

# Women in fiction essay



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“ A Room of One’s Own,” is an essay before its time Virginia Wolfe takes a unique approach when choosing to write her essay in the form of a fictitious novel. Wolfe wishes to bring attention and attempt to explain the injustice and prejudices women have faced in fiction. Through her essay the reader receives a unique glimpse into the mind of the author while she attempted to fight for equality for women in fiction.

She states, “ Lock up you r libraries if you like; but there is not gate, no lock, not bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind” (Wolfe, 231). Using literary techniques such as diction, imagery, language and creativity she shows that there is no lock or limit that can be placed on the scope of the human mind; whether that mind is male or female. From the minute one begins reading this essay they become entranced with the eloquence of the diction Wolfe uses to convey her convictions about women in fiction. Wolfe states, “ All I could do was to offer you an opinion upon one minor point—a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that, as you will see leaves the great problem of the nature of woman and the true nature of fiction unsolved. I have shirked the duty of coming to a conclusion upon these two questions—women and fiction remain, so far as I am concerned, unsolved problems” (Wolfe 231).

It is as though she feels this is a war, one that she has the obligation to fight and resolve. Wolfe has the ability to give her words a powerful presence, when reading you don’t just read her words you feel how she once felt. Equality for women has been an issue throughout history, not only in the areas concerning voting, but the workforce, in the home, as well as in fiction. Wolfe simply hopes to use her essay to eliminate the injustice put upon

women whom simply wish to write and be equally recognized with men as writers. She states, " Perhaps if I lay here the ideas, the prejudices; that lay behind this statement you will find that they have some bearing upon women and some upon fiction" (Wolfe 231). She seems to feel that there are separate issues having to do with women and fiction; separate problems that are in need of being quickly addressed.

Through her diction and language she shows that she not only possesses extreme intellectual ability but also possesses the knowledge to use it to her advantage. She speaks as those she is showcasing her unique ability to write from a perspective unmatched by any male writer. Yet further into the essay it is noted that she does not want to be portrayed as a female writer, but simply as a writer saying, " Here then was I (call me Mary Benton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael, or by any name you please—it is not a matter of any importance)..." (Wolfe 232). She feels that a name of really not something that needs to be seen at the forefront of their actions, it is simply their actions that need to be analyzed. She wants to give women the chance to show their true potential. Men have had some of the most influential voices up to this point and Wolfe hopes to show that women can defeat these insurmountable odds.

Imagery has a huge presence within this essay giving it a certain character other essays do not possess. She states, " That collar I have spoken of, women, and fiction, the need of coming to some conclusion on a subject that raises all sorts of prejudices and passions, bowed my head to the ground. To the right and left bushes of some sort, golden and crimson, glowed with the colour, even it seemed burnt with the heat of fire" (Wolfe 232). After reading <https://assignbuster.com/women-in-fiction-essay/>

this one can see vividly in their mind these intensely colored bushes sitting on each side of Wolfe. Yet it also portrays the struggle she is facing, how these thoughts are burning inside her mind begging for a chance to be heard.

The colors she uses also presents a separate image, these are no longer issues that will sit on the back burner, they are now going to come to the surface and burn into the minds of all who read this essay. Wolfe also uses a literary technique known as personification; giving human like qualities to in humane objects. She does this simply to make the essay more relatable to her audience. She states, “ That a famous library has been cursed by a woman is a matter of complete indifference to a famous library.

Venerable and calm, with all its treasures safe locked within its breast, it sleeps complacently and will, so far as I am concerned, so sleep forever” (Wolfe 233). It is a though she has resentment towards this library.

Resentment towards the fact that it does not fear whoever walks through the front doors because if it wishes it can simply lock away its’ treasures; keep them from whomever it feels is unworthy. It is as though Wolfe wants her essay to be the key capable of finally unlocking those treasures for everyone to revel in. Further down within the same paragraph she mentions an organ, and uses it to convey the sorrow this struggle has brought to many women.

Wolfe states, “ The organ complained magnificently as I passed the chapel door. Even the sorrows of Christianity in that serene air more like the recollection of sorrow than sorrow itself; even the groaning of the ancient organ seemed lapped in peace” (Wolfe 233). Wolfe herself being a female

author has experienced the sorrow and heartache of this never ending struggle for women. It gives the reader the true opportunity to empathize with all those who simply wish to see their dreams brought to light.

Women simply wanted for their voices to be heard and held to the same or better standards as the voices of men. Wolfe is using to the organ to imply that until there is a solution to this seriously concerning problem there will be no peace within society. Wolfe continuing to use personification gives a creative spin on everyday items, as she gets closer to the end of her essay she uses this technique to show how the struggle has begun to come to an end. She presents the image of a cat saying, “ Certainly, as I watched the Manx cat pause in the middle of the lawn as if it questioned the universe something seemed lacking, something seemed different.

But what was different I asked myself, listening to the talk. And to my answer that question. I had to think myself out of that room back into the past, before the war the war indeed and to set before my eyes the model of another luncheon party held in rooms not very far distant from these; but different. Everything was different” (Wolfe 235).

It seems her tone has changed towards the end of the essay. She seems to portray a sense of sadness within this quote, she has fought so hard to finally see a change in the equality of women, yet now that it has begun to take effect she is almost sad, or possibly afraid. Change is a scary thought for any human being to face and Wolfe uses the Manx cat to portray this fear.

Animals are innately adapted at sensing change, yet it seems to the naked eye they do not fear it. Wolfe uses the cat to show that though she may fear

the changes ahead but is extremely ready for what they may bring to her life and the lives of several women hoping to become writers.

Wolfe also mentions the war as a potential drawback, blaming it as the reason women's equality has become an issue. Wolfe states, " Shall we lay the blame on the war? Guns fired in August 1914; did the faces of men and women show so plain in each other's eyes that romance was killed? Certainly it was a shock (to women in particular with their illusions of education, and so on) to see the faces of our rulers in the light of shell fire" (Wolfe 236). It is almost as though she feels the war turned men and women against each other. Before the guns and the bombs there were endless amounts of romance in the world, and people were perfectly content with their lives. Yet after the war hit and men were called to fight and women were put in the factories to fill their jobs; it created a conflict that didn't use to exist.

All of the sudden the things women though that almost had a chance to become a part of were taken away from them. Wolfe mentions, " to women in particular with their illusions of education..." (Wolfe 236). She sees a woman's education as something that was once a possibility but now due to the war may be virtually unattainable. She sees the war a more of a punishment to the women then it was then men. Yes the men lost their lives and were also injured, but women lost sight of everything that made them who they were.

They were no longer able to do the things that once gave them joy, and she sees that as the cause of the beginning of the fights for women's equality. " A Room of One's Own" gave a remarkable author the chance to have her

voice heard for years to come. Through her use of literary techniques, possibly ahead of her time Virginia Wolfe also paved the way for women well into the future to have a voice. As stated earlier, “ Lock up you r libraries if you like; but there is not gate, no lock, not bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind” (Wolfe 231). She proved that there is nothing that can possibly shut down the scope of the human mind.

Through what seems like insurmountable odds the mind and the written word will always triumph.