Notecards

I. In the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Charlotte Perkins Gilman uses literary devices to emphasize the need for women’s rights in the nineteenth century.

II. Gilman uses symbolism to create double meanings throughout the text “The Yellow Wallpaper,” thus showing the underlying message of women’s desire for freedom.

“She sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over” (Gilman 13)

“After failing to convince John of her condition, she focuses on the wallpaper as if it holds a key to understanding herself. On one level the wallpaper represents the oppressiveness of her marriage; on another level it offers freedom from such oppression” (Kerr 70)

III. Personification is used by Gilman to illustrate how the wallpaper comes to life and is more than just a decoration in Jane’s eyes, sending her a message of the need to be independent.

“I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy-store” (Gilman 10).

“At first, in daylight, she sees the suggestion of a pattern in the wallpaper; then, at dusk, the pattern becomes clearer; finally, in the moonlight she discerns a woman trapped beneath the
paper. She then identifies with the woman and realizes that the source of her own power lies in her imagination” (Kerr 69)

IV. Jane’s point of view throughout “The Yellow Wallpaper” is critical to expressing the need for feminism throughout the world. Other women should have in the nineteenth century.

“...John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency” (Gilman 5)

“...true womanhood with its four attributes ‘piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity’ all put together they ‘spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman’ Only those women who adhered to such qualities were believed to be happy, contented and powerful in their home...” (Quawas 1)

V. Some believed Gilman, by the views emphasized through the mind of Jane in the short story, only represented opinions about feminism for one woman, not all women throughout the world.

“There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down. I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other” (Gilman 6)

“Gilman's heroine identifies wholly with the raging ‘madness’ of the double she discovers locked within the tortured arabesques of the wallpaper” (Johnson 523)
VI. However, even though “The Yellow Wallpaper” may be appear to be about one person’s views on women in society, Gilman hints throughout the short story that these feminist views apply to more than one woman.

“Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard. And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern -- it strangles so…” (Gilman 13)

“...the story as a whole describes a woman attempting to save herself through her own writing, to transform what she calls "dead paper" into a vibrant Gothic world of creative dream work and self-revelation” (Johnson 523)

VII. In the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper,” Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s use of literary devices brings the struggle for women to gain equality in society to life.
Works Cited


