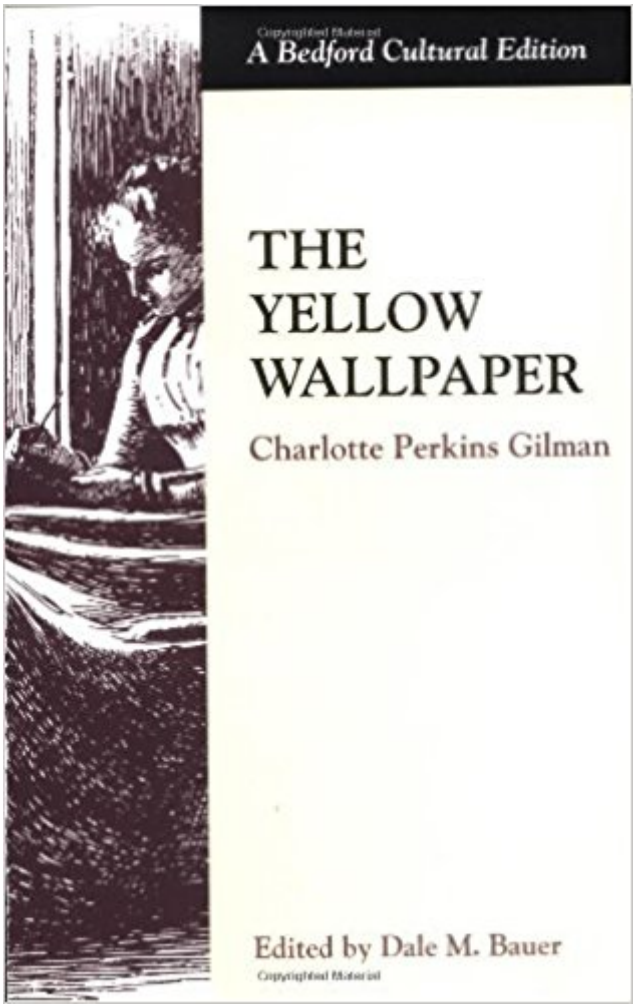
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# The Yellow Wallpaper (Bedford Cultural Editions)




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## Synopsis

Based on the 1892 New England Magazine text, this teaching edition of The Yellow Wallpaper includes a generous selection of historical materials. The documents are organized into thematic units and features nineteenth-century advice manuals for young women and mothers; medical texts discussing the nature of women's sexuality; social reform literature concerning women's rights, the working classes, and immigration; and excerpts from periodicals, diaries, and writers' notebooks that give students a sense of the changing literary scene that Gilman entered. Editorial features designed to help students read the novel in light of the documents include a general introduction providing historical and cultural background, a chronology o Hawthorne's life and times, an introduction to each thematic group of documents, headnotes, extensive annotations, a generous selection of illustrations, and a selected bibliography.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The unnamed narrator and her doctor husband, John, live in "a colonial mansion, a hereditary estate..." She believes the house is haunted. "John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that." She believes she is ill but her husband, and her brother, also a physician, say it is only "temporary nervous depression - a slight hysterical tendency..." They insist on "phosphates or phosphites - whichever it is - and tonics" and absolutely forbid work until she is well again. She believes "Personally...that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good. Personally, I

