

The Yellow Wallpaper Sparknote

Context

Charlotte Perkins Gilman was best known in her time as a crusading journalist and feminist intellectual, a follower of such pioneering women's rights advocates as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, Gilman's great-aunt. Gilman was concerned with political inequality and social justice in general, but the primary focus of her writing was the unequal status of women within the institution of marriage. In such works as *Concerning Children* (1900), *The Home* (1904), and *Human Work* (1904), Gilman argued that women's obligation to remain in the domestic sphere robbed them of the expression of their full powers of creativity and intelligence, while simultaneously robbing society of women whose abilities suited them for professional and public life. An essential part of her analysis was that the traditional power structure of the family made no one happy—not the woman who was made into an unpaid servant, not the husband who was made into a master, and not the children who were subject to both. Her most ambitious work, *Women and Economics* (1898), analyzed the hidden value of women's labor within the capitalist economy and argued, as Gilman did throughout her works, that financial independence for women could only benefit society as a whole.

Today, Gilman is primarily known for one remarkable story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," which was considered almost unprintably shocking in its time and which unnerves readers to this day. This short work of fiction, which deals with an unequal marriage and a woman destroyed by her unfulfilled desire for self-expression, deals with the same concerns and ideas as Gilman's nonfiction but in a much more personal mode. Indeed, "The Yellow Wallpaper" draws heavily on a particularly painful episode in Gilman's own life.

In 1886, early in her first marriage and not long after the birth of her daughter, Charlotte Perkins Stetson (as she was then known) was stricken with a severe case of depression. In her 1935 autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, she describes her "utter prostration" by "unbearable inner misery" and "ceaseless tears," a condition only made worse by the presence of her husband and her baby. She was referred to Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, then the country's leading specialist in nervous disorders, whose treatment in such cases was a "rest cure" of forced inactivity. Especially in the case of his female patients, Mitchell believed that depression was brought on by too much mental activity and not enough attention to domestic affairs. For Gilman, this course of treatment was a disaster. Prevented from working, she soon had a nervous breakdown. At her worst, she was reduced to crawling into closets and under beds, clutching a rag doll.

Once she abandoned Mitchell's rest cure, Gilman's condition improved, though she claimed to feel the effects of the ordeal for the rest of her life. Leaving behind her husband and child, a scandalous decision, Charlotte Perkins Stetson (she took the name Gilman after a second marriage, to her cousin) embarked on a successful career as a journalist, lecturer, and publisher. She wrote "The Yellow Wallpaper" soon after her move to California, and in it she uses her personal experience to create a tale that is both a chilling description of one woman's

fall into madness and a potent symbolic narrative of the fate of creative women stifled by a paternalistic culture.

In purely literary terms, "The Yellow Wallpaper" looks back to the tradition of the psychological horror tale as practiced by Edgar Allan Poe. For example, Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" is also told from the point of view of an insane narrator. Going further back, Gilman also draws on the tradition of the Gothic romances of the late eighteenth century, which often featured spooky old mansions and young heroines determined to uncover their secrets. Gilman's story is also forward-looking, however, and her moment-by-moment reporting of the narrator's thoughts is clearly a move in the direction of the sort of stream-of-consciousness narration used by such twentieth-century writers as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner.

Plot Overview

The narrator begins her journal by marveling at the grandeur of the house and grounds her husband has taken for their summer vacation. She describes it in romantic terms as an aristocratic estate or even a haunted house and wonders how they were able to afford it, and why the house had been empty for so long. Her feeling that there is "something queer" about the situation leads her into a discussion of her illness—she is suffering from "nervous depression"—and of her marriage. She complains that her husband John, who is also her doctor, belittles both her illness and her thoughts and concerns in general. She contrasts his practical, rationalistic manner with her own imaginative, sensitive ways. Her treatment requires that she do almost nothing active, and she is especially forbidden from working and writing. She feels that activity, freedom, and interesting work would help her condition and reveals that she has begun her secret journal in order to "relieve her mind." In an attempt to do so, the narrator begins describing the house. Her description is mostly positive, but disturbing elements such as the "rings and things" in the bedroom walls, and the bars on the windows, keep showing up. She is particularly disturbed by the yellow wallpaper in the bedroom, with its strange, formless pattern, and describes it as "revolting." Soon, however, her thoughts are interrupted by John's approach, and she is forced to stop writing.

