

1. TRIFLES

About the author

Susan Glaspell (1876-1948) was an American playwright, novelist, journalist and actress. First known for her short stories (fifty were published), Glaspell is known also to have written nine novels, fifteen plays, and a biography. Her works typically explore contemporary social issues, such as gender, ethics, and dissent, while featuring deep, sympathetic characters. Her first novel *The Glory of the Conquered* was published in 1909. She wrote three best-selling novels *Brook Evans* (1928), *Fugitive's Return* (1929), and *Ambrose Holt and Family* (1931).

Her first play *Trifles* (1916) was based on the murder trial she had covered as a young reporter in Des Moines. Her play *Alison's House* (1930) earned the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1931. Glaspell is today recognized as a pioneering feminist writer and America's first important modern female playwright.

The play *Trifles* revolves around murder investigation providing a perspective about the status of women in contemporary American society reflecting the male mentality as the dominant gender.

Trifles chronicles the day after Mrs. Wright is arrested on suspicion of murdering her husband. Though the play is about the Wrights and the circumstances of Mr. Wright's death, Mrs. Wright never appears onstage. The audience learns about her from the perspective of her neighbours and their reactions to items they find inside the Wrights' home.

Summary

The play "Trifles" has been written by an American playwright, novelist, journalist and actress Susan Glaspell. He has artistically presented suspense and mystery in this one-act play. In the same way, he presented various aspects related to women's lives and their self-priorities. This play has presented the various themes

related to women's lives as isolation, loss of identity, male domination, revenge and violence, feminism, freedom by rebellion etc. There is investigation about the murder case in the play.

The play is set in the abandoned farmhouse of Mr. John Wright. The main characters in the play are George Henderson, Mr. Peters, Mr. Hale, Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale. The farm house is a lonely and gloomy place. At first, George Henderson, the County Attorney, Mr. Henry Peters and Mr. Lewis Hale enter the kitchen of the house where the murder took place. All of them are followed by Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale. The condition of the kitchen is completely messy. When they reach there, they find everything messy and untidy. Some of them are broken too. The dishes in the kitchen lay scattered, a dishtowel is on the table, unwashed pans are under the sink etc. When Mrs. Peters tells the Attorney that Mrs. Wright was worried about her preservative. Mr. Hale says that women become worry over trifles. Hearing the men Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale move closer to each other.

Mr. George Henderson begins his further investigation from the kitchen. He allows Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters to gather few belongings for Mrs. Wright before going upstairs in search of evidence. Mrs. Hale rearranges the kitchen to its tidy condition before the men enters it. She relates to Mrs. Peters that Mrs. Wright was a quite popular singer thirty years back and known as Minnie Foster. She believes that she was sad and unhappy after her marriage. The women find the sewing on a quilt to be wrong, and want to fix it. They search for the paper and string in the cupboard to complete the quilt. Instead, she finds a broken bird cage in the cupboard. They notice the head of the bird is in the same condition as that of Mr. Wright. They talk about the missing bird too. Then, the women make a new insight about Mrs. Wright's situation. They speculate that her husband must have killed the bird. They connect Mr. John Wright's murder to the Canary's death. They both reveal the case related to necks. It must have been awful for her that after so many years of emptiness the only bird that sang was also killed in

her rage, she must have murdered her husband Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale decide to hide the evidence they have found as to Mrs. Wright's motive. Men take no notice thinking as the item as trifles. They come with no clues whereas women get full proofs but remain silent.

Thus, this play is about gender discrimination, domestic violence, injustice, male discrimination and also about revenge. This play warns the husbands like Mr. Wright to change their behavior and vision towards women.