

Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Early life

- Born Charlotte Anna Perkins on July 3, 1860, in Hartford, Connecticut
- Gilman was the great-niece of 19th-century writer Harriet Beecher Stowe (author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*).
- She had a difficult childhood
- Gilman's father abandoned the family, leaving Charlotte's mother to raise two children on her own.
- Gilman moved around a lot
 - her education suffered greatly for it.

Marriage and Inspiration

- Gilman attended college, but dropped out and married artist Charles Walter Stetson.
- In 1885, the couple had a daughter, but Gilman had developed neurasthenia, (called postpartum depression today) an emotional disorder characterized by fatigue and depression.
- Doctor Silas Weir Mitchell's unsuccessful prescription of a "rest cure" in 1887 provoked Gilman to write "The Yellow Wallpaper."

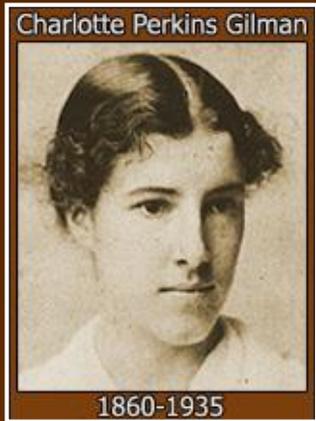
Her death

- Gilman later divorced her husband
 - divorcing Stetson and sending their daughter to live with him and his second wife—drew widespread public attention and criticism.
- Gilman continued writing after her happy remarriage to her *cousin*, George Houghton Gilman in 1900.
- In 1932, she learned she had incurable breast cancer.
- Wanting to be in charge of her own death, she committed suicide with an overdose of chloroform on August 17, 1935.

Background information

- To better understand “The Yellow Wallpaper,” we need to know...

Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Not a 'typical' Victorian lady



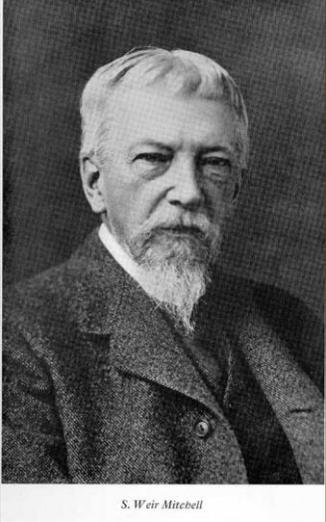
- Gilman believed in women's rights
- Her own experiences were similar to those of the narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper"
- Gilman believed that women must exercise their intellect or go mad
- The story, "The Yellow Wallpaper", was set in the Victorian era, and the story's theme was different than the established beliefs of the period.

Background



- The narrator has recently given birth; she may be suffering from post-partum depression
- The narrator mentions that she has been diagnosed with “A *slight hysterical tendency*,” and was being treated as most women of her time would be: with the Rest Cure.

The Rest Cure



- This cure was advocated strongly by a nationally (in the USA) recognized neurologist of the time, Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell.
- His Rest Cure called for complete rest, forced feeding, and isolation.
 - This was the same treatment Gilman received after the birth of her daughter.