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Mrs. Wright and Mr. Wrong

Trifles is a play about the death of a woman's spirit. She is overpowered by her dominating husband and in the end killed him for suffocating her spirit. Glaspell characterizes male characters differently than females. The men of this play act towards their wives like an man would in 1916. The men are dominating and have very little real respect for their wives, and women in general do not. In 1916, when the play was written, Glaspell opened the door to women's rights movements. This story shows how the male and female characters interact with each other and how the women are actually the ones who solve and understand the murder of Mr. Wright.

Glaspell does a good job at characterizing the men in this play as they really were in this time period. In the beginning of the story the Sheriff seems as though he doesn't really care about the women or the murder of Mr. Right. He tells the County Attorney when asked about the kitchen "Nothing here but kitchen things". This makes it seem like he did not even bother really looking through the kitchen carefully in order to know that there was nothing worth investigating. He assumes that because she is a woman she is being treated as though it's unimportant. That was obviously a mistake since the ladies, being meddlesome like normal women, found a very key instrument in the motivation of the murder. The County Attorney is dead set on figuring out exactly what had happened.

He is probably the most professional and most determined one of them all. He knows that “what was needed for the case was a motive; something to show anger or—sudden feeling”. This shows that he actually cares about solving this murder case and truly knowing who is to blame, rather than just accepting that Mrs. Wright is most likely the one to blame, so better to say she just did it without truly knowing. Mr. Hale is the one who originally found the whole mess when he entered the house to try to talk to Mr. Wright. He must have been very amazed to find his acquaintance murdered, and his wife just sitting without emotion in a rocking chair. He was basically only in the story for background on the murder because he was the one to find the scene of the crime. Other than that, he does not play a very important part in the play.

The Sheriff and the County Attorney seem to have a jaded view of women and their importance to society. They sort of push the women aside as if they are not able to do this investigation or anything else other than gather the woman’s belongings together, and stay in the kitchen. We see the typical stereotype where the women are meant to stay in the kitchen and do things the men tell them to be a major influence in the story. Glaspell was ahead of her time by showing how these men were smothering their wives, just as Mr. Wright did. Mrs. Wright was an outgoing woman who became disgusted by her lifestyle and decided to put an end to it. Unfortunately now she might be spending the rest of her life in jail. She made that decision though, to put herself out of the misery of being tied down and unappreciated for what she truly could have been. The story says that she used to wear pretty clothes and sing in the choir, until Mr. Wright took her life away. The Sheriff and the County Attorney were not to this extreme like Mr. Wright had been. Their wives are content and have their time to do their own business with each

other. These men definitely have a serious attitude towards women that proves that they could soon be on their way to being in the same sort of marriage and household that Mr. and Mrs. Wright were.

Consequently, the time period when Glaspell wrote this one act play was known for men being negative or basically indifferent towards women. It was before the women's rights movement and therefore women had not had the backbone to stand up for themselves. By portraying a strong willed woman, and someone who was sick of the suffocation by men, Glaspell opened the doors for the women's rights movement. We wouldn't be where we are today without such strong willed women. Glaspell showed these men as non-caring human beings who were only concerned about themselves, and money.