As the first few weeks of the summer pass, the narrator becomes good at hiding her journal, and thus hiding her true thoughts from John. She continues to long for more stimulating company and activity, and she complains again about John's patronizing, controlling ways—although she immediately returns to the wallpaper, which begins to seem not only ugly, but oddly menacing. She mentions that John is worried about her becoming fixated on it, and that he has even refused to repaper the room so as not to give in to her neurotic worries. The narrator's imagination, however, has been aroused. She mentions that she enjoys picturing people on the walkways around the house and that John always discourages such fantasies. She also thinks back to her childhood, when she was able to work herself into a terror by imagining things in the dark. As she describes the bedroom, which she says must have been a nursery for young children, she points out that the paper is torn off the wall in spots, there are scratches and gouges in the floor, and the furniture is heavy and fixed in place. Just as she

begins to see a strange sub-pattern behind the main design of the wallpaper, her writing is interrupted again, this time by John's sister, Jennie, who is acting as housekeeper and nurse for the narrator.

As the Fourth of July passes, the narrator reports that her family has just visited, leaving her more tired than ever. John threatens to send her to Weir Mitchell, the real-life physician under whose care Gilman had a nervous breakdown. The narrator is alone most of the time and says that she has become almost fond of the wallpaper and that attempting to figure out its pattern has become her primary entertainment. As her obsession grows, the sub-pattern of the wallpaper becomes clearer. It begins to resemble a woman "stooping down and creeping" behind the main pattern, which looks like the bars of a cage. Whenever the narrator tries to discuss leaving the house, John makes light of her concerns, effectively silencing her. Each time he does so, her disgusted fascination with the paper grows.

Soon the wallpaper dominates the narrator's imagination. She becomes possessive and secretive, hiding her interest in the paper and making sure no one else examines it so that she can "find it out" on her own. At one point, she startles Jennie, who had been touching the wallpaper and who mentions that she had found yellow stains on their clothes. Mistaking the narrator's fixation for tranquility, John thinks she is improving. But she sleeps less and less and is convinced that she can smell the paper all over the house, even outside. She discovers a strange smudge mark on the paper, running all around the room, as if it had been rubbed by someone crawling against the wall.

The sub-pattern now clearly resembles a woman who is trying to get out from behind the main pattern. The narrator sees her shaking the bars at night and creeping around during the day, when the woman is able to escape briefly. The narrator mentions that she, too, creeps around at times. She suspects that John and Jennie are aware of her obsession, and she resolves to destroy the paper once and for all, peeling much of it off during the night. The next day she manages to be alone and goes into something of a frenzy, biting and tearing at the paper in order to free the trapped woman, whom she sees struggling from inside the pattern.

By the end, the narrator is hopelessly insane, convinced that there are many creeping women around and that she herself has come out of the wallpaper—that she herself is the trapped woman. She creeps endlessly around the room, smudging the wallpaper as she goes. When John breaks into the locked room and sees the full horror of the situation, he faints in the doorway, so that the narrator has "to creep over him every time!"

Character List

The Narrator A young, upper-middle-class woman, newly married and a mother, who is undergoing care for depression. The narrator—whose name may or may not be Jane—is

highly imaginative and a natural storyteller, though her doctors believe she has a "slight hysterical tendency." The story is told in the form of her secret diary, in which she records her thoughts as her obsession with the wallpaper grows.

John The narrator's husband and her physician. John restricts her behavior as part of her treatment. Unlike his imaginative wife, John is extremely practical, preferring facts and figures to "fancy," at which he "scoffs openly." He seems to love his wife, but he does not understand the negative effect his treatment has on her.

Jennie John's sister. Jennie acts as housekeeper for the couple. Her presence and her contentment with a domestic role intensify the narrator's feelings of guilt over her own inability to act as a traditional wife and mother. Jennie seems, at times, to suspect that the narrator is more troubled than she lets on.

