



Gothic and the Female Voice: Examining Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper,"

Guide for Curriculum Unit 99.01.07

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As urban schools attempt to expand the list of multicultural readings assigned to high school students, women writers are often still excluded from the curriculum. The unit, "Gothic and the Female Voice: Examining Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* " is intended for a college preparatory English class that focuses on American Literature in its historical context. The unit will follow one on Edgar Allan Poe's stories and poetry. While I plan to use the unit with a class of sophomores, it is easily adaptable to any secondary level English class.

The New Haven school system has proclaimed a district-wide literacy focus. I teach at an inner-city magnet high school for students interested in careers in science or business. Often, the students in sophomore English do not read at grade level and have great difficulty with writing. In Connecticut, high school sophomores also take a standardized response to literature test which focuses on reading comprehension and writing skills. This unit is intended to address both high-achieving and lower-level English students with opportunities for reading aloud, guided note taking if necessary, small group activities, extensive writing practice and intense literary analysis.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" is already included in my school's sophomore English textbook, *McDougal-Littell Language of Literature* . The text provides vocabulary exercises, comprehension questions and suggested writing activities. The mere fact that "The Yellow Wallpaper" has become so frequently anthologized is monumental. After all, Gilman had difficulty getting the melancholy story published at all. This unit aims to provide teachers and students with entry points for analyzing "The Yellow Wallpaper" within two thematic contexts. Background narrative and lessons are provided for analyzing the story within the context of narrative and female voice and within the context of gothic genre. Lastly, a story like "The Yellow Wallpaper," which raises questions more than provides answers is a teacher's favorite for any literature class. The story provides a literature class with endless issues for discussion, areas for debate and topics for writing practice.

(Recommended for English, grades 9-12.)

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