

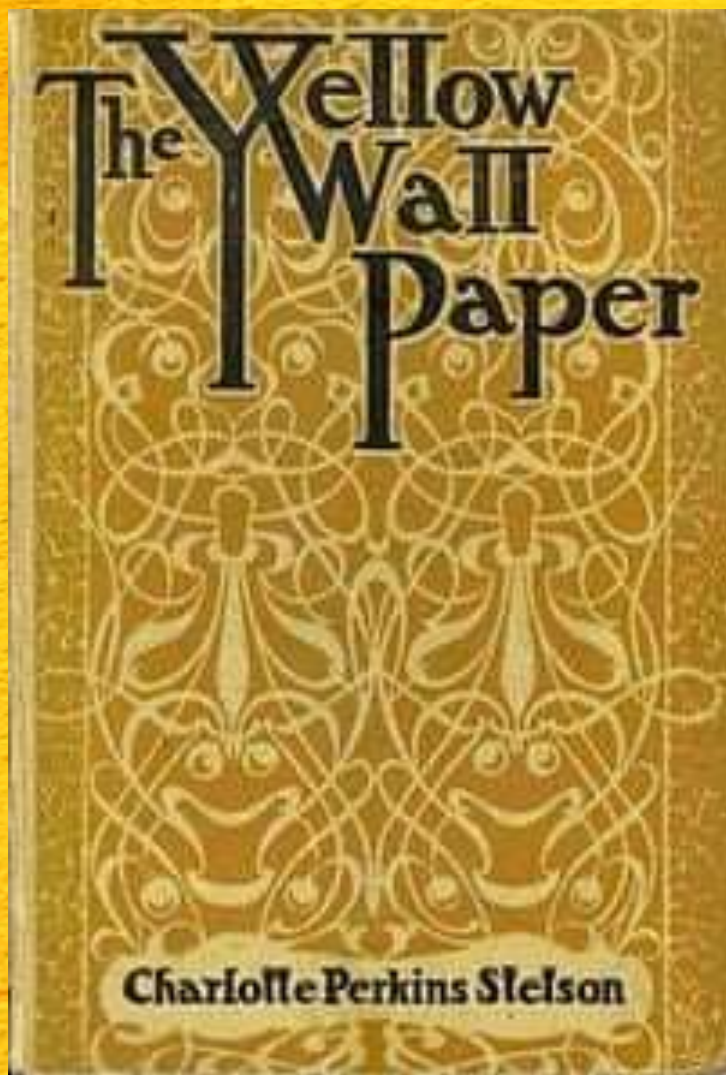
THE YELLOW WALLPAPER

Charlotte Perkins Gilman

CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN

- Charlotte Perkins Gilman(Charlotte Perkins Stetson) was a writer, artist, magazine editor, lecturer and social reformer.
- She was born on 3 July, 1860.
- She has written six non fiction works, eight novels, nearly 200 short stories, hundreds of poems and essays.
- Her notable works are “The Yellow Wallpaper”, “Herland” and “The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography.”





INTRODUCTION

- The Yellow Wallpaper is a semi-autobiographical short story written in 1890.
- It was published in January, 1892 issue of The New England Magazine.
- It is now the all-time best selling book of the Feminist Press.
- The story is about the role of women in society, illustrating how women's lack of autonomy causes harm to their mental, emotional, and even physical wellbeing.

SEMI-AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SHORT STORY

- Charlotte Perkins Gilman married Charles Stetson in 1884.
- She wrote the short story after a severe bout of post-partum depression (is a type of mood disorder associated with childbirth).
- This story was inspired by her treatment from her first husband.
- It is a response to the doctor (Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell) who tried to cure her of her depression through a “Rest Cure”. She sent him a copy of the story.



THE YELLOW WALLPAPER

CHARACTERS

- **The Narrator**
- **John, Physician, her husband**
- **Mary, takes care of their child**
- **Jennie, John's sister, their housekeeper**
- **Narrator's brother, Physician**

DIARY ENTRIES

- The story is in the first person narrative.
- It is the series of diary entries that happens in narrator's life.
- She is a young mother who suffers depression after child birth.
- The narrator and her husband John move to a colonial mansion for summer.
- She tells about the house that
 - It is a hereditary estate
 - It is cheap
 - But untenanted for long time.
 - Appears to be haunted
 - Feels something queer about it.



- The narrator's husband is a physician of high standing.
- He is extremely practical man.
- Her helplessness is revealed as she says that he does not believe that she is sick.
- This becomes the reason for not to get well faster.
- He calls her sickness as "nervous depression."



