Reflection On The Yellow Wallpaper Essay, Research Paper

The Yellow Wallpaper

In the short story ?The Yellow Wallpaper? by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the narrator and her husband move to a colonial mansion for three months in order to help the narrator get better. She moves upstairs in this horrid room with yellow wallpaper. Throughout the story she studies the wallpaper because she isn?t allowed out of the room that much because her husband, John, a physician, says that it is best that she stays inside. As she learns more about the wallpaper she realizes that she sees a woman inside it and she spends a lot of time plotting how to free the woman. She locks her room and tears off most of the wallpaper and frees the woman. At the end John comes into the room, sees what she has done and faints.

Everyone deals with their personal obstacles differently and ?The Yellow Wallpaper? is a perfect example because there are many different obstacles throughout the story. The narrator and John both handle them differently and a result of which, is an essential change by both of them.

First of all, John handles everything to an extent but he doesn?t solve the problem at hand. He tends to run away from it. For example, when the narrator asks, ?why the house had stood so long untenanted,? he just laughs at her and doesn?t even investigate about it, which proves that he just let it go and does nothing about it. And that is what he does throughout the whole story. Also he ?scoffs openly at any talk.? This means that he doesn?t talk about his problems and he would prefer to keep things bottled up then to express how he is really feeling. He is also always ?going into town for more serious cases.? This is another way in which John deals with his problems, he runs away from them. He also avoids the actual subject by calling his wife a cute name like, ?bless her little heart,? and, ?my blessed little goose.? These quotes just make it so he doesn?t have to answer the question and then he has relinquished himself from the situation. Another thing that he does to handle obstacles is he lies. When the narrator says that she doesn?t feel any better, and this happens often, then he just says, ?you are getting better, you are eating more and you have more color today.? So john handles his obstacles in an inefficient and ineffective matter.

The narrator however handles things in a much more precise manner. The number one thing that made her relaxed and that calmed her down was her journal. She would write about everything that happened not to read it later but so she was more relaxed and could think a little clearer with whatever she wrote not in her mind. The whole story is her journal and she writes mostly about the wallpaper and how her husband is always gone. This journal idea is essential because we know what she is thinking and that really helps understand the story and her character better. Also, in order for her to forget about her surroundings she studies the wallpaper. This method, not unlike her husbands, just shows that she is avoiding the problem as well. She spends hours on end following the pattern of the wallpaper. The curves and patterns that go along it mystify her. This is avoidance from the obstacle at hand and she doesn?t deal with them directly sometimes. However, unlike John, she always wanted to talk about her condition and other problems that they had. Her problem was when he just avoided the problem she just let it be when she should have persisted. Also, if she has an obstacle to get around, she focuses on that obstacle until she can clear it. This is shown with the lady in the wallpaper. All she thought about was the lady and how she could get her free from the wallpaper. She spent days plotting how to do so. And she persisted on it until the task at hand was completed. So although she has some traits that are the same as John?s when dealing with obstacles, she also has some effective ones in which make her a little better in dealing with the problems.

There are many different obstacles that are to be found in ?The Yellow Wallpaper.? The main obstacle is of course the narrator?s health. She obviously knows when she is feeling worse or better, however her husband seems to think that he knows but he is afraid of the truth so he always says she is doing fine. She knows better but she does not contest what he says because he is a physician and she doesn?t want to insult him. The author indicates through the narrator?s state of mind that she is obviously getting worse rather than better. Another obstacle is also with the narrator?s state of mind. Her obstacle is the lady in the wallpaper. However she must develop a way to release her from the wallpaper and also to do it when neither John nor Jennie are around. She eventually completes this task but she lost her sanity in the process. Another obstacle is a physical one between the narrator and her husband John. He has her pretty much confined to her bedroom and she doesn?t like that. She wants to have friends over and he won?t let her see anyone. She isn?t even allowed to see her baby at all, John won?t let her do anything that could be remotely stressful and in the end that is what pushes her over the edge. He always leaves town and avoids her to avoid communicating about her condition and therefore she feels as though she has done something wrong. Another minor obstacle for the narrator is between her and the nursery. At the beginning she detests the nursery, everything from the wallpaper, to the bed, to the smell it emitted, she just hated it. As she learned to cope with her obstacles she learns to appreciate the room. In this story only some of the obstacles were actually dealt with to a conclusion of resolution.

There are a couple things that account for the differences in which they attack their obstacles. John has a practical attitude and thus he takes his time in analyzing the thoughts of the narrator. This takes him a long time to realize that what he sees is in fact true, she is insane. The narrator however has more of an outgoing attitude. She wants to get out of the house and see people and she wants to do everything normally, but she is restricted to a limited amount of socialization. This gives her time to analyze her obstacle and overcome it quicker than John does.

