

# Trifels sexism essay



Danielle Archer Mr. Ellis November 10, 2009 Theme Essay We are All Sexist  
The play "Trifles" by Susan Glaspell is about the major differences between women and men. This story was written in a time period when women were treated much differently than they are today, and the women and this story are not taken seriously.

This story exposes the sexism that women dealt with then, and still to some extent deal with today. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale find incriminating evidence against Minnie, but the men never think to ask them their opinion; they are too busy looking for solid tangible, evidence. The "trifles" the women are worried about do not matter to the men.

Although the women find evidence to believe Minnie is the killer, they feel somewhat responsible for abandoning her. The women and the men in this story are both somewhat sexist. The women are on Minnie's side, and the men are on her husband John's side. This is because of the differences in men and women. Women and men perceive things differently. The men perceive the killer to be cruel because they cannot find a motive.

They are searching for some reason someone would kill John, because they need "Something to show -something to make a story about - a thing that would connect up with this strange way of doing it (776)." They are looking for solid, tangible evidence to link Minnie to the crime. They overlook the small, but significant, clues that tell the real story.

Mrs. Peters tells Mrs. Hale that the men need "something to show anger, or - sudden feeling (771. )" They are looking for something more obvious like abuse or alcoholism, but according to Mrs. Hale, John did not drink. Mr. Hale

even tells the County Attorney that John “ never cared what his wife wanted (768),” but that does not faze him.

The kitchen is in a mess and that is blamed on bad housekeeping, instead of being used as evidence. The clues are all there for them, but they do not see them. The women see these things very differently.

They look around and notice the “ trifles. ” The women do not only see small physical clues, but they also pick up on the emotional clues as well. The women are standing around discussing whether Minnie was going to knot or stitch her quilt. Mrs. Hale says “ ....

I wonder if she was goin’ to quilt it or just knot it? ” The Sheriff mocks the women’s conversation by telling the other men “ They wonder if she was going to quilt it or just knot it (772)! ” The women figure out that she was knotting it, which is a clear reference to the knot around John’s neck, and the men can do nothing but mock the women for even posing the question. This shows an obvious difference in how opposite genders interpret things. The men continue on the quest to find evidence, and continue to be blinded by arrogance of their manliness. The men feel almost as if Minnie has betrayed their sex. She has taken another man’s power. It is as if they are saying “ She is a woman, and she has no right to do that (775)! ” The County Attorney says “ .

... But you know juries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing (775). ” This shows that he is trying to make sure she gets punished for her crime, but he is more distracted with making sure she pays for taking away a man’s power than for the murder.

The women find many clues to link Minnie to the murder, but as the play goes on, and the sexism thickens, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale begin to form a bond. They find a dead bird and it makes them think of Minnie when she was younger. She was pretty and she used to sing, like the bird.

“ I wish you’d seen Minnie Foster when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons and stood up there in the choir and sang (775). ” They have come to the conclusion that John must have killed Minnie’s bird, the bird that symbolized what little bit of herself that she had left, and that Minnie could not take being in his shadow any longer, so that is why she killed him. They do not really know why Minnie killed her husband, but they are women and they are on Minnie’s side. They too are being sexist.

Each gender is secretly fighting a sexist battle. The women are indoors searching for clues to justify poor Minnie. They try to paint a picture of what could have happened to her, and what kind of life she must have lived. In reality, they had no idea.

They were on Minnie’s side for one reason, and that is because she is a female. The men are no different. Minnie could be innocent. They have found no evidence or motive against her. They are painting their own picture of the murder which suits their sexist views. After all, Mrs. Hale mentions that “ there was a gun in the house (771).

The men did not mention anything about a gun, because it did not fit in their plan to blame Minnie. The theme of this story is that both men and women can be sexist in certain situations. In this time period one would assume that women would be loyal and truthful to their husbands. Mrs. Hale is a farmer’s

wife, like Minnie, and repeatedly defended Minnie's housekeeping, comparing it to her own. These women put themselves in Minnie's place. Could this be happening to them? In certain situations everyone has a sexist side to them. The County Attorney said to Mrs.

Hale, " Ah, loyal to your sex, I see.... (770)," Which is ironic.

She is loyal to her sex, but he has no idea how true that statement is. The women are so loyal to their sex that they hide the evidence, or as the men would call it " trifles", that they find in the house that would possibly link Minnie to the murder. The men and the women in this play are sexist, but the men are so sexist that they did not realize the women were smart enough to be sexist. Glaspell, Susan. " Trifles. " Legacies: Poetry, Drama, Nonfiction.

Cheryl Forman. Fourth Edition. Boston, MA: Lyn Uhi, 2009. 767-776