

The girls in their summer dresses

[Family](#), [Divorce](#)



"The Girls in their Summer Dresses" by Irwin Shaw is about romantic love, fidelity, and marriage. The story is about Michael and Frances, a rich, young, outgoing couple living in midtown Manhattan, whose marriage is going downhill because of Michael's desire for other women. Even though Michael has desires for other women, his wife, Frances, is unable to do anything about it because of society's stigma. Also due to the time period the story was written in, divorce was considered a really bad thing. Throughout the story we discover how Frances loves Michael so much, but Michael does not love her. Michael being totally disrespectful puts their marriage in jeopardy.

There are many points in the story from which we find out that Michael does not love Frances. Firstly, Michael disrespects Frances by looking at other girls. If he really loves her, he should show respect and pay attention to her instead of looking at these other women on the street. Even when he is with his wife he looks at other girls. Who knows what he does when she is not with him, even though he says he hasn't touched any women in past five years since he is with her? Who knows! He isn't even afraid for a single minute that his wife is walking with him and he shouldn't watch other girls. He still thinks that he is a macho guy according to the story "I am the envy of all men between the ages of fifteen and sixty in the state of New York." He forgets his wife, his love. He didn't even care once about what she will think about. He was totally not in love. They don't have mutual understanding at all.

Second, not that Michael is unfaithful now but as he said he could be in the future. When they are having the discussion at a bar on 8th street, Michael tells Frances that he not only looks at pretty women on the street but also

fantasizes about being with them. He tells her " I love you, but I also want them."(Shaw 8) This is no way to express that your love someone. This is considered cheating and obviously if there is cheating than there is no love at all.

Furthermore Michael does nothing when Frances is crying face down into her handkerchief. " Michael didn't say anything. He sat watching the bartender slowly peel a lemon."(Shaw 8) This shows that Michael does not care about Frances' feelings. It looks as though for Michael the relationship is based on physical appearance because even after a long discussion at the bar when Frances got up from the table, " Michael watched her walk, thinking, what a pretty girl, what nice legs."(Shaw 9) If Michael really loves Frances he should try to see her inner feelings instead of her physical appearance.

On the other hand, Frances being a good wife loves her husband. She tells him " Lets just hang around with each other. You and me." This proves that she like being with him. She also has respects for him. Unlike Michael who is always looking at other girls she tells him she hasn't looked at another man since the second time they went out. Moreover, we find out that she truly loves him when she says " I'd do any damn thing for you." This shows that she is a good wife deeply in love with her husband. Frances being respectful, faithful, and loving proves that there are no complaints about their marriage from her side.

In the ending, the most effective part of the story, we see how a women at that time period could not do anything to solve the problem but instead deal with it. Frances ends up calling the Stevensons instead of asking for a

divorce. She could not be divorced because the society won't let her live. People will look at her with bad eyes. Her love for Michael fades away because he shows neither commitment nor love. Who would love someone that wants to be with someone else, especially after finding it out?

Overall it seems as though Shaw is trying to tell the reader that not all marriages are the same. He shows how for some, marriages are built with honesty, fidelity and love while for others, it's just about physical appearance. And yes, time period is definitely a matter.