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DIAGNOSIS OF MENTAL ILLNESS IN THE NARRATOR OF CHARLOTTE GILMAN'S "THE YELLOW WALLPAPER" USING THE DSM-5

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Diagnosis of Mental Illness in the Narrator of Charlotte Perkin Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" Using the DSM-5

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ABSTRACT

Charlotte Perkin Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" explores mental illness, freedom, and the faults of the rest cure by exploring the life of a wife who has been diagnosed with neurasthenia. In this story, Gilman describes an increasingly common practice during her time and how problematic it was for individuals who were diagnosed with neurasthenia. Through the wife's narration, Gilman shows how many women felt trapped since they were forced to undertake the rest cure due to one-sided relationship dynamics. Using this narrative of the wife's deteriorating mental health, Gilman argues for equality in relationships as well as better treatments for mental health. In this presentation, I will use the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) as well as other scholarly sources to diagnose the wife's mental illness. To do this, I will take the wife's narration and compare it to diagnostic criteria as presented in the DSM-5. By examining the narrator's thoughts and actions, I will be able to examine the progression of her mental illness. Examining the wife's mental health can show how many women of her time period may have felt trapped. This in turn can explain how many women faced unequal power dynamics in their marriages.

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