



THE YELLOW WALLPAPER

CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN

RETOLD BY SARA SIMPSON

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My husband, John, and I are so lucky! We have rented a large, beautiful house in the country for the summer; hardly anyone I know can afford to do that. It's a little strange that we were able to rent the house for such a cheap price. There has to be something wrong with it. Why else would it have just been sitting there with no one living in it for so long?

John thinks I am being silly for thinking there is something wrong with the house. He is a doctor and a very practical person. I have been sick for a while now, but it's not a sickness in my body. The sickness is in my mind. I've been sad since the baby was born. Honestly, I think that the fact that John is a doctor is part of the reason I can't seem to get better more quickly. He doesn't actually believe anything is wrong with me. He tells all of our friends and family that I'm just a little depressed and it isn't a big deal. My brother is also a doctor and says the same thing. There isn't much a woman can do if two men in her family both say she's fine...even if *she* knows she isn't.

John keeps giving me different vitamins and special, healthy drinks. He tells me I just need to get outside and get some fresh air and exercise. I love to write. Writing is my passion in life. However, John says it's bad for me and will make me feel worse. Until I get better, he says I shouldn't do any writing. I also shouldn't have any friends come over. They're too exciting and will get in the way of my rest. I am supposed to spend as much time as I can lying in bed. I'm not supposed to think about all the things that upset me, but that is hard because there isn't anything else to do while I'm lying in bed all day.

Why do you think the house is so cheap to rent?

After reading this paragraph, what are your opinions about the roles of men and women in 1892 (the year Gilman published this story)?

How would postpartum depression treatment be different today?

Nevertheless, I try not to think about my “condition” too much because it *does* make me feel bad.

Honestly? I disagree with their ideas. I think I'd feel much better if I could do things that I enjoyed: writing and spending time with friends. Oh, well. It doesn't really matter. I don't get to decide these things; that is John's job.

Enough of that. I'm going to focus on the house!

It's a beautiful house. It sits back away from the road, which is nice because it keeps me from hearing carriages and other traffic that goes by. The house is about three miles outside of the village. This place reminds me of a fancy English manor house, with one huge house surrounded by lots of little houses where the people who worked here--gardeners, maids, cooks--would have lived. The garden is the best part. There is lots of shade, pretty paths to walk on with hedges on either side, old stone walls with locking gates, and comfortable benches to sit on.

It looks nice here, but there's something strange about the house. I told John this one night, but he just laughed and said I was feeling a draft blow in because the windows are so old. There are no ghosts.

Sometimes I get mad at John. I didn't used to get so upset over things, but I think my depression is making me yell at him. John says that my behavior isn't because I'm depressed. He says that it's because I don't want to control myself. When I'm around him, I try very hard not to get upset and yell. Bottling up my feelings makes me feel tired.

Do you think Jane should be allowed to write? Why or why not?

Do you agree with John when he says Jane could control her temper if she wanted to? Why or why not?

I hate our bedroom at this house. I wanted us to stay in a bedroom I saw downstairs that had doors to the patio and a window with roses growing on it. John said “no.”

John is very loving and thoughtful. He has an hour-by-hour schedule to tell me what to do each day. He makes all the decisions so I don’t have to worry. I should be more grateful for everything he does for me. He says we came to this house to help me get well. I need lots of fresh air. That’s why we are staying in the old children’s room at the very top of the house.

The room is huge. It has windows on every wall, so there’s lots of fresh and and sunshine. I can tell this used to be a playroom for little children; there are bars on the windows to prevent children from falling out and getting hurt. There are also rings bolted into the walls, probably for attaching toys or climbing or something like that.

The children that used this room were bad. They tore the room up! All around the bed, as far as I can reach out my arms, the wallpaper is torn off in big strips. The wallpaper is also torn off across the room in another corner.

I can understand why the children did it, though. It is the ugliest wallpaper I have ever seen in my life. It has huge, ugly flowers in different ugly shades of yellow. The pattern doesn’t have a nice design; when I try to follow the pattern with my eyes, it stops in strange places. The pattern doesn’t line up. It is very annoying. I can see why the children hated it and tried to tear it off the walls. If I had to live here for very long, I’d do the same thing.

Here comes John! I need to put this journal away. He doesn’t like it when he catches me writing.

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Why do you think John says “no” when Jane wants to stay in the downstairs bedroom instead of this one?

