

"the yellow wallpaper" analysis

Business



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"The Yellow Wallpaper" was written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and first published in 1899, but it was not the last publication of the short story. The plot hit a spot in the lives of those that read the story.

The situation and reactions of the characters were common at the time of publication. However, these actions are the main theme of the story. The story is about a young married woman, who believes she is ill. However, her husband, John, who is a physician and her brother, also a physician, do not believe that she is truly ill. They diagnose her as depressed and believe that rest and fresh air will retrieve her from the melancholy state. Because of this belief, John rents a country mansion for three months in hopes to make his wife better, but in reality it is his treatment plan that does not cure her, but takes her over the brink of insanity.

From the beginning, the wife knows there is something wrong. She states, "...there is something strange about the house - I can feel it." This is the first clue that all is not as it may seem.

This feeling does not depart but intensifies throughout the story. The more requests the wife makes to stay out of the nursery, with the yellow wallpaper, the more John makes her stay, telling her to not let her imagination run away with her. This marks the first step into insanity for the wife. She knows something is wrong, and puts it to paper because no one will believe her. Using the paper as the catalyst for the descent into insanity, Gilman personifies the wallpaper. "This paper looks at me as if it knew what a vicious influence it had!".

This personification allows the wallpaper to become a dynamic character within the story, constantly changing per the wife's whims or imagination. She follows the patterns and even acknowledges a smell that she said is the smell of the personified wallpaper. The longer she refuses to tell anyone of this feeling the more entrenched she becomes with the wallpaper and the woman within its patterns. As the wife delves deeper into insanity, the woman in the wallpaper becomes similar to the wife. She acknowledges the woman and the way the woman creeps by comparing herself, " I always lock the door when I creep by daylight.

I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once." This statement is used to show how the wife is becoming one with the wallpaper, and is hiding from her husband her new found relationship, because of fear he will take it away from her. The final plunge comes when John enters the room and sees that she is mentally one with the wallpaper. " Now why should that poor man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time." The wife know longer knows those around her, all she knows is that is the wallpaper and these people are interfering with her convergence.

The irony is obvious. The fact that the doctor put her there and then kept her there destroyed her rather than healed her. Throughout the story, the wife tried to do things, but was not allowed to do any of them, only rest and only stare at the wallpaper. It begs to answer the question of whether visiting relatives, or taking the bedroom on the first floor, if the same reaction would have occurred. Of course the reader is not told but can only assume that the real culprit in this tragedy is the husband, the physician.

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