

THE MULHERN STORY LIBRARY — SALON READING GUIDE

The Yellow Wallpaper

Charlotte Perkins Gilman · American Realism / Feminist · first published 1892

AUTHOR	Charlotte Perkins Gilman
PUBLISHED	1892
ERA	American Realism / Feminist
THEMES	Confinement, Mental Health, Gender
READER PATHWAY	Advanced adult / college seminar

INTRODUCTION FOR THOUGHTFUL READERS

A woman confined to a room for a 'rest cure' after childbirth records her growing obsession with the room's yellow wallpaper. As her journal entries fragment, she comes to believe a woman is trapped behind the pattern, mirroring her own descent.

HISTORICAL & LITERARY CONTEXT

Published in *The New England Magazine* in 1892, the story drew on Gilman's own experience with the rest cure prescribed by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell. It became a foundational feminist text and an early portrait of postpartum mental illness.

DISCUSSION FOCUS

First-person unreliable narration, symbolism of the wallpaper, feminist critique of medicine and marriage, the journal form, and the medicalization of women's experience. Rich for historical and theoretical analysis.

SALON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does the narrator's confinement operate medically, domestically, and aesthetically?
- What does the wallpaper become as the narrator's interpretive powers intensify?

READ & RESEARCH

1. Full text at Wikisource — https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Yellow_Wall_Paper
2. The Yellow Wallpaper at Project Gutenberg — <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1952>