Why do you think there are bars on the windows of the room and rings bolted into the walls?

Describe the wallpaper in the room.

It has been two weeks since we came here. I haven't felt like writing since the first day.

I sit here every day, looking out the window of this ugly room. There is no reason why I couldn't spend all day writing, but I don't write very much. I feel tired all the time.

John is always working. He goes into town to see patients every day. Sometimes, he is even gone all night if someone is very sick. I'm glad that *I'm* not that sick! I still feel very sad and depressed, though. John doesn't know how bad I feel. All he knows is that there is no good reason *why* I should feel depressed, and that's good enough for him. I feel like I am a burden to him and a bad wife. I don't have enough energy to do the most basic things: getting dressed, talking to John, ordering groceries.

Our babysitter, Mary, takes care of the baby. I'm glad she is so good with him. He's such a sweet baby. I get very nervous whenever I have to take care of him. John never feels nervous about anything.

John laughs at me when I tell him how much I hate the wallpaper. When we first came here, John said we'd take down the wallpaper and put up something new. Once I started to complain about it, however, he said it would be wrong for him to give in and do what I wanted. He said that once the wallpaper was changed, I'd just find something else to be upset about--the bed, the bars on the windows, the gate at the top of the stairs, and so on. He thinks it has been good for me to stay here, and it would be a waste of money to buy new wallpaper for a room in a house we're only staying at for three months.

I asked him to at least move our bedroom downstairs to the room I liked better. John laughed at me and called

List some of the symptoms of clinical depression Jane has.

Why do you think John won't let Jane change the wallpaper?

Do some quick online research. Who is Dr. Weir Mitchell? How did he try to cure women with depression?

worried or mad at me. I am alone a lot. John is always in town working, and Jennie leaves me alone.

Sometimes I walk in the garden and sit there. I lie down in bed a lot. I've started to really like this room, in spite of the wallpaper. Maybe even *because* of the wallpaper! I think about the wallpaper all the time. I stare at the pattern for hours. It wears me out. I start in one corner of the room and try to follow the pattern to where it ends, but there isn't anything consistent about the design so I can't. It's so irritating, and it makes me tired. I think I'll take a nap.

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I don't know why I am writing this. I don't want to write. I feel so tired. I know John would think I'm crazy. However, I have to get my thoughts and feelings out *somehow*, and writing in this journal is the only place I can do that. Every day, it gets harder and harder to find the energy to write. I lie down and sleep half of the day.

John sees how much I'm sleeping, and he keeps giving me things to eat like cod liver oil, beer, wine, and red meat. He thinks if I eat healthy food, I'll stop feeling so tired all the time. He hates seeing me sick.

I tried to have a serious talk with him the other day. I told him that I would feel better if I could go visit Cousin Henry and his wife, Julia. He said I couldn't go. I started

crying and couldn't stop, and that didn't help convince him it was a good idea. He carried me upstairs to bed and read to me until I fell asleep.

John says that I need to have better willpower and self-control over my thoughts if I want to get better and stop crying all the time.

How do you think Jane's mental state would change if she were encouraged to write?

I know not to talk to John or Jennie about the wallpaper anymore, but I watch it all the time. I'm the only one who can see the shapes moving around inside it. I can see the shape of a woman crouching down and creeping around. I can see her more every day. I wish John would take me away from here!

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“What is it, little girl?” he asked. “Don’t walk around like that in the middle of the night! You’ll get cold!”

"Why, darling!" he said. "We've paid for three more weeks! We can't leave until then! The repairs aren't done at home, and I can't leave town right now. If I really thought you were in danger, we'd leave. But you aren't. I'm a doctor and your husband, and I know what's best. You are eating better and gaining weight, so I know you are fine."

This image shows a single page from a notebook or ledger. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal black lines across its entire width, providing a template for writing. The margins are consistent on all sides, and there are no other markings, text, or illustrations present.

[illegible]

“Stop saying that,” he said. “You need to think about my needs and about our child’s needs. You have to stop imagining things and feeling sorry for yourself.”

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[illegible]

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[illegible]

How have Jane's feelings towards the wallpaper changed since she first came to the house?

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There are always new growths in the fungus in the wallpaper pattern. There are new shades of yellow, too—not a pretty yellow like you’d see in flowers but an old, dirty, bad yellow. There is something else about that wallpaper—the smell! I noticed it when we first moved into the room but the fresh air coming it covered it up. Now that it has been raining and foggy for a week, the smell is there.

