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Role of Wallpaper in *The Yellow Wallpaper*

In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman uses the wallpaper symbol to reveal the oppressive nature of gender roles in the 19th century. The story follows a woman confined to a room with yellow wallpaper as part of her 'treatment' for mental illness. As she becomes increasingly obsessed with the wallpaper, she begins to see a woman trapped behind it, struggling to escape. This symbolizes the woman's own struggle against the gender roles that confine her and limit her agency.

Gilman's use of the wallpaper as a symbol is a powerful commentary on how women were confined and oppressed in the 19th century. The yellow wallpaper represents sickness and decay, suggesting that the gender roles imposed on women are damaging and unhealthy. The wallpaper pattern, which the narrator describes as "dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate," represents the monotony and tedium of women's lives in a patriarchal society. The woman trapped behind the wallpaper symbolizes the narrator's own imprisonment in her prescribed role as a wife and mother.

Through her use of the wallpaper symbol, Gilman highlights the importance of agency and self-expression for women. The narrator's growing obsession with the wallpaper represents her own struggle to assert her identity and assert her independence. By the end of the story, when



she has fully embraced her madness and begins to peel the wallpaper away, she is reclaiming her agency and rejecting the gender roles that have been imposed on her.

Overall, *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a powerful critique of the gender roles and expectations that confined women in the 19th century. By using the symbol of the wallpaper to represent the narrator's struggle for agency and self-expression, Gilman highlights the damaging effects of gender roles and the importance of breaking free from them.

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Works Cited

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Yellow Wallpaper*. True Sign Publishing House, 2021.

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