Analysis of Major Characters

The Narrator

The narrator of "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a paradox: as she loses touch with the outer world, she comes to a greater understanding of the inner reality of her life. This inner/outer split is crucial to understanding the nature of the narrator's suffering. At every point, she is faced with relationships, objects, and situations that seem innocent and natural but that are actually quite bizarre and even oppressive. In a sense, the plot of "The Yellow Wallpaper" is the narrator's attempt to avoid acknowledging the extent to which her external situation stifles her inner impulses. From the beginning, we see that the narrator is an imaginative, highly expressive woman. She remembers terrifying herself with imaginary nighttime monsters as a child, and she enjoys the notion that the house they have taken is haunted. Yet as part of her "cure," her husband forbids her to exercise her imagination in any way. Both her reason and her emotions rebel at this treatment, and she turns her imagination onto seemingly neutral objects—the house and the wallpaper—in an attempt to ignore her growing frustration. Her negative feelings color her description of her surroundings, making them seem uncanny and sinister, and she becomes fixated on the wallpaper.

As the narrator sinks further into her inner fascination with the wallpaper, she becomes progressively more dissociated from her day-to-day life. This process of dissociation begins when the story does, at the very moment she decides to keep a secret diary as "a relief to her mind." From that point, her true thoughts are hidden from the outer world, and the narrator begins to slip into a fantasy world in which the nature of "her situation" is made clear in symbolic terms. Gilman shows us this division in the narrator's consciousness by having the narrator puzzle over effects in the world that she herself has caused. For example, the narrator doesn't immediately understand that the yellow stains on her clothing and the long "smooch" on the wallpaper are connected. Similarly, the narrator fights the realization that the predicament of the woman in the wallpaper is a symbolic version of her own situation. At first she even disapproves of the woman's efforts to escape and intends to "tie her up."

When the narrator finally identifies herself with the woman trapped in the wallpaper, she is able to see that other women are forced to creep and hide behind the domestic "patterns" of their lives, and that she herself is the one in need of rescue. The horror of this story is that the narrator must lose herself to understand herself. She has untangled the pattern of her life, but she has torn herself apart in getting free of it. An odd detail at the end of the story reveals how much the narrator has sacrificed. During her final split from reality, the narrator says, "I've got out at last, in spite of you and Jane." Who is this Jane? Some critics claim "Jane" is a misprint for "Jennie," the sister-in-law. It is more likely, however, that "Jane" is the name of the unnamed narrator, who has been a stranger to herself and her jailers. Now she is horribly "free" of the constraints of her marriage, her society, and her own efforts to repress her mind. John

Though John seems like the obvious villain of "The Yellow Wallpaper," the story does not allow us to see him as wholly evil. John's treatment of the narrator's depression goes terribly wrong, but in all likelihood he was trying to help her, not make her worse. The real problem with John is the all-encompassing authority he has in his combined role as the narrator's husband and doctor. John is so sure that he knows what's best for his wife that he disregards her own opinion of the matter, forcing her to hide her true feelings. He consistently patronizes her. He calls her "a blessed little goose" and vetoes her smallest wishes, such as when he refuses to switch bedrooms so as not to overindulge her "fancies." Further, his dry, clinical rationality renders him uniquely unsuited to understand his imaginative wife. He does not intend to harm her, but his ignorance about what she really needs ultimately proves dangerous.

John knows his wife only superficially. He sees the "outer pattern" but misses the trapped, struggling woman inside. This ignorance is why John is no mere cardboard villain. He cares for his wife, but the unequal relationship in which they find themselves prevents him from truly understanding her and her problems. By treating her as a "case" or a "wife" and not as a person with a will of her own, he helps destroy her, which is the last thing he wants. That John has been destroyed by this imprisoning relationship is made clear by the story's chilling finale. After breaking in on his insane wife, John faints in shock and goes unrecognized by his wife, who calls him "that man" and complains about having to "creep over him" as she makes her way along the wall.

