

Prompt: When it comes to the way that characters read evidence in the play *Trifles*, we may say that there are two "styles"--there is a male style and there is a female style. 1) While making reference to the play, see if you can describe what is characteristic of the "male style" and what is characteristic of the "female style" of reading evidence. 2) Do you think that Susan Glaspell's view differs much from typical views of how men and women think? Give us an example from outside the play that illustrates this "typical" difference in the way that men and women think. Write two full paragraphs for this discussion assignment. Here's [my example](#) from outside the text.

Observing Differences Between Men and Women in "Trifles"

In Susan Glaspell's short play "Trifles", there is no greater storytelling device at work than the carefully constructed perspective showcasing the fundamental differences of the psyches of men and women. This is communicated to the audience through a single scene of an unhappy kitchen where, for most of the proceedings, two women are left alone to talk and share their observations with one another. During most of this time the men—a sheriff, a county attorney and a neighbor farmer—are elsewhere in the house attempting to collect evidence for how and why a wife recently murdered her husband. A twist comes when it is actually the women who successfully piece the events together by recognizing in their environment aspects of their own lives.

After the introduction, the men are almost always elsewhere, doing things which seem to be most important to them, like looking for clues and trying to establish potential motives. When they do make appearances, they are engaged in "men's business", while the women become passive in their presence. Unlike the women, the men are incapable of noticing the more subtle and telling details provided by the house. They instead assume their professional duties, roles which were afforded to them by gender: the county attorney is conducting his investigation and is asking very routine questions, the neighbor farmer feels obliged to answer most of these questions, and the sheriff is securing the crime scene and guiding people through the house. They get nowhere in their efforts, however, and have very little relevance to the story being told, except to show how they failed in building a case against the wife.

Meanwhile the women are sitting together in the kitchen and talking with each other about the peculiarities of the situation. One remembers how lively and happy the wife used to be before she married and then she became lonely and isolated. The other relates her lost child to the great feeling of emptiness in the wife's home. They both understand the gruesome death of the canary and how it had for a time filled the house with music and color. These are details that could only be understood and appreciated by women who, through their own experiences, found ways to discover important qualities everywhere surrounding them.

I think that Susan Glaspell's portrayal of gender roles in her play is accurate, although it is perhaps a little less relevant in the present day. There are certainly contemporary examples of how men are still considered to be superior to women, but a lot has changed in the last century in that women have entered the workforce, girls are educated alongside boys (in first world countries), they are allowed to hold important positions of service and responsibility (such as district attorney or sheriff), etc. There are still important differences between men and women, however, and this will always be true. Women are more nurturing and understanding while men are more protective and decisive. These and other qualities distinguish one gender from another. Natural roles do exist, but so do exceptions to these roles.

Re: Feeling Out a Problem (Jessica Johnson)

The empathy the women felt towards one of the feelings behind the murder, not being valued, also was a great motivator for the women not decided to let the men in on who the killer was.

I thought it was interesting how Mrs. Hale waited for Mrs. Peters to act before she committed to taking evidence from the scene: "Suddenly Mrs. Peters throws back quilt pieces and tries to put the box in the bag she is wearing. It is too big. She opens box, starts to take bird out, cannot touch it, goes to pieces, stands there helpless" (819). Throughout the entire play Mrs. Hale is sharing information and making suggestions to Mrs. Peters, commenting about her friend Minnie Foster's difficult life. She also begins to innocently restitch the quilt to see how Mrs. Peters will react to her tampering with the crime scene. More examples such as these surface in their conversation.

Eventually the conflicted Mrs. Peters attempts to hide the canary, which would be used to establish a motive. Though she fails, Mrs. Hale deftly hides it in a pocket of her coat. It becomes understood at this point that Mrs. Hale was always trying to figure out how to protect her friend, but could do nothing in the presence of the wife of the sheriff. However, when Mrs. Peters acts on her own accord, Mrs. Hale is now free to save her friend from being convicted of murder.

Re:

Quote

Response