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Is the protagonist insane or not?

The protagonist is suffering from postpartum depression after giving birth to her daughter, however, her husband/physician John believes the condition is far worse, so he give her unreasonable restrictions to help her get better. The protagonist is not insane but needs proper treatment for her PPD. John thinks he is doing what is best for his wife even though he is not listening to his wife’s opinions on what she feels she should do to get better. The woman explained in the short story that keeping occupied by writing and using her imagination we most likely feel better. However, the woman spends a lot of her time isolated and due to the restrictions John has set, she is unable to expand her creative mind through her writing and housework. Doing work would distract her from her emotions she is feeling from her PPD, however, her solitude causes her to feel lonesome which is when she begins to notice the repulsive faded yellow wallpaper. After being isolated for so long, the woman begins to see the different characteristics in the wallpaper as her imagination bring the wallpapers to life. Though her actions are unusual, her behavior is shown though her lack of freedom causing her to have occasional hysteric tendencies. The woman was not insane, however, the confined room and her distance from society is causing her to go crazy.

How does this story challenge representations of masculinity and femininity?

The Yellow Wallpaper

The high level of **patriarchy** in the Victorian era lead woman to feel a lack of freedom and control. “The Yellow Wallpaper” written by Charlette Perkins Gilman in late 18th century shows the **feminist** view on mental illness. After the short story was written, doctors around the world changed their treatment to help women be properly treated for their illnesses. In the early 19th century, women most often spent their time at home caring for children, meanwhile, the men worked a daily job bringing home their family’s income. In the short story, the narrator develops an illness after giving birth to a daughter and the woman is then treated by her physician and spouse by using the resting cure technique. The narrator in the story found that her female role in this society had many limitations including an inability to express herself creatively. Due to the woman’s resting cure treatment, her isolation and restrictions lead her to develop hysteric tendencies. Having a male physician diagnose and treat the woman’s illness caused her illness and mental state to worsen because males in the Victorian era were unable to relate and understand the condition woman were being diagnosed with, therefor, men were not a reliable source for a cure.

Charlotte Gilman wrote “The Yellow Wallpaper” about her life and how she suffered from postpartum depression (PPD) after giving birth to her daughter. During the 19th century, PPD was an unknown condition, therefor doctors explained and convinced females about the condition “hysteria”. The protagonist was **subdued** due to the limited contact with the outside world. The woman’s orderly restrictions lead her to be **reproachful** towards her husband John because her opinions on her treatment were different from his. The narrator said, “I believe that **congenial** work, with excitement and change, would do me good” (Gilman, 648). The narrator felt powerless and wished she had an influence on what her daily treatments would be. In spite of the fact that it was in Johns best interest for her to get better, men in the late 18th century were unable to understand the physical and mental condition that is needed to be treatment for the narrator.

The isolation and lack of control caused the protagonist to feel an immense amount of boredom leaving her with no options but to stare at the wallpaper. The protagonist thought the wallpaper was unappealing to the eye; she strongly disliked it. The woman explained, “It is a dull yet **lurid** orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others,” (Gilman,649). The **revolting** wallpaper that surrounded her isolated room brought back memories. Her imagination brought the wallpaper to life; she saw woman behind bars fighting for equality. The narrator discusses the smell of the wallpaper, potentially meaning it is moldy; however, the smell resembled her past memories. The protagonist’s imagination, shown through the wallpaper, demonstrates her thoughts on the patriarchal society she is living in. Her lack of control causes her to feel trapped in her own mind, like the women she is imagining are trapped in the wallpaper.

In conclusion, “The Yellow Wallpaper” provide a positive impact for many people around the world who may relate to feeling powerless. Gilman’s **feminist** view on her treatment and freedoms in the 1890’s not only affected woman who related to the story, as well it influenced doctors to search for a new cure. Gilman writing demonstrated the consequences a society can have when fixed gender roles are assigned by a **patriarchy** where women’s rights and freedoms are not a priority.

Works Cited

Gilman, Charlotte. “The Yellow Wallpaper.” *Inside Stories for Senior Students*, by Glen Kirkland and Richard Davies, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993, p. 648.

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