Themes, Motifs, and Symbols

Themes

The Subordination of Women in Marriage

In "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman uses the conventions of the psychological horror tale to critique the position of women within the institution of marriage, especially as practiced by the "respectable" classes of her time. When the story was first published, most readers took it as a scary tale about a woman in an extreme state of consciousness—a gripping, disturbing entertainment, but little more. After its rediscovery in the twentieth century, however, readings of the story have become more complex. For Gilman, the conventional nineteenth-

century middle-class marriage, with its rigid distinction between the "domestic" functions of the female and the "active" work of the male, ensured that women remained second-class citizens. The story reveals that this gender division had the effect of keeping women in a childish state of ignorance and preventing their full development. John's assumption of his own superior wisdom and maturity leads him to misjudge, patronize, and dominate his wife, all in the name of "helping" her. The narrator is reduced to acting like a cross, petulant child, unable to stand up for herself without seeming unreasonable or disloyal. The narrator has no say in even the smallest details of her life, and she retreats into her obsessive fantasy, the only place she can retain some control and exercise the power of her mind.

The Importance of Self-Expression

The mental constraints placed upon the narrator, even more so than the physical ones, are what ultimately drive her insane. She is forced to hide her anxieties and fears in order to preserve the façade of a happy marriage and to make it seem as though she is winning the fight against her depression. From the beginning, the most intolerable aspect of her treatment is the compulsory silence and idleness of the "resting cure." She is forced to become completely passive, forbidden from exercising her mind in any way. Writing is especially off limits, and John warns her several times that she must use her self-control to rein in her imagination, which he fears will run away with her. Of course, the narrator's eventual insanity is a product of the repression of her imaginative power, not the expression of it. She is constantly longing for an emotional and intellectual outlet, even going so far as to keep a secret journal, which she describes more than once as a "relief" to her mind. For Gilman, a mind that is kept in a state of forced inactivity is doomed to self-destruction.

The Evils of the "Resting Cure"

As someone who almost was destroyed by S. Weir Mitchell's "resting cure" for depression, it is not surprising that Gilman structured her story as an attack on this ineffective and cruel course of treatment. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is an illustration of the way a mind that is already plagued with anxiety can deteriorate and begin to prey on itself when it is forced into inactivity and kept from healthy work. To his credit, Mitchell, who is mentioned by name in the story, took Gilman's criticism to heart and abandoned the "resting cure." Beyond the specific technique described in the story, Gilman means to criticize any form of medical care that ignores the concerns of the patient, considering her only as a passive object of treatment. The connection between a woman's subordination in the home and her subordination in a doctor/patient relationship is clear—John is, after all, the narrator's husband and doctor. Gilman implies that both forms of authority can be easily abused, even when the husband or doctor means to help. All too often, the women who are the silent subjects of this authority are infantilized, or worse.

Motifs

Irony

Almost every aspect of "The Yellow Wallpaper" is ironic in some way. Irony is a way of using words to convey multiple levels of meaning that contrast with or complicate one another. In verbal irony, words are frequently used to convey the exact opposite of their literal meaning, such as when one person responds to another's mistake by saying "nice work." (Sarcasm—which this example embodies—is a form of verbal irony.) In her journal, the narrator uses verbal irony often, especially in reference to her husband: "John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage." Obviously, one expects no such thing, at least not in a healthy marriage. Later, she says, "I am glad my case is not serious," at a point when it is clear that she is concerned that her case is very serious indeed.

Dramatic irony occurs when there is a contrast between the reader's knowledge and the knowledge of the characters in the work. Dramatic irony is used extensively in "The Yellow Wallpaper." For example, when the narrator first describes the bedroom John has chosen for them, she attributes the room's bizarre features—the "rings and things" in the walls, the nailed-down furniture, the bars on the windows, and the torn wallpaper—to the fact that it must have once been used as a nursery. Even this early in the story, the reader sees that there is an equally plausible explanation for these details: the room had been used to house an insane person. Another example is when the narrator assumes that Jennie shares her interest in the wallpaper, while it is clear that Jennie is only now noticing the source of the yellow stains on their clothing. The effect intensifies toward the end of the story, as the narrator sinks further into her fantasy and the reader remains able to see her actions from the "outside." By the time the narrator fully identifies with the trapped woman she sees in the wallpaper, the reader can appreciate the narrator's experience from her point of view as well as John's shock at what he sees when he breaks down the door to the bedroom.

