

## ANALYSIS OF THE YELLOW WALLPAPER

- When we see references to the house being haunted, having a hidden secret and the wallpaper having grotesque faces we are shown aspects of Gothic Horror.
- John laughs at anything that is abstract and not tangible.
- She knows already how to alleviate her symptoms; there's an awareness that writing helps her mind and she's aware that it is because of him that she cannot do this – here a woman has far more awareness with her creative mind than her reasoning husband who is physician.
- We see evidence of a patriarchal society. One obstacle for the narrator is her husband who's a physician and another is her brother who is also a physician – she feels vulnerable and helpless against such male opposition.
- She is thought of as having a female condition – temporary nervous depression.
- The choppy rhythm of the sentences and line paragraphs help evoke hurried writing and show her agitated state of mind.
- We can almost see Gilman's voice coming through.
- She disagrees with her treatment but has no power to change it.
- She feels tired of having to express herself in secret and going against the norm and going against reason
- She's being told don't talk, exercise, write, use her imagination or think – what is left of her but a shell then?
- She changes to talking about her house instead – that's all that's left for her. It highlights the role women were expected to undertake willingly. She attempts to project her unhappiness onto her surroundings such as the house and the wallpaper.
- She's forcing herself to push her condition to one side for his sake and it is this that leads to her losing her sanity.
- She says there's legal trouble '[she] believes' – she is not certain, this shows again politics is 'not for women'
- When she feels there's something ghostly in the house John says it must be a draught – a typical reasoning man who just believes in tangible things.
- We find it is difficult for us to criticise John as he does love her dearly
- He's however taking all care from her and now she feels guilty that she doesn't 'value it more'. She thinks she should feel content as there is nothing in her life that can be a tangible cause of her troubles – males' view being forced upon her
- The windows and bars of the room add a sinister tone to the house – he's made it seem to her that she's up there because it's the nicest room but really it seems it's to cage her in and protect her – from what?
- We also have to judge how far we can trust what she says – is she insane already which could decrease the validity of all she's saying?
- Before becoming obsessed by the paper she detests it. Her fascination with the ugly paper begins as an innocent annoyance, builds to a pastime, and crescendos to an obsession.
- She puts her writings away as soon as she sees John coming.
- The stifling seems to be working as she states she hasn't even felt like writing since being there apart from the first day.

- In a reasoning practical point of view, John feels her case is not serious as it is only her thinking and 'only nervousness'.
- She's feeling the pressure and guilt of not fulfilling her role as wife and mother and feels a burden on them all. But she is also trying to cry out to do the things she knows will relieve her but her voice is not listened to or valued and her condition is seen not seriousness to treat.
- No request of hers is met – not even something small such as changing the wallpaper.
- There's hints at post-natal depression. She seems distant towards the baby.
- Things seem to be constantly worsening.
- We see that whenever she voices her opinion it is met with a patronising comment. He infantilises her and makes her out to be incapable of doing anything.
- Symbolically, since she now is not a wife or mother, she adopts a similar role of a child who is incapable and vulnerable who needs to be told what to do. She always says 'he said' 'he says' – this is quite childlike and also shows how everyone else exercises control over her actions and also her thoughts. At times she even interrupts her own train of thought to recall John's instructions as she has internalised his authority and so hears his voice telling her what to think.
- At this stage we hear his voice against hers only.
- She constantly belittles her condition.
- She feels physically and symbolically caged in – is this John trying to be loving and barring the window as a safety measure? Or is he trying to suppress her?
- John has put her up there, in the room of his choice, and then prevents her from being creative by stopping her imagining things outside the window. He has even prevented visitors.
- However, Gilman goes to great lengths not to openly criticise John as he does seem to just be thinking he is caring for her in all he's doing
- Her language here is still quite controlled.
- We get reminders that she is in opposition of the rest cure.
- She wants to get better faster – the pressure she feels to please everyone. This is because it is very childlike to want to please others, she feels guilty not fulfilling her 'roles' and she knows when she gets better she can return to writing.
- The wallpaper begins to show grotesque faces – it reflects her inner feelings.
- The paper starts to become alive. You can trace her downwards spiral to insanity.
- Evidence of a very imaginative nature and personality. We see how suppressed she is as her imagination is trying to break out and is being projected onto the wallpaper.
- The sinister quality of the wallpaper is becoming evident.
- The fact she says the wallpaper is teared by the children who were here before could actually be her descending into madness; maybe she teared it off herself.
- The woman in the wallpaper symbolises her trying to escape all that is forced and suppressed on her.
- John's sister has taken on the role that the narrator should have.
- She begins to notice the woman behind the wallpaper at the beginning of her descent into madness. The woman is a representation of herself and her art being trapped.
- The pattern of the wallpaper is what is straining her (as it's like the 'bars' which are holding the woman in the paper); it symbolises patriarchal society and the way in which women have to conform to certain rules and regulations.
- When Jennie comes over she does everything; again keeping her mindless

