

A summary and analysis of charlotte perkins gilman's

Literature



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The Yellow Wallpaper, an 1891 short story written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a short story about a young woman suffering from what seems like post-partum depression. The narrator, the young woman, tells through her diary about her three month long stay at an estate, in which she is ordered to stay in her room to rest by her physician husband, leading to her obsession with the yellow wallpaper and the mysteries it holds. The author uses literary devices such as symbolism, themes, and imagery throughout the story giving it a much deeper and more literal meaning than a mentally ill woman. Through symbolism of imprisonment, the theme of oppression, and imagery of the wallpaper, the author portrays the narrator as a representation of the struggles American women faced starting with the Women's Suffrage Movement of the 19th century.

Throughout the story, the main character and narrator wants to journal and write about her daily life but is restricted to her bed by herself in her yellow wallpapered room by her husband. The narrator describes her room for several paragraphs hinting at the obsession she will soon grow to have with the room and wallpaper itself. The narrator says the windows are "Barred for little children", which is the first example of symbolism in the text. The bars on her bedroom window are representative of the prison the narrator faced not only physically but mentally. The narrator is trapped inside this room without contact to the outside world unless through her husband. The husband, John, is not very endearing to his wife's mental state and just treats her as if she was another burden for him to carry. As the narrator attempts to journal to escape her own mind, she is often told to stop by her husband or her husband's sister, Jennie. Her scattered, journaled thoughts

are practically her only escape from the confinement sentenced to her. This confinement that the narrator experiences symbolizes the restraints women in 19th century America faced since they often did not have much freedom and had to obey their husbands wishes. The narrator being confined to the prison of her mental state and her physical room symbolizes the lack of freedom granted to women in the 19th century.

In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the narrator faces oppression by her husband in several aspects. The husband orders the narrator to bed rest and no journaling which to him are justified since he is a physician and only wants what is best for his wife. There are several comments the narrator makes throughout the story that suggest John is less concerned about his wife's well-being and more about how he can keep her quiet. Remarks such as "John laughs at me, of course, but no one expects that in marriage", and "He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction". John even misdiagnoses his wife with nervous tendency rather than post-partum depression and does not actually believe she is sick. The whole story the narrator is fearful of John catching her journaling and doing anything that is outside of his instructions. The control that John has over her was a very real struggle women faced during this time. The narrator had very little control over her own life and was oppressed just like women were in America.

The imagery Gilman uses when describing the yellow wallpaper most prominently show the narrators wishes to be free. The author uses imagery throughout the story but the best example of the narrator feeling trapped is

by her yellow wallpaper. Similar to the symbolism of her room being like a prison, the narrator feels trapped and stuck inside this wallpaper in her room. She becomes very obsessive over the color and how horrid she thinks it is, and soon comes up with a plan to rid the room of the yellow wallpaper. By tearing the wallpaper down, the narrator frees herself of her delusions and thoughts that were encapsulating her, ' And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!'. When the Women's Suffrage movement was influential, the desire for women to be free of old-fashioned standards was very similar to the narrator. The narrator wanted to be free of her husband as well as her illness, coinciding with the independence that was needed for the women of 19th Century America.

The narrator faces several struggles in *The Yellow Wallpaper* that relate to the struggles of women in 19th Century America. As the narrator faces very real problems from her mental illness to the physical oppression of her husband, she attempts to overcome them whilst conveying a deeper meaning. Through theme of oppression, symbolism of her imprisonment, and imagery of the wallpaper, the author represents the narrator as the trials women went through during the start of the women's suffrage movement.