“The Yellow Wallpaper” Discussion Questions

1. How does John treat the woman? How does she react to his treatment? What does this interaction say about women and men’s roles, relationships, etc. in this period?
2. How might Charlotte Gilman’s history with Post-Partum Depression affect her writing of “The Yellow Wallpaper”? What argument might she be making an argument for women everywhere?
3. The yellow wallpaper is a central image of the story. Explain its significance. What else is significant about the setting?
4. What clue does the narrator's repeated lament "What can one do" give us about her personality?
5. How does the narrator's relationship with her husband evolve/change? Does her mental state improve or worsen?
6. What are some themes in The Yellow Wallpaper? Symbols? How do they relate to the plot and characters?
7. What is the significance of the color yellow seen throughout the story?
8. In “The Yellow Wallpaper” the point of view is changed a lot. Why do you believe the author does this? Do you believe doing this allowed for a deeper insight in the story? If so where and why?
9. While reading you of course see the lifestyle of a woman in this time period through the main character. What does the text say about how women were treated back then? About how they were represented back then as mothers as well?
10. What about this story might lead us to label it as “feminist literature”?
11. From the title alone you read about yellow wallpaper-- what is the significance of this color? (Ex-to mental illness? Could the wallpaper have been any other color? How would a change in color have changed the story? How does the color "yellow" affect you? Do you like (or dislike) it? What are the psychological implications of the color "yellow"? How would a different color change the story?)
12. What could you assume about the main character’s relationship with her husband?
13. Knowing that Charlotte Gilman is a feminist, why do you think she decided to portray the main character as inferior to her husband?
14. When do you think the main character became unstable? Was she always? Was it when her child was born? Did it have anything to do with her husband?
15. What are the conflicts in The Yellow Wallpaper? What types of conflict (physical, moral, intellectual, or emotional) did you notice? Is the conflict resolved?
16. How does the narrator's description of the wallpaper change over time? How is the wallpaper representative of the domestic sphere?