Both the narrator and John undergo an essential change. The narrator begins the story as a woman who is somewhat mentally distraught. Throughout the story you can see her become different through her thoughts and actions. By the end of the story she has become clinically insane and is in desperate need for help. John on the other hand does not come to the realization that at the beginning of the story, the narrator has some issues that have to be dealt with and he just ignores them for the most part. Finally at the end of the story he comes to the realization that in fact, his wife is nuts.

In conclusion, everyone experiences obstacles in their life, and all have a different approach in which they attack the obstacle. Some are more effective than others are. The narrator was much more effective than John was because she had time to analyze the problem and then do something about it. Where as John would pretty much just leave it be and hope it eventually went away.

Symbolism in The Yellow Wallpaper

The Yellow Wallpaper is overflowed with symbolism. Symbols are images that have a meaning beyond them selves in a short story, a symbol is a detail, a character, or an incident that has a meaning beyond its literal role in the narrative. Gilman uses symbols to tell her story of a woman?s mental state of being diminishes throughout the story. The following paragraphs tell just some of the symbols and how I interpreted them, they could be read in many different ways.

The title itself, The Yellow Wallpaper, is symbolizing the role men play in a patriarchal society, where men are the more dominant sex, and how women are ?trapped? in a life of male control. For instance, At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all moonlight, it becomes bars!?(Gilman 211) This shows how the narrator feels trapped by the paper. Another symbol that refers to the role women play is, ?And she is all the time trying to climb through that pattern, it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads.?(Gilman 213) This is meaning that if a women tried to play a role in society she was just not taken seriously, or felt like trying to play a role was getting nowhere.

The way Gilman describes the wallpaper tells of what the narrator?s mind is thinking, ?and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide.?(Gillman 206) She doesn?t think this on the conscious level but more on the unconscious level. When the narrator writes, ?(The designs) destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.?(Gillman 206) She is speaking of her state of mind subconsciously, the narrator is on the brink of losing her mind at this point. Gillman writes, ?There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down. ?(Gillman 207) She was explaining how the wallpaper is like a ?watchdog? or a guard of some type, watching her every move, naturally making her nervous.

I think that the narrator feels much alone in life, even though she has a family who cares for her. She is clinically depressed so naturally she is going to feel isolated from the world. Speaking about a house that the narrator grew up in, she writes, ?and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.? (Gillman 208) The chair gave her a sense of companionship or maybe protection as the armrests and the back surrounded her.

As she sits in the room for hours on end, her mind allows her to see herself as an acquaintance portrayed as a stranger trapped behind the design in the wallpaper. ?But int the places where it isn?t faded and where the sun is just so-I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.?(Gillman 213) Later in the story when her mind is slipping more she tries to help the ?women? get out from the entrapment of the wallpaper, for instance, ?As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.?(Gillman 214) The narrator says, ?I don?t like to look out of the windows even-there are so many of these creeping women, and they creep so fast. I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did??(Gillman 215) She is saying that there are many women out there that feel trapped just as she did.

Symbolism plays a soul part of The Yellow Wallpaper. Gillman gets her point across if the reader can catch what she is trying to say. Gillman put together a remarkable collection of symbols throughout her story. Some are easy to find and others I haven?t even found. The point to the story is that women could not play a role in society back then because society felt it was wrong, society wanted women in the household.

Guth, Hans P., and Gadriele L. Rico Discovering Literature second edition (1997) 204-216. Text Book.

“The Yellow Wallpaper”, written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is a short story with many interpretations and is a source of many reactions. One interpretation that appears often, is the idea that a woman who is not afraid of looking at things in an intangible sense is looked upon as some sort of “lunatic.” This reason was sometimes a primary reason to drive a woman, not medically claimed as ill, to live in a mansion, “standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village,” was a practice very popular yet very wrong. By placing this woman in this mansion, forcing her to quit her writing and all other sources of communication and excitement, condemned this woman into a state of depression and hallucination. Therefor, by placing a woman in the backcountry and forcing her ignore all others forms of life, is a form of abuse that needed to be expressed thought this short story.

A woman that looks within the depths of a house and characterizes it as “haunted” is not evidence to lock her up and diagnose her with an illness. “A colonial mansion?I would say haunted house?but that would be asking too much of fate,” shows the narrator’s superstitious characteristic that places her outside the walls of society. By moving into a bedroom, the narrator feels a form of solitude. The narrator is eventually forced to discontinue her writing for she is afraid to hear the words of her husband. “He hates to ha