

# The yellow wallpaper by charlotte perkins gilman

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



"The Yellow Wallpaper" is a short story written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman that was first published in 1892. The story has been considered a breakthrough in the women's feminist movement while it also began bringing awareness to mental illness surrounding postpartum depression and how the illness was treated. Gilman's story outlines and compares its main character's own struggles with the struggle for equal rights for women during the nineteenth century, in which women were typically viewed as being only useful for marriage and not having any true contribution to the home aside from bearing children. During a time where women essentially had no rights, women were often submissive to their husbands as they had no other choice. The controlling and oppressive nature of the husband, John in the story is shown almost immediately, as well as his wife's desire to free herself from his control. As John is his wife's physician, he has total control over her care. John's care for his wife is limiting her to rest only, limiting her outside world involvement and activity. Realizing that her husband's treatment isn't the best option for her, she begins to write in secret in order to relieve her thoughts no one else in her family seems to be concerned with. The woman soon realizes that all hope is lost in having her voice heard and that there is nothing she can do to improve her situation.

*"If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friend 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, Pg. 6)*

No matter how much the woman delves into her writings, it does not help in ridding herself of the surroundings of her unhappy life and ill feelings towards her dismissive husband. As the woman's mental state continues to spiral downward, she becomes more reserved and passive in her rest treatment. The husband, unaware of his wife's true feelings, begins to think that his rest remedy is working, further diluting his views on his wife's health.

The wife spends a majority of her time in the nursery of the home, which has since become her own isolated prison cell. The fascination she discovers with the yellow wallpaper in the room begins her demise into insanity. Not only are there bars on the windows of the room she is in, but she begins to notice the bars within the wallpaper itself. The wallpaper slowly consumes her and takes control of her life. As the woman has descended into madness, she starts to notice a woman appear in the wallpaper, which can only confirm her insanity.

*" There are things in that paper which nobody knows but me, or ever will." (Gilman, Pg. 10)*

As the woman's obsession with the wallpaper continues to grow, it's clear to the reader that she has no interest in following her husband's/physician's orders for rest as, all that the woman can think or write about is the wallpaper. With no one else to turn to in the house besides the woman in the wallpaper, the author's character has finally found true happiness at last. " Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be." (Gilman, Pg. 21). At the climax of Gilman's story, the woman begins to tear away the wallpaper, trying in vain to free the woman trapped behind it as well as

trying to free herself from her own prison. All the while she tears at the paper, she notices that it is not just the two of them who are trapped, but it is the women in society as a whole who have been trapped and locked away. I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did?" (Gilman, Pg. 25)

In conclusion, the author confirms that it is not just one single woman who was enduring the dismissive, submissive, controlling and unequal nature men were inflicting, it was all women who were experiencing this. The oppression women were facing had reached its boiling point and it was time to shed light on the subject of women's suffrage and in order for change to take place within society, women needed to take a stand and begin to fight against the equalities they faced.

## Works Cited

- Gilman Perkins Charlotte. " The Yellow Wallpaper". Small, Maynard, 1899