

Lesson Plan: "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Objective:

Students will analyze *"The Yellow Wallpaper"* to understand the themes of mental illness, gender roles, and symbolism, and critically engage with its feminist perspective.

5E Lesson Plan Structure

1. Engage (10–15 minutes)

Activity:

- Show students a close-up image of torn or patterned wallpaper.
 - Ask:
 - *What do you see?*
 - *What emotions or thoughts does this image evoke?*
 - Lead a quick journal response:
"Describe a time you felt confined or misunderstood. What helped you get through it?"
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2. Explore (20–30 minutes)

Activity:

- Read selected excerpts from *"The Yellow Wallpaper."*
 - Focus on the opening paragraph, her descriptions of the wallpaper, and the final scene.
 - In pairs or small groups, students track:
 - Changes in the narrator's tone and language
 - Descriptions of the wallpaper
 - Key actions taken by the narrator
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3. Explain (15–20 minutes)

Teacher-Led Discussion:

- Provide context about Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the "rest cure."
 - Discuss:
 - How the narrator's confinement affects her mind
 - The symbolism of the wallpaper and the woman behind it
 - John's role in the narrator's decline
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4. Elaborate (25–30 minutes)

Activity Options:

- **Creative Task:** Rewrite a scene from *John's* point of view—how might he justify his actions?
 - **Debate:**
Was the narrator liberated or destroyed by the end of the story?
 - **Symbolism Chart:** Have students identify and explain 3 symbols in the story.
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5. Evaluate (Homework or Class Assignment)

Assessment Options:

- **Short Essay Prompt:**
How does the story use symbolism to reflect the narrator's mental state?
 - **Exit Ticket:**
One paragraph answering: *What does the wallpaper represent in the narrator's life?*
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Discussion Questions: "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Comprehension

1. Why is the narrator in the room with the yellow wallpaper?
2. What is her relationship like with her husband John?
3. How does the narrator's view of the wallpaper change over time?

Analysis

4. How does Gilman use the wallpaper to represent the narrator's psychological state?
5. What role does gender play in how the narrator is treated?
6. Why do you think the story is told through journal entries?

Critical Thinking

7. In what ways is the narrator both a victim and a symbol of resistance?
8. How would the story be different if told from John's point of view?
9. Do you think the narrator truly "escapes" in the end? Why or why not?

Extension

10. How is this story relevant today in discussions of mental health and gender expectations?