

The Yellow Wallpaper

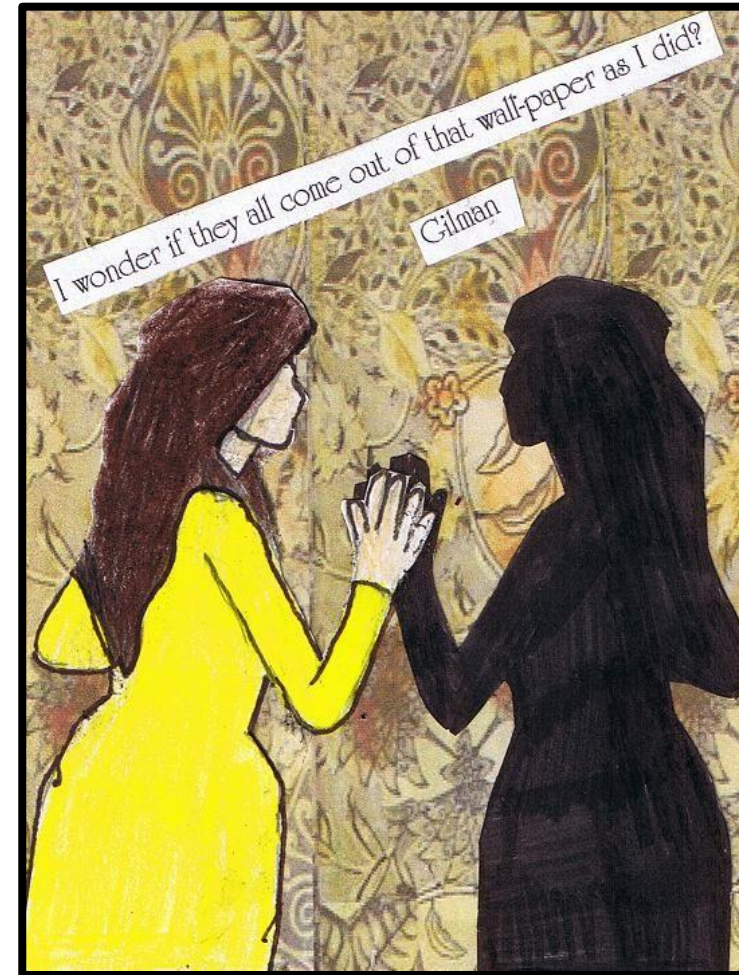
By Charlotte Perkins Gilman

1892

A bit of info about 'The Yellow Wallpaper':

The public reaction to the story was strong, if mixed. In many circles, 'The Yellow Wallpaper' was initially perceived as nothing more than a horror story, stemming from the gothic example of Edgar Allen Poe and Mary Shelley.

It was not until the 1970s that the story was also recognized as an extraordinary narrative that enlightens the reader on **women's health**, **motherhood**, **mental breakdown and its treatment**, as well as **feminism** and **gender relations** in late 19th-century America.



Read the short text by accessing this PDF:

- <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Books/documents/2009/01/09/TheYellowWallpaper.pdf>

Answer these questions to assess understanding:

- 1.) Give a description of John. Why does the heroine say that his profession is "perhaps . . . one reason I do not get well faster"? How does the narrator view her husband? Does she agree with John's diagnosis and treatment? Who else supports John's diagnosis? What effect does this have on the heroine?
- 2.) How would you characterise the narrator's initial reaction to, and description of, the wallpaper?
- 3.) Describe the narrator's state after the first two weeks of residence. Has John's relationship with his wife changed at all?
- 4.) Who is Jennie? What is her relationship to the narrator, and why do you think she's been included in the story? What function does she serve?
- 5.) How has the narrator changed in her description of the wallpaper? Is it fair to say that the wallpaper has become more dominant in her day-to-day routine? Explain.

Continue to answer these questions:

- **6.)** How does the narrator try to reach out to her husband? What is his reaction?
- **7.)** Who does the narrator see in the wallpaper? How have her perceptions of John and Jennie changed from the beginning of the story?
- **8.)** Abruptly the narrator switches mood from boredom and frustration to excitement. To what does she attribute this change? How does John react to this? What new aspects of the wallpaper does she discuss?
- **9.)** By the final section of the story, what is the narrator's relationship to her husband? to Jennie? to the wallpaper? How has the narrator's perspective changed from the start of the story? What change do we see in her actions?
- **10.)** Considering all your work on this story, what do you think Charlotte Perkin Gilman's warning / message is to the reader?

Useful websites/revision guides to assist understanding:

SparkNotes:

- <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/yellowwallpaper/themes/>

Grade Saver:

- <https://www.gradesaver.com/the-yellow-wallpaper>

LitCharts:

- <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-yellow-wallpaper>

Further insight/reading:

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's biography:

<https://www.coursehero.com/lit/The-Yellow-Wallpaper/author/>

The Rest Cure:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-the-rest-cure-in-the-yellow-wallpaper.html>

Silas Weir Mitchell:

<https://nyamcenterforhistory.org/2016/04/08/beyond-the-yellow-wallpaper-silas-weir-mitchell-doctor-and-poet/>