

# The narrators changing character in the yellow wallpaper by charlotte perkins gil...

[Literature](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

When the narrator first moves into her upstairs bedroom, in the house that her husband has rented for them for the summer, she despises the yellow wallpaper that covers her bedroom walls. Her husband is a physician who believes that the narrator, his wife, has nothing “but a temporary nervous depression” and that this should be treated by a “rest cure”, during which she is confined to her room and allowed almost no mentally stimulating activity. Cooped up in this room during the summer with nothing to do, the narrator starts to be obsessed with the wallpaper, its color, smell, patterns, and lines. And slowly she begins to lose contact with reality and her sanity as she realizes the truth of her inner sufferings. Towards the middle of the story, the narrator loses her hatred for the wallpaper and is quite intrigued and absorbed by it. She starts seeing things; inside the wallpaper at nighttime and outside of the wallpaper during the day. In effect, through the course of this short story, the narrator’s description of “The Yellow Wallpaper” changes in relation to her level of retained sanity.

The wallpaper comes to mean to the narrator a kind of representation of herself, her life, and her sufferings. She sees a woman trapped in the wallpaper behind bars, much like the bars in her bedroom window where her husband has confined her. This woman sometimes escapes from these bars and “creeps” around, hiding behind things. She is in dire need of rescue or escape. As her fascination with the wallpaper and the life she imagines in its patterns grows, the narrator starts to keep a secret journal where she writes about what she sees. Doing this makes her slip farther away into her fantasy world and dissociate with reality more and more with every passing day. The

wallpaper becomes a mystery of patterns and codes she must understand. She stares at it for hours and tries to figure out the sense behind the pattern on it. Soon, the shadowy shape of women starts to emerge. At first, the narrator sees a woman who is trapped and trying to escape. She does not identify herself with this woman, nor does she realize that she is actually a symbolic representation of her own self and suffering. As time progresses, however, the narrator realizes that this woman trapped behind bars is a representation of her. She is forced to “ creep” around and be subordinate and meek in her domestic role, much like all other women as she soon realizes. She sees now that she needs to escape and needs to be rescued from her current role and position in life. The faster she untangles her life’s mess and begins to comprehend it, the faster she loses her grip on reality and her sanity. The last straw is when she tears the wallpaper off the walls in an effort to free the woman who is stuck inside it.

At last, the woman in the wallpaper is able to escape, and this is the moment the narrator loses her sanity, which, in effect, becomes her escape, as she and the woman from the wallpaper becomes one and the same person. The reader’s interpretation of the story is a little complicated owing to the fact that the narrator is slowly losing her sanity and this story, as narrated by her, leaves many open ends. Many things are thus free to personal interpretation; for example, the existence of her husband, baby, and sister-in-law. They could all just have been a figment of her imagination; there is nothing mentioned in the story that makes it concrete, so this, among many things, remains a matter of speculation and interpretation. The story leaves many

questions unanswered: questions to do with the struggle women have faced, their symbolic imprisonment and struggle to be free of this imprisonment, and all that they have had to sacrifice to be free of their subordinate roles. These questions are posed by the narrator through the narration of this story and are directed at readers or interpreters to ponder on and answer of their own accord.