the true messages lingering behind the story. Different schools of literature attempted to endorse Sailing's story and portray it as belonging to their style. Whether one wishes to interpret "The Yellow Wallpaper" as a error, gothic, ghost, or feminist story depends on how one interprets the narrator's status as a wife and her mental condition.

Nevertheless, I think there is one underlying assumption beneath the different interpretations which emphasizes that the narrator is the subjugated party in her marriage. Although her husband, John, really does want to help her improve, the problem is he doesn't understand her. He fails to answer her demands for freedom and stimulation. Time after time, her cries go unheard. Time after time, her pleas come to no avail. And this is what ultimately entails the narrator's downfall, as her desires are never fulfilled.

If we are to look at this story from a psychological lens, I believe we'd conclude that this short story draws heavily on the impact of living in an invalidating environment. In an invalidating environment, a person continuously attacks another person's reality of feelings. Lineman writes: "This can be done through denying, ridiculing, ignoring or judging another's feelings. Regardless of the manner, the effect is clear: the person's feelings are "wrong" " (1993). Among the effects of living in an invalidating environment is distrust in one's own feelings (Lineman, 1993).

In other words, because the feelings of anger, sadness and fear are often discouraged, the person no longer knows when to trust his/her emotions as reflecting real and tangible situations (Lineman, 1993). I think this is what happened to the narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" as her feelings of doubt were very often "invalidated" and this is what led to her destruction. Finally, I'd like to end with a quote by Peter Ballard which I think represents the narrator's situation: "It is by doubting that we come to investigate, and by investigating that we recognize the truth. The narrator had to lose herself, in order to finally find herself."