[illegible]

What do you think is causing the bad smell Jane keeps noticing?

There is a weird mark low on the wall near the floor. It goes all the way around the room behind every piece of furniture except for the bed. It looks like someone has rubbed the wall over and over again. I wonder who made that mark and why they did it. It goes round and round and round--round and round and round. It makes me dizzy.

By watching the wallpaper so much at night, I have know
the pattern really *does* move. It moves because the
woman behind it shakes it!

In the bright spots, she stands still. In the darker spots she grabs the bars and shakes them. She is always trying to climb out from behind the wallpaper, but the pattern is too thick to get through. I think that is why the pattern has so many heads. A head can get through the pattern, but the pattern ends up choking the head until it is cut off. The eyes in the heads turn white. If the heads would go away, it wouldn't be so bad.

I think that woman gets out during the daytime!

[illegible]

to try to see her completely, she is gone. The woman is very fast.

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If I could only get the top part of the wallpaper off, I know I could see the woman more clearly. I will peel it off a little bit at a time. I only have two more days to get the paper off, and I think John has started to notice that pieces of it are missing.

I don't like the way he has been looking at me. He has been asking Jennie lots of questions about me. Jennie has given me a good report. She told John I sleep a lot during the day. John knows I do not sleep very well at night, even though I try to be very quiet. John asked me

Why do you think Jane keeps seeing the strange woman from the wallpaper everywhere she goes?

What does the woman behind the wallpaper want?

I'll tell you why I think that--I've seen her! I can see her when I look out any of the windows in the room. I know it is the same woman because of the unusual way she moves around. She creeps. She walks around all hunched over and is always looking from side to side like someone is chasing her. I see her on the shaded walking path. I see her sitting on bench in the garden. Whenever a carriage drives by, she hides in the bushes until it is gone.

I don't blame her. I'd be embarrassed to be caught creeping around, too. When I creep around during the day, I always lock the door. I can't creep around at night because John would know something was wrong.

John is acting so odd lately. I wish he'd go sleep in a different bedroom. I don't want anybody to get that woman out of the wallpaper at night besides me. I can see her out of the corner of my eye, but the minute I turn

I have the rope tied around my waist. Nobody can make me leave this room.

I will have to climb back behind the wallpaper when night comes. That is hard.

I like being out in this nice, big room. It is nice to be able to creep around as much as I want. I don't want to go outside. I won't go, even if Jennie asks. Outside, you have to creep on the ground and everything is green instead of yellow.

In here, I can creep smoothly on the floor. My shoulder fits in the weird mark all along the wall just above the floor, so I can't get lost.

Why does Jane throw the key out the window? What does this tell you about her mental health?

What does Jane do when she gets upset that she can't move the bed?

Who really tore up the room?

What does Jane say the children did to the bed?

I locked the door and threw the key out the window. The key landed near the front path below. I do not want to leave the room, and I don't want anyone else coming in until John gets home. I want to surprise him.

I have a rope up here that Jennie didn't find. If she found it, she would take it away from me. If the woman gets out and tries to get away, I will use it to tie her up.

I wanted to move the bed so I could tear off the paper behind it. It. Would. Not. Move. I got so angry that I bit a chunk of the wood off the corner of the bed. It hurt my teeth.

I want to jump out the window, but I know I won't. The bars are too strong. I don't like to look out the windows anymore. There are so many women creeping around, and they move so fast.

I wonder if all of those women came out of the wallpaper the same way I did.

“I finally got out!” I said. “In spite of you and Jane. I have pulled off most of the wallpaper so you can’t put me back in there!”

John fainted. I don’t know why, but he did. His body was in my way, so I had to creep right over him every time I went around the room.

Who is the woman Jane has seen hiding behind the wallpaper?

John is here! He is pounding on the door and yelling for someone to bring him an ax so he can get inside.

“John, dear!” I said in a gentle voice. “The key is down by the front steps. It is under a plant leaf.”

John was quiet for a few minutes, then he said “Open the door, darling!”

“I can’t,” I said. “The key is down by the front steps. It is under a plant leaf.” I said this again until he believed me. After a while, he went downstairs and got the key. John opened the door.

“What is wrong?” he cried. “What are you doing?”

I kept on creeping, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

Why does John faint when he sees his wife?
