

Virginia woolf's the new dress: alienation, isolation, and loneliness



Alienation, Isolation, and Loneliness *The New Dress* Virginia Woolf -Woolf was born into a privileged household on January 25th, 1882. -She began writing when she was young and published her first novel in 1915. -She was known as an advocate for women rights and feminist movements helped influence her writings. -Virginia Woolf was known for her battles with depression.

- Virginia Woolf committed suicide on March 28th, 1941. Alienation (noun) : A sense of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, or cultural- or self estrangement brought on by the lack of fit between individual needs or expectations and the social order.

“ The main object in life for the coming woman will be not so much the mating as the making of herself.” -Prentice Mulford Setting -Set in the early 20th century -A time where women were still going through many struggles to gain social acceptance and importance. -This was also a time where the appearance of women was important too. Two Main Settings Setting Mrs. Milans Workroom:

Mabel felt, “ Rid of cares and wrinkles, what she dreamed of herself was there—a beautiful woman.” (pg. 494) In the workroom, Mabel didn't feel judged. There were no expectations but her own. The setting of the workroom acted as a safety for where Mable could truly be herself. Mrs. Dalloways Party Setting “ Mabel had her first suspicion that something was wrong as she took her cloak off and Mrs. Barnet...confirmed the suspicion—that it was not right, not quite right.”

This is the first line in the story and it reveals so much about where Mabel is.

This is where Mabel began to feel separated and disconnected from the
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world because of the dress she was wearing. The setting of the party is what disconnected Mabel from the people around her. Mabel Waring is the protagonist of the story, but not however a dynamic character. The story is told through a stream of consciousness fashion. There is a very intense internal conflict going on within Mabel. Mabel is a woman consumed with thoughts of self-hatred and insecurities. Mabel constantly felt like a failure because she wasn't married to anyone of wealth or high social standings.

Character: Mabel Waring Mabel compared herself to a fly.

Mabel “ saw herself like that—she was a fly, but the others were dragonflies, butterflies, beautiful insects, dancing, fluttering, skimming, while she dragged herself up out of the saucer.” (pg. 494)

Mabel is overcome with feelings of constantly being criticized by those around her.

At the party, Mabel was “ left alone on the blue sofa, punching the cushion in order to look occupied, for she would not go join Charles Burt or Rose Shaw.. perhaps laughing at her by the fireplace.” (pg. 498) Character: Mabel Waring

Mabel's character does not go through any drastic change. She starts off in the same emotional state that she ends in. When Mabel first arrived at the party and noticed her dress compared to the other women's dresses, she felt that hers was not suitable and was severely insecure about this. Because Mabel's character is one that is overcome with self-judgment, negative self-esteem, and severe insecurities, Mabel Waring unconsciously alienates herself from the people around her. Character: Mabel Waring Virginia Woolf

used very distinctive words to describe the emotional state Mabel Waring was going through.

Tone When describing Mabel while she was wearing the yellow dress, she wrote that Mabel “ felt like a dressmaker’s dummy standing there, for young people to stick pins into.” (pg. 493) The words that Virginia Woolf chose were words that captured that Mabel felt that she was always being criticized and that other people were constantly picking apart Mabel’s insecurities.

Because of the word choice that was used, we the readers are given a much clearer understanding as to who Mabel Waring is. Because of the narrator perspective that the reader gets, the narrator reveals the thoughts of Mabel Waring and how she views herself. Mabel described herself as “ some dowdy, decrepit, horrible dingy old fly.” (pg. 494) After realizing how much she cares about what other people think of her, she starts thinking about her “ odious, weak, vacillating character.” (pg. 496) The language that Virginia Woolf uses is to such an extreme, that it gives the reader the idea that Mabel Waring is going through serious emotional instability.

The word choice that she chose also helps the reader to connect with the feelings of someone who may feel isolated or alienated from everyone. The feeling of being alienated from those around you, and alienated from society, comes from the lack of fitting with individuals or in the social order. Mabel Waring did not have the resources to be as well dressed as other women. She felt inferior to everyone around her, and felt constantly judged and ridiculed. She tries to overcome it but goes back to despising her character. Through the settings, character, and tone of the story, Virginia Woolf helped

to connect the reader to the extreme feelings of alienation that Mabel Waring felt. When Expectations Are Not Met New dresses are supposed to make a girl feel absolutely beautiful. In Mabel Waring's case, a new dress made her despise who she was.