disagree with their ideas. But what is one to do? I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal - having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition." She is confined to rest in a room she hates with wallpaper she finds hideously ugly: "The color is repellent, almost revolting: a smoldering unclean yellow... dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others." It is in this room that she writes her secret journal that is this story. She struggles to believe in her husband and brother's "kindness" and "care" while, with terrifying starkness, she narrates her journey into madness. -- For great reviews of books for girls, check out Let's Hear It for the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14. -- From 500 Great Books by Women; review by Jesse Larsen --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860Ã¢â ¬â œ1935) American short story and non-fiction writer, novelist, commercial artist, lecturer and feminist social reformer; married the artist Charles Walter Stetson in 1884 and went by that surname afterward. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I originally read this story back in high school. I had this uber feminist English teacher who had us reading everything from The Awakening to The Handmaid's Tale. I was way more closed minded and stubborn back then (ok, I'm still really stubborn) and definitely did not share in her feministic views. However, somehow, this short story always stayed with me.So imagine my surprise when I am reading this book and I come across the backstory as to why Gilman wrote The Yellow Wallpaper. A Civil War doctor use to prescribe what he called "rest cure" for different ailments (mainly mental health related, although they certainly didn't categorize it as such back then). For men, he sent them out West, to be outdoors with other people, hunting, being active, relaxing. But for women, he sentenced them to confinement. Told them they needed to be in an isolated, dark room with no visitors and no stimulation. And people actually accepted this!Well, most did. Gillman, one of his patients, rejected the idea so soundly that she produced The Yellow Wallpaper as a result. (Apparently Virginia Woolf also met with the doctor and had a similar response). This fact made me think I misjudged this short story all those years ago. So I took to rereading it. With this new knowledge of how it came about (and I am sure a more mature and open mindset), I was able to see just how inspired, angry, and good Gilman's story really is.

Thematically remarkable for a short story of that time from a female author. Gilman ratchets up the tension of a woman's psychological decline while simultaneously making a pointed critique of the

era. It manages to be eerier than much of Poe without ratcheting up the Gothic tendencies of similar stories of psychological decline.

The Yellow Wallpaper is the short story of a woman's descent into madness. What probably started as a post-partum depression slides into a full-on psychosis by the end. The story is told by the narrator by means of a secret journal, of sorts. We are made privy to her thoughts, which come to fixate on the yellow wallpaper in the bedroom of the house her physician husband has rented for them in an attempt to to get her away from it all so she can "rest" and get better.But instead of getting better, the narrator falls more deeply into her illness. In just a few pages, the author says much about mental illness and the patronizing, paternalistic attitudes men often took/take with women. What makes it so sad is how believable the story is. The creepy factor comes from the horror the narrator's mind invents. In small, nearly imperceptible steps, the reader slides into the crazy along with the narrator. I am intrigued and will seek out more works by this author.

A profoundly disturbing story of a depressed woman who, upon the advice of her husband, a confident and hearty physician, is isolated in a small room, with rare, brief visits. Despite her pleas to go outside and to see people, the woman is told she must rest without interruption. This short story, although written in 1892, demonstrates the persistent ignorance even today about depression and what helps and what doesn't. Certainly isolation does not. Yet many people are afraid to initiate conversations with depressed persons. Without acknowledgement of the need for understanding and companionship, the story of the "Yellow Wallpaper" continues to go on. It's so important not to hide depression.

I have seen the movie and read the short story and will admit that I am still confused as to the ending. I suppose that the observer/reader must come to his or her supposition as to the outcome. However, this story does stir the imagination to form different ideas about what happens. I do feel certain that the woman is stifled by her husband in her life. I feel that she is imaginative and perceptive, where he is level-headed and not given to believing anything that can't be proven to his satisfaction. and that, I think makes all the difference as to the ending. I suggest seeing the movie and reading the story to reach a possible scenario to conclude this imaginative tale.

The Yellow Wallpaper is a short story about a woman's battle with postpartum depression and how this problem is managed during her time (the 1890's).The narrator's/ protagonist's husband is a

doctor, so she acknowledges that he must know what's best for her. He doesn't want her to face any stress of any kind. Oddly, he even discourages her from doing things she enjoys doing, such as writing. Not being allowed to do things that she enjoys only makes matters worse; she sees visions in the designs of the yellow wallpaper in the room in which her husband confines her.Obviously, this makes the style and voice of this work more difficult to follow. Readers must remember that the narrator/protagonist is suffering from psychological problems and will not always write coherently. If readers consider that this writing might compare to a journal, it is not so difficult to think through the times when the writing seems disconnected.An understanding about what was known about mental health during the late 19th century, particularly as concerns women's mental health, is very helpful here. Also, it is helpful to realize that Gillman, the author, went through a battle with postpartum depression herself. This short story simply puts a face on the way such was handled in that time and, as such, has much historical merit.

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