

“The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

I. First consider the film’s title. Is it over-emphasizing the theme used in the Gilman text?

- Does the film provide the same sense of threat to the protagonist’s well being? In other words, does the use of the word “confinement” seem appropriate after watching the film?

II. Contrast the film’s opening scenes with the opening scenes of Gilman’s text.

- What is the immediate, obvious correlation that the film makes by placing the scenes in a modern setting?
- What is achieved with the removal of the protagonist’s notebook? —are the interior monologues effective?
- *Find criticism discussing the method of narration for the story. Use as a secondary resource.*
- What mood does the film promote by using a setting heavily influenced by the late 1800s?
- Is the film’s use of lightning just as effective conveying a Gothic mood as the text’s intense descriptions of the setting?
- Notice when you first are introduced to Kathy she appears covered in full shadows. What message is being conveyed through this action?

III. Contrast and compare the timing and the settings presented in the two versions.

- The film reduces the stay on the property from three months down to one month. Does this prove more effective for a modern audience? What does the limited time frame say to you about John?
- What mood is felt when you first see the interior of the house? Is it as powerful as the description laid out to you in Gilman’s text? How do the items in the house contrast/compare with the text? What does the rocker represent?
- Notice the garden scene. How is the set presented to you? What does it symbolize? How does it compare with the text version?
- The main action takes place in the Nursery/Asylum room. Compare the different methods the two environments are shown to you. Does the film convey the same sense of Gothic horror and imprisonment that the text provides? Propose why the film suggests Kathy imagined that the bed was nailed down. What does this provide the viewing audience about her characterization?
- Compare and contrast the presentation of the main focal point: the wallpaper itself. How is it presented in the text? How does the film present it to you? What actions does it cause within the plot of the text? How does the film treat these same issues?

IV. Compare/ Contrast the principal characters within the film and the text:

- Kathy: is her transformation as believable and well-developed between the two art forms? Why or why not? Is her characterization well-crafted in both mediums? Is she presented in the same fashion? When she is first seen in full view, stepping out of shadows, how does Kathy appear to you physically. Notice her hairstyle. What message is being conveyed to you here? Contrast how her name is revealed in the film versus the text. Who reveals her name in the film? Is using a name like “Kathy” just as effective as using a name like “Jane”? Detail the importance of the scene in which the audience learns her name.

(Item IV. Principal Characters, continued)

How is she shown reacting to the wallpaper? Does the film present Kathy as strong of a symbol as the figure of Jane in Gilman's text? What, or who, do these women represent overall?

- *Find criticism discussing the importance of the protagonist as a symbol in the text version.*
- John: in both versions he is presented as a doctor; in the text his motives are more ambiguous than in the film. Why does the film chose to show him more in the mode of well-intentioned? Are his uses of terms of endearment as demeaning in the film as in the text? Cite and explain examples.
- Mary, John's sister: The film changes some details regarding this character. Compare/contrast how she is portrayed. Which of the two versions does she seem more sympathetic? In the film it is hinted that Mary could be lesbian. How does that shift her characterization from the original text?

V. Compare and contrast the themes of both text and film.

- Gilman's text set out to convey a theme of entrapment of women by the patriarchal system. Is the same message delivered from the film? Explain in what ways it is successful and which ways it fails.
- Both versions of the story convey the notion that the protagonist is suffering from postpartum depression. How is this information treated between the two forms? Notice in each version the baby is never shown, and is only mentioned briefly, indirectly. How is this an effective tool for the drama aspect of the overall plot? Why is the child not provided a name?

VI. Both the text and the film use a moment of recreation to promote a false sense of security and betterment of the protagonist.

- In the Gilman text, the narrator discusses how on the Fourth of July people visited to provide a little company. Whereas in the film it is shown with only John and Kathy playing a game of Scrabble. What is the film proposing about John and Kathy's relationship in this scene? Why do you think the film avoids a gathering of people to convey the same point?
- What is significant about the words on the board?

VII. Compare the closing scenes between the text and the film:

- *Find a critic who discusses plot techniques and strategies within the overall story. Use as secondary reference.*
- Are the closing scenes equally effective?
- What does the film treat differently in relation to John's reaction when he enters the room?
- Why does the film use Mary as a witness of the scene after John is knocked out and Kathy is without any sanity?
- Is the film successful carrying the Female Gothic theme promoted by the text?
- Notice the film removes any reference to the other hallucinations the protagonist experiences: scene of the woman crawling outside in daylight (par. 191, p. 553), the wallpaper laughing at her (par. 217, p. 553), and the odor emitted from the paper (par. 170-180, p. 552).
- Notice the film removes the intentions of tying up the woman behind the wallpaper.
- Notice the film removes any full, extended tension between John's sister and the protagonist.
- Do these absences hinder Gilman's original message? Does the film manage to overcome these hurdles?

VIII. Finally, does the film achieve the same effective point that Gilman's story presented?

Compare and contrast the overall message of the film, versus the text. Which is more effective?