Situational irony refers to moments when a character's actions have the opposite of their intended effect. For example, John's course of treatment backfires, worsening the depression he was trying to cure and actually driving his wife insane. Similarly, there is a deep irony in the way the narrator's fate develops. She gains a kind of power and insight only by losing what we would call her self-control and reason.

The Journal

An "epistolary" work of fiction takes the form of letters between characters. "The Yellow Wallpaper" is a kind of epistolary story, in which the narrator writes to herself. Gilman uses this technique to show the narrator's descent into madness both subjectively and objectively—that is, from both the inside and the outside. Had Gilman told her story in traditional first-person narration, reporting events from inside the narrator's head, the reader would never know exactly what to think: a woman inside the wallpaper might seem to actually exist. Had Gilman told the story from an objective, third-person point of view, without revealing the narrator's thoughts, the social and political symbolism of the story would have been obscured. As it is, the reader must decipher the ambiguity of the story, just as the narrator must attempt to decipher the bewildering story of her life and the bizarre patterns of the wallpaper. Gilman also uses the journal to give the story an intense intimacy and immediacy, especially in those moments when the narrative is interrupted by the

approach of John or Jennie. These interruptions perfectly illustrate the constraints placed on the narrator by authority figures who urge her not to think about her "condition."

Symbols

The Wallpaper

"The Yellow Wallpaper" is driven by the narrator's sense that the wallpaper is a text she must interpret, that it symbolizes something that affects her directly. Accordingly, the wallpaper develops its symbolism throughout the story. At first it seems merely unpleasant: it is ripped, soiled, and an "unclean yellow." The worst part is the ostensibly formless pattern, which fascinates the narrator as she attempts to figure out how it is organized. After staring at the paper for hours, she sees a ghostly sub-pattern behind the main pattern, visible only in certain light. Eventually, the sub-pattern comes into focus as a desperate woman, constantly crawling and stooping, looking for an escape from behind the main pattern, which has come to resemble the bars of a cage. The narrator sees this cage as festooned with the heads of many women, all of whom were strangled as they tried to escape. Clearly, the wallpaper represents the structure of family, medicine, and tradition in which the narrator finds herself trapped. Wallpaper is domestic and humble, and Gilman skillfully uses this nightmarish, hideous paper as a symbol of the domestic life that traps so many women.

Quotations

1. If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do? . . . I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again. I disagree with their ideas . . .

In this passage, which appears near the beginning of the story, the main elements of the narrator's dilemma are present. The powerful, authoritative voices of her husband, her family, and the medical establishment urge her to be passive. Her own conviction, however, is that what she needs is precisely the opposite—activity and stimulation. From the outset, her opinions carry little weight. "Personally," she disagrees with her treatment, but she has no power to change the situation. Gilman also begins to characterize the narrator here. The confusion over "phosphates or phosphites" is in character for someone who is not particularly interested in factual accuracy. And the choppy rhythm of the sentences, often broken into one-line paragraphs, helps evoke the hurried writing of the narrator in her secret journal, as well as the agitated state of her mind.

2. I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus—but John says the very worst thing I can do is think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad. So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

This section appears near the beginning of the story, and it helps characterize both the narrator's dilemma and the narrator herself. Notably, the narrator interrupts her own train of thought by recalling John's instructions. Gilman shows how the narrator has internalized her husband's authority to the point that she practically hears his voice in her head, telling her what to think. Even so, she cannot help but feel the way she does, and so the move she makes at the end—focusing on the house instead of her situation—marks the beginning of her slide into obsession and madness. This mental struggle, this desperate attempt not to think about her unhappiness, makes her project her feelings onto her surroundings, especially the wallpaper, which becomes a symbolic image of "her condition." The play on words here is typical of Gilman's consistent use of irony throughout the story. She feels bad whenever she thinks about her "condition," that is, about both her depression and her condition in general within her oppressive marriage.

3. There are things in that paper which nobody knows but me, or ever will. Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day. is always the same shape, only very numerous. it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here!

