

# Trifles review

Law



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“ Trifles” by Susan Glaspell observes the different reactions characters have due to a murder case. Each of the characters emotions are captivated within the dialog and fundamentally an understanding of the state of mind that lies beneath the scene. The play explains the psyche of the suspect who feels justified due to their past experiences, the sympathy shown from a friend who wasn’t always there, the difference in thought process amongst genders, and the empathetic struggle between law and justice.

Glaspell explores how the understanding of a situation depends on the character’s personal relations with the suspect, and in turn how this affects their judgment of a person’s actions. Mrs. Hale’s reaction to the situation is empathetic to Mrs. Wright based off of her own personal experience of knowing her. Mrs. Hale remembers Mrs. Wright as a delightful person but years with Mr. Wright she had become cold and dark to the outside world. The only light for Mrs. Wright was her pet bird. Mrs. Hale finds the bird’s neck snapped and realizes that after all the abuse Mrs. Wright had taken; the bird’s death was the final straw for her (Glaspell 1035-1036). Glaspell shows both Mrs. Hale’s empathy and realization in the following lines, “ I wonder how it would seem never to have any children around. No, Wright wouldn’t like the bird- a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that, too” (1036). Glaspell use Mrs. Hale’s reaction to not only explore her bias empathy but also to show reason in Mrs. Wright killing her husband. Mrs. Hale’s empathetic reaction also comes from her own guilt. Mrs. Hale was feeling guilty because she hadn’t come by to see Mrs. Wright.

Her regret is indicated in these lines, “ Oh, I wish I’d come over here once in a while! That was a crime! That was a crime! Who’s going to punish that”

(Glaspell 1036). After Mrs. Hale understood Mrs. Wright was trapped and slowly abused without any outside help, she knew she had taken justice into her own hands. Mrs. Hale, in this situation, is the only one who can see Mrs. Wright disparity and the only one who felt she could have prevented the murder from happening. Mrs. Hale's understanding of the situation also comes from the insight she had on Mr. and Mrs. Wright's relationship.

Her understanding allows her to more easily see a motive than Mrs. Peters or the men. Glaspell shows Mrs. Peters' ignorance in the following lines, " Not to know him; I've seen him in town. They say he was a good man" (1035), and follows that with Mrs. Hale's understanding of Mr. Wright " Yes-good; he didn't drink, and kept his word as well as most... But he was a hard man, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him-[Shivers]" (1035). With this personal experience of knowing both Mr. and Mrs. Wright; Mrs. Hale has a different perspective of what has happened than the reader or the rest of the characters.

With this knowledge Mrs. Hale can share Mrs. and Mr. Wright's relationship with not only Mrs. Peters but also the reader, and allow both audiences a chance to make their own judgment of the situation. Mrs. Wright's reaction is somewhat nonchalant to the situation and creates a sense of justification toward her actions. When Mr. Hale describes the encounter with Mrs. Wright there is a sense of uneasiness. Mrs. Wright laughs when Hale asks if he can see Mr. Wright and is nonchalant when telling him that he is dead. The strangest thing about the situation is Mrs. Wright is worried about very trivial things while she is being held for murder. Glaspell uses Mrs. Wright's distracted behavior to show her feelings toward the whole incident in the <https://assignbuster.com/trifles-review/>

following lines, “ Mrs. Peters: ‘ Oh her fruit; it did freeze. She worried about that when it turned so cold. She said the fire’d go out and her jars would break. ’ Sheriff: ‘ Well, can you beat the women! Held for murder and worryin’ about her preserves’” (1031). Mrs. Wright more worried about her fruit than being held for murder tells a lot about what is going through her mind.

She might be crazy or she could feel that her actions were justified. It could be seen as revenge because of her killing her husband in the same way her husband killed the bird. It also could have been she was abused for most of her life and felt it was self defense. Maybe she felt the law would not properly punish Mr. Wright for slowly sucking the life out of her. Nobody understood the situation better than Mrs. Wright and only knowing her past experiences would lead anybody to a motive. Glaspell uses Mrs. Peter’s reaction to connect with the reader because she is as ignorant to the situation as the reader.

When Mrs. Hale finds out Mrs. Peter’s didn’t know who Mrs. Wright was she begins to tell her. She explains Mrs. Wright as delightful person as can be. Mrs. Peters also didn’t know Mr. Wright and with the understanding that he is a “ hard man” (Glaspell 1035) she can better connect with the situation. Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale begin to uncover evidence and they start to realize a possible motive for Mrs. Wright killing her husband. Mrs. Peters is flustered by the situation but Mrs. Hale in a sense is pleading with her to sympathize with Mrs. Wright situation. Mrs. Peters understands Mrs. Wright’s predicament and helps Mrs. Hale hide key evidence even though she is married to the law. The mixed feelings of Mrs. Peters are shown in the <https://assignbuster.com/trifles-review/>

following lines “ I know what stillness is. The law has got to punish crime, Mrs. Hale... My, it’s a good thing the men couldn’t hear us. Wouldn’t they just laugh! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a – dead canary” (Glaspell 1036-1037). These changes of feelings may follow similar feelings of the reader. Initially Mrs. Wright can be seen as almost maniacal when being nonchalant about her husband’s death.

However after seeing the abuse and stillness of Mrs. Wright’s life; allows both Mrs. Peters and the reader to empathize with her. She doesn’t come to this conclusion herself but when Mrs. Hale explains Mr. and Mrs. Wright’s relationship, she understands that Mrs. Wright felt that there was no other way out of the situation. The main focus of the play is to show how someone’s past experience effects their understanding of a situation. While the men are going in and out of rooms looking for evidence the women are in the kitchen digesting the essence of Mrs. Wright. The women, due to the fact Mrs.

Hale knows both Mr. and Mrs. Wright, are identifying with the situation more emotionally. The men are doing things more by the book, going room to room looking for something to stand out to them. This approach make the men seem ignorant or just not able to connect with Mrs. Wright or Mr. Wright on a personal level. Suzy Holstein in “ Silent Justice in a Different Key: Glaspell’s ‘ Trifles’” says in the following lines “ The county attorney, Mr. Peters, and Mr. Hale never attempt to identify with John Wright...Instead, they view him as they do his wife, and abstraction”(286).

However the men's approach to investigating the murder doesn't have the same insight as Mrs. Hale has. Mrs. Hale knew Mrs. Wright on a personal level, and can involve the emotions that come along with the crime scene. The men could only look at situation objectively without the same knowledge that Mrs. Hale possesses. So instead of the men's ignorance being made by the difference in gender, it is the fact that Mrs. Hale knew both Mr. and Mrs. Wright. Glaspell uses these character's relationships to explain two sides of a story. On the surface Mrs. Wright has killed her husband and is facing murder charges. The three men in the play are only looking at the surface. They look at the scene objectively and doing the investigation by the book, are not able to uncover a motive. However, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters are dissecting Mrs. Wright's state of mind and actually uncovering the true story. Mrs. Wright obviously understands her situation because she knows the abuse Mr. Wright put her through. With the women uncovering Mrs. Wright's motive, Mrs. Peters is left with a decision to judge whether her actions are justified.

Glaspell sets up this situation to explore how someone's personal experience and knowledge change the understanding of a situation. With Mrs. Hale knowing the relationship between Mrs. Wright and her husband she is able to uncover a motive the other characters are blind to. She could convince Mrs. Peters that Mrs. Wright was the victim even more so than Mr. Wright by explaining the stillness of their relationship. Looking at the situation without the knowledge Mrs. Hale has and only the evidence both of the women uncovered, Mr. Wright's death looks like an act of revenge.