- We actually get a biographical reference to Weir Mitchell. And she speaks of a 'friend' who saw him; this could be a direct reference to herself.
- The cure itself is worse than the disease and her mental condition deteriorates rapidly.
- John still feels her case isn't too serious, that it's just a 'fancy' or a 'whim' that is put on by herself.
- Initially she hated the wall paper but now she is fixated and intrigued by it.
- She ends up trying to use reason like the way John thinks; she tried to explain the wallpaper and name the pattern – but she cannot do so – much like her own condition it cannot be explained.
- She shows attention to the detail of the paper; she is still somewhat coherent and it shows her intelligence. The next line is less coherent – she is deteriorating.
- There is a full understanding throughout of what will help her – that writing about it, even in secret, is best for her.
- She tried to have a 'reasonable talk' with John – she tries to talk to him with reason but her voice still is not heard as a woman's opinion is not valid in the male world of reason.
- John read to her until she slept – again treating her like a child who cannot think for itself.
- The references to the baby, which is still impersonal, is also telling of her maternal side as she's thinking that at least the baby is well by not having to be with the wallpaper.
- She has an awareness that the wallpaper should be a cause for concern for others, so she has opted not to talk to about it so that others think she is okay – we hear her inner thoughts but also see how she acts outwardly. As it is in diary form that nobody is reading she feels she can be open about everything.
- The idea that there's more than one women behind the paper could symbolise the number of roles that she undertakes as a women.
- The fact the narrator stoops and creeps shows how she is trapped in a suffocating domestic "pattern" which she cannot escape.
- Perhaps a question for debate is whether the message of the tails conclusion is mere madness. By the end of the story Dr. John has been metaphorically temporarily defeated or at least momentarily stunned.
- The narrator ironically asks as she creeps around her attic why he has fainted.
- John's masculine swoop (fainting was only done by women) is only one of the triumphs Gilman imagines for her man woman.
- The woman from behind the wallpaper creeps away fast and far on the long road – it was such an escape from the numb world behind the patterned wallpaper that it was like a flight from disease into health that was clear to Gilman himself.
- She tries to apply reason to try to explain why he behaves the way he does towards her and comes to the conclusion that he is wise and he loves her when really it is an example of male oppression supressing her feelings and not accepting her feelings.
- The narrator attempts to have her voice heard but is stifled by her husband who 'knows best'. He will not even consider the possibility of mental illness because she has no reason to be ill.
- John says she is getting better as 'you are gaining flesh and colour, your appetite is better' – these are simply physical manifestations not a reflection of her emotional or mental wellbeing.
- John refers to her as 'she' – not even a direct reference to her, she is being patronised and belittled.

- She says she is only 'better in body' but it is met by a stern look from John as he feels she is making herself sick by thinking of it, it is all in her head, if she is getting better physically he believes she must be getting better mentally. He refuses to accept that she has mental issues. Mental health issues were thought of as something a woman brought about upon herself, it was created by her nerves.
- John keeps adding extra pressure by making her feeling guilty for her condition.
- Readers are made to see her madness as a perverse triumph over the imprisoning domesticity in which she is trapped by patriarchy embodied by her common sense doctor husband.
- We see glimpses of her getting more 'normal' and better when she tries to reason with her husband, but he tells her to suppress those thoughts which just inadvertently pushes her back into her illness and she focuses on the wallpaper again.
- The pattern has become destructive, perhaps destructive on her mind. Her imaginative side that has been told not to function has found a way out, been corrupted and projected onto her surroundings (i.e. the wallpaper).
- Her spiralling into madness can be traced through the wallpaper; she hates it at first, then she tries to apply reason, then it turns grotesque and now it is destructive.
- The patterns 'knocks you down and tramples upon you' – the pattern is the 'bars' (patriarchal society) that is locking in the woman. The 'bars' are also evident of her being a prisoner.
- Her writing is becoming less fluid and a lot more use of punctuation like pauses
- She says she didn't realise what the thing was for a while but now she knows it is a woman – she now realises her entrapment which she might not have before.
- The woman is her double.
- She says Jennie has an inexplicable look – maybe it is because the others are noticing that her behaviour is becoming peculiar and she is not fooling them as well by pretending to be better and doing what they say. She feels she is acting normally in an appropriate manner.
- Even though she feels better it is the rapid descent into insanity that is lulling her into a false sense of wellbeing. Her madness is helping her liberation. What some call madness, others call liberation and imagination. The price that women pay for being themselves is the label 'madness'.
- The wallpaper is described using grotesque words such as foul.
- She speaks of a mark low down on the wall – we know it was done by her.
- She says the smell of the wallpaper is everywhere – this could be a direct reference to the patriarchal society which is forever following her, she cannot escape it.
- She says there is 'great many woman' behind the paper – she is speaking more widely of all the women in society not just herself.
- The women's heads bulging through the bars gives an image of strangulation; she feels strangled, suppressed and not-listened to.
- The way she speaks is much more sinister now – she's describing how she feels more, but at the cost of 'madness'.
- We have sudden changes in first and third person; she sounds as though she is describing someone else and then suddenly turns it on herself.
- She's writing in a diary which is meant to be her own thoughts; but here she suddenly feels she 'shan't tell it this time' – she's even becoming suspicious of her own thoughts almost as if her dual personality is becoming established. She now is even suspicious of her husband.

- She has such an obsessive nature with the paper; she doesn't want anyone to touch it and wants to be the person who gets the woman out.
- She seems to have grown in experience – at the beginning she was submissive but this growing suspicion of everybody has allowed her to assert herself more (such as when she feels okay in telling them she doesn't want to be woken for dinner).
- She says there is gnawing of the bed which she says was the children but we later learn it was her that bit bed – she cannot recall gnawing at it earlier
- The idea of suicide is present – she cannot do it though because of the bars on the window
- She now makes the connection she was avoiding – that the pattern and the stooping woman was an image of herself. She knows there is many other women like her.
- Narrator now calls John 'Young man' – almost as if they aren't a married couple and evidence of role reversal and of how he used to speak to her.