“BUT WHAT IS ONE TO DO?”

- The narrator takes lot of medicines (phosphates or phosphites) and tonics. She is suggested with fresh air and exercise. She is not allowed to do any work until she gets well.
- She completely disagrees with their ideas.
- She believes that congenial work with excitement and change might bring improvement in her health.
- Her repeated question “But what is one to do?” reveals helplessness and male domination.
- She writes to divert her. But she gets exhausted as he insists her not to write.
- She is tormented with “heavy opposition” all the time.
- She feels that “less opposition and more society and stimulus” could bring positive change in her but John disagrees with her.



- She finds the house as the most beautiful place.
- It is three miles from the village quite alone.
- There are hedges, walls and gates with lock.
- It has lot of separate little houses for the gardeners.
- It has wonderful large, shady, box-bordered path garden, greenhouses.
- But they are all broken now.
- The place is empty for many years as it had legal trouble about the heirs.



- She feels something strange about the house.
- She has shared her strange feeling about the house to John but he dismissed her words and shut the window.
- He blames her to be self controlled. Her pain to control herself makes her even more sick.
- She becomes angry for his behaviour but blames herself for being sensitive due to nervous condition.



- The narrator prefers to have the room downstairs that had piazza (verandah), roses all over the window and chintz (woodblock printed) hangings.
- But it has only one window and no sufficient space for two beds.
- John is so careful and loving that he wants her to take complete rest, breathing fresh air and eating healthy food.
- So he wants her to take the big, airy room upstairs.
- It must have been nursery first then playground and gymnasium.
- The windows are barred for little children.
- The paper is in patches and stripped off.
- It confuses her with uncertain curves, in different angles. The colour is dull, unclean yellow.
- She thus hates the room.



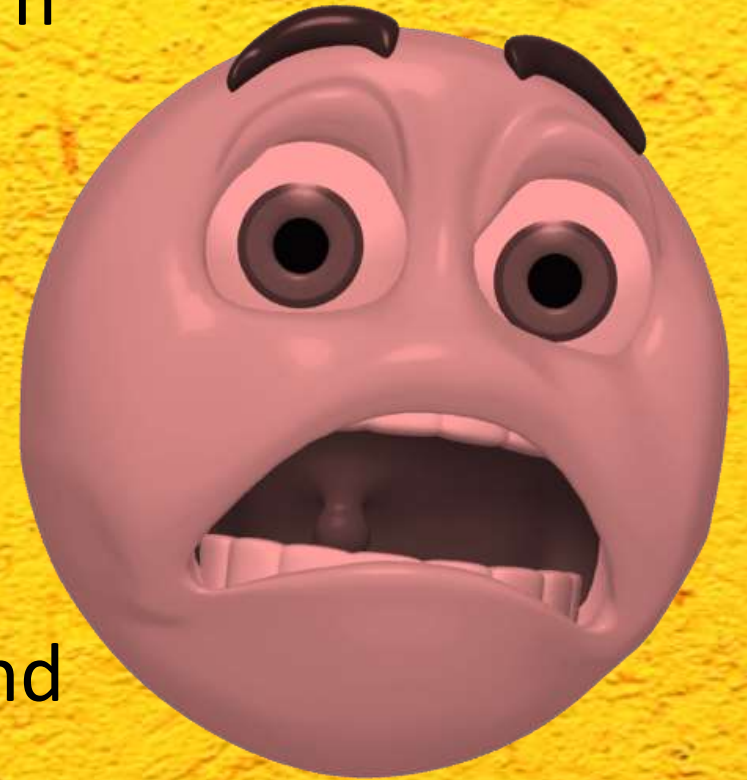
- She feels so depressed to live in the big room.
- But John finds no reason to suffer and so he is satisfied.
- She is happy that Mary takes good care of her baby.
- Being separated from her baby makes her nervous again.
- She has no role to play as a mother.



- John initially accepts to repaper the room.
- He later disapproves that she might complain about the heavy bed or the barred window or the gate.
- He does not wish to renovate as the house is only for three month's rental.
- He convinces that the place is good for her.
- He calls her affectionately as “blessed little goose” and is ready to move to cellar if she wishes to.
- She accepts to stay in the big room but is horrified by the paper.



- She is terrified to look at the paper.
- There is a repeated spot where the pattern looks like a broken neck and the two bulbous eyes stare at her upside-down.
- She is angry because of its presence.
- She feels it crawls up and down and sideways with unblinking eyes.
- She considers the chair as her strong friend as she could hop into it and be safe.



