

Symbolism In The Play Trifles By Susan Glaspell

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In the [play Trifles](#) by Susan Glaspell, the playwright uses different literary devices to bring out the core message and purpose of the play. Amongst the devices that have been employed in the play is symbolism. Symbolism functions in the play trifles to enhance the meaning and understanding of the play. There are different instances in which symbolism is used in the play. It functions in this play to give the audience a varied interpretation of the text and, therefore, enhances its intellectual use. The text, therefore, uses the actions of its characters and the physical aspects discussed in the play to represent other abstract ideas that relate to the major themes of the play. The use of symbolism has been brought out in the play Trifles through the instances discussed below.

The mention of the birdcage in the play symbolizes the life of Mrs. Wright. According to the conversation between Mrs Hale and Mrs Peters, it is observed that the birdcage has certain similarities to the home and the life of Mrs Wright, whom we are told had a sense of timidity like a bird in a cage. The cage also represents Mrs. Wright's sweet and pretty kind of life. She was sweet and pretty like a bird until the fateful morning when John was found dead (Carpentier et al., 29). Her timidity regarding the death of her husband is also symbolized by the bird in the cage. However, the cage is found empty by the two women, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters. The emptiness of the cage is an aspect that relates to the main character's breakaway from her coy and timid life, which was represented by the bird in the cage. With the bird alive and inside the cage, Mrs. Wright's innocence is symbolized, but the cage is found empty by the two women, who are left to imagine whatever might have happened to the bird. The absence of the bird in its cage shows that the symbol of innocence had been removed, and Mrs Wright had taken on another personality.

Related to the bird in the cage is the symbol of the dead bird, wrapped in a silk cloth and kept in a treasure box. This shows that the main character was more remorseful for doing whatever she did. The remorse is symbolized by the killing of the bird, which symbolizes sweetness and tenderness. Keeping it safe in a treasure box shows how valued the woman's virtues of sweetness and innocence, which took her great pains to let go.

Another use of symbolism in the text is the aspect of the rocking chair. Rocking or sitting on a rocking chair is symbolic of worry and internal conflict. When Hale visits the Wrights' homestead and asks to see John, Mrs. Wright sits on a rocking chair, pleading and showing a queer look, as seen in the quote, "She was rocking back and forth" (Glaspell 103). The act of rocking on a chair symbolizes whatever she is feeling within her. It paints a picture of her emotional state and how worried she was. The act of rocking on a chair has also been used to aid in facilitating the audience's understanding of this character's act of going back and forth in her thoughts without reaching a meaningful decision. Hale

explains that the woman seemed lost in thought when he asked her if he could see John. The rocking chair in this part of the text symbolizes the conflicts within her, whereby one part urges her to relate all that led to the [death](#) of her husband, while another part urges her to remain adamant.

The quilt found by Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale in the Wrights' house further evidences the use of symbolism in the text. Mrs. Wright had made earlier patterns in the quilt, which were neat and qualified to be considered exquisite patterns by the two observing women. However, the last patterns made by Mrs. Wright are unarranged and out of order, which makes it hard to determine whether they are patterns or knots (Kolls 98). The patterned part of the pleating symbolizes the woman's mental clarity and peace, while the shambled part symbolizes her emotional troubles surrounding the death of her husband, John. Through the acts of piercing the guilt, the character's anger has been symbolized. The manner in which Mrs. Wright pierced the guilt expressed the anger she felt within her.

The rope in the play is another symbol. It symbolizes horror and cruelty. The dangling of the rope brings an unbearable picture to the county attorney and Hale. It has been used in the play to symbolize horror and acts of cruelty. The dead bird can also be said to be another symbol of cruelty and horror in the text, based on the manner in which its neck was twisted.

In conclusion, symbolism as a literary device helps in offering meanings that words would not offer in the play *Trifles*. The use of symbolism has also helped in the overall understanding of the text and the roles of the various characters therein. It can thus be concluded that symbolism has been used in the instances discussed above to help the audience decipher the themes within the play *Trifles*.

Works Cited

Carpentier, Martha C., and Emeline Jouve. On Susan [Glaspell's Trifles](#) and "A Jury of Her Peers": Centennial Essays, Interviews and Adaptations. McFarland, 2015.

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