

The Yellow Wallpaper

Directions. Fill out the chart below. In the left column, cite a passage from the story about the yellow wallpaper. In the right column, explain the significance of the citation.

Specific Example	Analysis
<p>“One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin. It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.”</p>	<p>This passage associates many of the story’s themes with the wallpaper. There’s a reference to “artistic sin,” associated with the prohibition on writing. There’s a mention of suicide, which alludes to the narrator’s depression and madness. The constant irritation could refer to John or the constant state of irritation being locked in a room represents.</p>

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<p>“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. I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before”</p>	<p>This passage hints at madness and confinement. The wallpaper symbolizes the watching eyes of the narrator’s husband and sister-in-law.</p>
<p>He said that after the wall-paper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.</p>	<p>The wallpaper is only the beginning of the narrator’s confinement. There are many layers to the narrator’s prison, much in the same way there are many layers to the wallpaper, and many layers to the story.</p>
<p>“There are things in that paper which nobody knows but me, or ever will. Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day. It is always the same shape, only very numerous. And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don’t like it a bit.”</p>	<p>The theme of gender inequality and confinement come to the front with the description of the trapped women.</p>
<p>““I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"”</p>	<p>The narrator comes right out and accuses her husband and his sister of trapping her. The ending, however, is ambiguous. Is the narrator truly free? Has she really broken the bonds of her confinement? It’s apparent that, at the very least, she has broken the psychological hold her husband has.</p>