

Male dominance in marriage

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



The main female characters in Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* similarly provide the concept of male dominance in a traditional marriage. This is achieved through the vivid description of both Mrs. Mallard and the narrator's emotional burdens as they fulfill their obligations as their husbands' wives. Albeit not directly stated in any of the two stories, the very situations of the wives in the hands of their husbands already show the negative effects of male dominance in the emotional well-being of women in marriages.

Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* may have started to establish the personality of Mrs. Mallard as a sensitive woman who dearly loves her husband. Gradually, Chopin reveals an ambiguity in the feelings of the character as she describes Mrs. Mallard that, "When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: 'free, free, free!'" (Chopin,).

Gradually, readers are given a wider view of how Mrs.

Mallard feelings are becoming. "There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature" (Chopin,). However, in the end, readers are implicitly informed that the cause of Mrs. Mallard's death is due to the realization that her husband is actually alive. "When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease –of the joy that kills" (Chopin,).

The last statement gives out the message that the joy upon seeing her husband alive is not actually the reason for her death but rather because of

the freedom that has been lost when he appeared at their doorstep. In this story, the Mrs. Mallard secretly endures a miserable life with her husband which can be blamed on women's domesticity. After a moment of grief, she becomes glad that she is finally free from the demanding grasps of her husband. The pressures and demands brought about by the society's claim that women's role are merely for domestic purposes pushes Mrs.

Mallard into being grateful for her husband's death. This is, of course, a wrongful act however it is triggered by the character's desire for liberation. Mrs. Mallard's suppressed desire for liberation somewhat mirrors that of the narrator's in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. The problem of male dominance in a marriage can also be observed as the writer uncovers the mental and emotional effects of male dominance and social pressure to women. It is a story about the wickedness of confinement—literally and psychologically.

In the story, the narrator's husband locks her inside a room with yellow wallpaper because he believes that she would be cured of her post-partum depression due to recently giving birth. He thinks he could cure her by means of rest cure treatment. This symbolizes the very prison that the husband made for his wife when he married her. As a result, the wife resorts and depends on the images that the yellow wallpaper provides her. She begins to see images crawling and creeping inside it and starts hallucinating, thus, worsening the mental state of the wife.

The story is an entire symbolism of women being manipulated fully by men. The husband's way of taking charge of his wife's mental health signifies the concept of male domination in the story. " If a physician of high standing,
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and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do? ” (Gilman,). The narrator's question reveals the powerlessness of a woman in her society if a “ physician of higher standing” whom she refers as a man has already made a conclusion and solution against her will.

In a thorough analysis, the husband symbolizes the patriarchal ascendancy that restricts women's lives. They are expected to always follow and obey their husbands and fathers as they are believed to know the best for everyone. In Kate Chopin's *The Story of an Hour*, readers are exposed to the concept of a wife trying to bear the news of her husband's death and the ambiguity of her feelings towards it. In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the author presents the ongoing problem of male dominance over females.

Nonetheless, both stories deal with how husbands usually hold the authority in a household and the extremity of such authority can lead to esteem and emotional problems for women. Works Cited Chopin, Kate. “ The Story of an Hour. ” *Literature and Society: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Nonfiction*. Eds. Pamela J. Annas and Robert C. Rosen. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2009. pp. 358. Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. “ The Yellow Wallpaper. ” *Literature and society: an introduction to fiction, poetry, drama, nonfiction* Eds. Pamela J. Annas and Robert C. Rosen. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2009. pp. 307