

# [The bride comes to yellow sky](https://assignbuster.com/the-bride-comes-to-yellow-sky-essay-samples/)

The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky
Crane's Use of Ironic Symbolism in " The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky"
Stephen Crane's " The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," as well as his other Western stories, owe much to Mark Twain's approach to the West. According to Eric Solomon, " both authorsused humor to comment on the flaws of traditional fictional processes" (237). While employing parody of the Western literary tradition, Crane also uses realism to depict the influence of the East on the West. In " The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," Stephen Crane uses symbolism to develop his study of the changes effected on the West and the roles of its inhabitants by the encroachment of eastern society.

" The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" is a parable of the East's invasion of the West through role changes in a small western town. This invasion is perfectly illustrated in the first setting. Crane writes, " The great Pullman was whirling onward with such dignity of motion that a glance from the window seemed simply to prove that the plains of Texas were pouring eastward" (401). This, the first sentence of the story, " fixes the sensation of a train ride through a kinesthetic detail, and that detail also supplies a theme that the rest of the story will develop" (Bergon 95). The Pullman train is carrying Marshal Jack Potter and his Eastern bride back to Yellow Sky. The Marshall's role in the affairs of his town has been affected and changed by his literal marriage to the East. The Marshall is only beginning to realize the effect his arrival on the town will have. The train car is the perfect symbol of the East moving toward and imposing itself on the west.
The second setting is " a world of complete contrast to the Eastern Pullman: the setting is Western, the bar of the Weary Gentleman Saloon" (Solomon 253). The saloon
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contains all the necessary Western elements-- whisky, guns, barflies, and an all-knowing bartender. Crane places another sign of the encroaching east, a traveling salesman, in the bar to supply an observer to whom the local customs and roles can be explained. It is through the barkeep that we learn of the " customary epic drunks of Scratchy Wilson that disturb the dozing atmosphere" (Solomon 253).

The symbolism is tightly, almost rigidly organized. The train represents the East; the saloon represents the West. The two most important ironic symbols are, however, Wilson and Potter. Jack Potter, the town marshal, has left Yellow Sky to marry his bride in secret. Potter is very self-conscious of " his change from his formal role as the lone marshal, ever ready for a fight" (Solomon 252). Potter is embarrassed in the great eastern train car. He is not accustomed to the fancy Victorian environment, and neither is his wife. Potter is also worried about the act of his marriage itself. He felt " the shadow of a deed weigh upon him like a leaden slab. He, the town marshal of Yellow Sky, a man known, liked, and feared in his corner had married without consulting Yellow Sky for any part of the transaction" (Crane 403). Potter had defiled the idea of..... the " Marshal, a figure fearsome and independent" (Solomon 252). Potter also ignored the Western tradition of partnership and consulting one's friends before marriage. He has told no one and is quietly attempting to sneak his bride back into town. This bride is the catalyst of change that is sure to wreak havoc on the social structure of Yellow Sky, and Potter knows it.

Potter's " opposite, Scratchy Wilson cannot face his own two roles" (Solomon 252). Where Potter has realized and is attempting to accept his new role, Scratchy will do nothing of the kind. Scratchy is the town's drunken bum. The occupants of the town are
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terrified as he rages up and down the street. Scratchy is, however, almost comical in his decorative shirt and fancy boots. Though he isn't conscious of it, these are a symbol of the East's encroachment on Scratchy. His shirt was " made principally by some Jewish women on the east side of New Yorkand his boots had red tops with gilded imprints, of the kind beloved by little sledding boys on the hillsides of New England" (407).
Despite his comical appearance, Scratchy is still the terror of the town. He is " a wonder with a gun," " the last one of the old gang that used to hang out along the river," and " out for trouble" (Crane 405). Solomon describes him as " a living cliche of the Old West, a quick draw, a deadly shot, a rough with a heart of gold: in every way out-dated (254). His binges are " formulaic, and the formula depends upon Marshal Potter to bring the ceremony of shouting and shooting to a halt by engaging in a ritual fight with Scratchy" (Solomon 253).
When Scratchy finally finds Marshal Potter it is a far different situation thenexpected. Scratchy is ready for the climax of the Western novel: the duel. Instead he finds the climax of the story's role conflict as " the relic of the Old West runs into the new bourgeois and his wife" (Solomon 252). Potter has ignored his role as Marshal and is unarmed. Scratchy's pretend world is shattered: " There ain't a man in Texas ever seen you without no gun. Don't take me for no kid" (Crane 409). Stunned by the news of the marriage, Scratchy is quick to grant that " I s'pose it's all off now" (Crane 409). The news of marriage resigns Scratchy to his former role of town bum; he shuffles off. Scratchy is the first to meet Potter's Eastern bride, and this catalyst wreaks havoc on his world.

Thus, " The Bride comes to Yellow Sky" is a study of changing roles in the West. Jack Potter, the Marshal, reluctantly accepts his new role and tries to fit in, while
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Scratchy Wilson cannot face his. Stephen Crane's " The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" uses symbolism to illustrate the effect of Eastern Society on the West.

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