About halfway through the story, the sub-pattern of the wallpaper finally comes into focus. The narrator is being drawn further and further into her fantasy, which contains a disturbing truth about her life. Gilman's irony is actively at work here: the "things" in the paper are both the ghostly women the narrator sees and the disturbing ideas she is coming to understand. She is simultaneously jealous of the secret ("nobody knows but me") and frightened of what it seems to imply. Again the narrator tries to deny her growing insight ("the dim shapes get clearer every day"), but she is powerless to extricate herself. Small wonder that the woman she sees is always "stooping down and creeping about." Like the narrator herself, she is trapped within a suffocating domestic "pattern" from which no escape is possible.

4. Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be.

This comment comes just after the scene in which the narrator catches Jennie touching the paper and resolves that no one else is allowed to figure out the pattern. It captures one of the most distinctive qualities of "The Yellow Wallpaper": Gilman's bitter, sarcastic sense of humor. Now that the narrator has become hopelessly obsessed with the pattern, spending all day and all night thinking about it, life has become more interesting and she is no longer bored. Gilman manages to combine humor and dread in such moments. The comment is funny, but the reader knows that someone who would make such a joke is not well. Indeed, in the section that follows, the narrator casually mentions that she considered burning the house down in order to eliminate the smell of the wallpaper.

5. I don't like to look out of the windows even—there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast. I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did?

In the story's final scene, just before John finally breaks into her room, the narrator has finished tearing off enough of the wallpaper that the woman she saw inside is now free—and the two women have become one. This passage is the exact moment of full identification, when the narrator finally makes the connection she has been avoiding, a connection that the

reader has made already. The woman behind the pattern was an image of herself—she has been the one "stooping and creeping." Further, she knows that there are many women just like her, so many that she is afraid to look at them. The question she asks is poignant and complex: did they all have to struggle the way I did? Were they trapped within homes that were really prisons? Did they all have to tear their lives up at the roots in order to be free? The narrator, unable to answer these questions, leaves them for another woman—or the reader—to ponder.

Key Facts

TITLE· "The Yellow Wallpaper"

AUTHOR· Charlotte Perkins Gilman

TYPE OF WORK· Short story

GENRE· Gothic horror tale; character study; socio-political allegory

LANGUAGE· English

TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN· 1892, California

DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION· May, 1892

PUBLISHER· The New England Magazine

NARRATOR· A mentally troubled young woman, possibly named Jane

POINT OF VIEW· As the main character's fictional journal, the story is told in strict first-person narration, focusing exclusively on her own thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Everything that we learn or see in the story is filtered through the narrator's shifting consciousness, and since the narrator goes insane over the course of the story, her perception of reality is often completely at odds with that of the other characters.

TONE· The narrator is in a state of anxiety for much of the story, with flashes of sarcasm, anger, and desperation—a tone Gilman wants the reader to share.

TENSE· The story stays close to the narrator's thoughts at the moment and is thus mostly in the present tense.

SETTING (TIME)· Late nineteenth century

SETTING (PLACE)· America, in a large summer home (or possibly an old asylum), primarily in one bedroom within the house.

PROTAGONIST· The narrator, a young upper-middle-class woman who is suffering from what is most likely postpartum depression and whose illness gives her insight into her (and other women's) situation in society and in marriage, even as the treatment she undergoes robs her of her sanity.

MAJOR CONFLICT· The struggle between the narrator and her husband, who is also her doctor, over the nature and treatment of her illness leads to a conflict within the narrator's mind between her growing understanding of her own powerlessness and her desire to repress this awareness.

RISING ACTION· The narrator decides to keep a secret journal, in which she describes her forced passivity and expresses her dislike for her bedroom wallpaper, a dislike that gradually intensifies into obsession.

CLIMAX· The narrator completely identifies herself with the woman imprisoned in the wallpaper.

FALLING ACTION· The narrator, now completely identified with the woman in the wallpaper, spends her time crawling on all fours around the room. Her husband discovers her and collapses in shock, and she keeps crawling, right over his fallen body.

THEMES· The subordination of women in marriage; the importance of self-expression; the evils of the "Resting Cure"

MOTIFS· Irony; the journal

SYMBOLS· The wallpaper

FORESHADOWING· The discovery of the teeth marks on the bedstead foreshadows the narrator's own insanity and suggests the narrator is not revealing everything about her behavior; the first use of the word "creepy" foreshadows the increasing desperation of the narrator's situation and her own eventual "creeping."