

Trifles: the thematic explanation of the play

Literature



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Trifles: The Thematic explanation of the Play

Susan Glaspell's 'Trifles' is considered one of the earliest feminist dramas, since it portrays two strong female characters, namely; Mrs. Peters, wife of the Sheriff and Mrs. Hale, wife of the neighbor who found the body of the murdered Mr. Wright. The entire play is wrought in binaries that are portrayed at the different stages in the play. The binaries between women and men; a binary which involves hierarchy that builds a careful wall between the two sexes. The title of this play, 'Trifles', reflects the attitude of the twentieth century males; that women are subordinate to men in intellect and worry over trifles, while men take care of and value serious matters. 'Trifles', which involves the hunt for evidence and motive for the murder by the County Attorney, Henderson, and the sheriff, Peters, satirizes that time's strict societal roles of women and men. While the men search the Wright house-the scene of the crime- the women, who are delegated to the kitchen, actually find, through careful observation and consideration, the evidence that men fail to find.

One dominant theme of 'Trifles', 'Gender Differences', reflect the presumed inferiority of women in intelligence as well as the various social infrastructures of society such as: law, communication, and business. These gender differences can be detected from the theme in the plot, the conversations between characters in the plot and various other elements present in the play. The premise that this play is based on is that women are not capable of doing, thinking or being a part of the significant things in society. The play seeks to contradict this premise by proving the contrary towards the end of the play.

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(Country Attorney) - I guess we'll go upstairs first-and then out to the barn and around there. You're convinced that there was nothing important here-nothing that would point to any motive?

(Sherriff) - Nothing here but kitchen things,(p. 10)

This short exchange and other similar comments depict the men as indifferent to the concerns of women-such as the kitchen- while Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale who are deliberative and sensitive to the life of Mrs. Wright whom the men suspect as a killer, find what the men are seeking-an explanation of the murder.

The cheerless dreary atmosphere of the house is self-explanatory as to how Mr. Wright; the deceased, must have killed the merriment of the house and also of the life of Mrs. Wright. Additionally, in the entire play, the women are called by their last names, the men by their professions. One is not aware of the First names of the ladies in the play, as if their identities are lent to them by their husbands. The men on the other hand too are referred to by their last names; as if they do not possess an identity.

The cold, tough and serious-mindedness of the men, result in the bonding of Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters, who choose to ultimately result in the hiding of constructive evidence of a mutilated bird, out the compassion they feel for Mrs. Wright. This act reflects their sympathy for the understanding of Mrs. Wright's hard and colorless life with Mr. Wright and their loyalty to women's suppression in a Patriarchal Society.

The above flow of the argument proves the prominent theme to be ' gender difference', which the author has repeatedly, tries to elicit through different methods in the play. Most of the references seen in the play are biographical to Susan Glaspell's life, however, the arguments portrayed do fall in favor of <https://assignbuster.com/trifles-the-thematic-explanation-of-the-play/>

the fact that the deliberative and sensitivity that women are blamed of has helped them uncover the mystery of the play.