- John's sister arrives. She believes that it is the writing that makes the narrator sick.
- So she avoids writing when she is at home.
- The windows open up to the green garden.
- The only irritating thing is the yellow wallpaper which has different patterns in different shades of light.
- She begins to see formless sort of figure behind the front design.



- John made arrangements for their relatives (mother and Nellie and the children) to be home for a week.
- But they made no difference to her.
- John says that he might send her to Dr. Weir Mitchell if she does not improve in her health.
- She does not wish to travel and her friend says that of John.
- She has started to cry at nothing most of the time when she is alone.
- She goes for a walk in the garden but prefers to be in the room because of the wallpaper as it now dwells in her mind so clearly.



- She has tried to follow the pattern of the wallpaper thousand times but could not bring to any conclusion.
- They appear to be connected diagonally, having slanting waves.
- She is exhausted and confused to find the whole paper moving horizontally.
- With the sunlight it appears to have a common centre and scatter in equal distraction.
- She is tired to write and wishes to sleep.
- John advises her that she must use her will and self control and not to be carried away by her imagination.
- Her only comfort is that the baby is not in the nursery with the horrible wallpaper.



- She stopped complaining about the wallpaper anymore.
- She feels wise to observe it all by herself.
- The dim shapes behind that outside pattern get clearer and numerous every day.
- It is like a woman stooping down and creeping behind the pattern.
- She does not like it.
- She could not share it with John as he considers himself to be wise and loves her dearly.



- In the moonlight, the faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.
- She asks him to take her away from the house.
- But he says that the lease ends up in three weeks and he finds no danger.
- Moreover, as a doctor, he finds her growing healthy.
- She feels better physically but not emotionally.



- The pattern tortures her as it slaps, knocks down and tramples her.
- It is like a bad dream.
- She imagines a toadstool sprouting in joints.
- Sometimes the colour changes as the light changes.
- By moonlight, the pattern becomes bars and the woman behind it.
- By daylight she is subdued and quiet.



- Jennie warns her to be careful as the paper stains her clothes and John's.
- One day she finds Jennie closely reading the pattern.
- She is jealous of her as she is the only person skilled to find the pattern.
- She sleeps in the daytime and awake at night.
- Now she could smell the paper all over the house.
- It is a strange odour. She is tired of trying to find what sort of a smell it is.
- She is so irritated that she thought of burning the house.
- But now she is used to it. She finalised that it must be the colour of the paper-yellow smell.



- She finds a mark on the wall that goes round and round. It makes her dizzy. (The marks are actually made by her).
- She finally finds that the front pattern move and the woman behind shake it.
- The woman behind the wallpaper crawls around fast. She tries to climb through the pattern but is strangled.
- She says that she has seen her in the lane, garden creeping and hiding.
- She confesses, "I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once".
- She wishes John to take another room as she wants to find the woman at night by herself.



- It is the last day. John was in town and not home.
- Jennie wants to sleep with her but she convinces that she would sleep alone.
- In the moonlight the woman begins to crawl and shake the pattern.
- She runs to help her by pulling and peeling the paper.
- She has locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.
- She does not want to go out. She wished to allow none except John. She wanted to surprise him.
- She has managed to hide a rope in the room that even Jennie did not find it.
- She wanted to tie the woman.



- She needs to move the bed to reach the wall.
- She is frustrated that she could not move it, so started to bite it angrily.
- But it hurt her teeth.
- Then she starts to peel all the paper standing on the floor.
- She is so angry that she wants to jump out of the window.
- She finds many women creeping very fast outside the window.
- She wonders if they all come out of the wallpaper as she has come out.
- She is happy to creep smoothly in the room that is yellow and she does not lose her way.
- She wants to get back behind the pattern at night.



- John has come home. He plans to break the door with an axe.
- She tells him that the key is down near the front steps, under a plantain leaf.
- He desperately asks her what she is doing.
- She kept creeping near the wall and answered him that she has got out of the wallpaper at last and he cannot put her back.



- John is shocked. He faints as he understands the extent of her insanity.
- The story ends as she keeps creeping over John who lies on her way.
- She wonders, “Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!”
- She is completely out of reality.
- She is satisfied that she has liberated the woman(herself) finally.



THEMES

- **Depression and its treatment**
- **Women's role**

SYMBOL

- **Pattern - Confinement**

THANK YOU