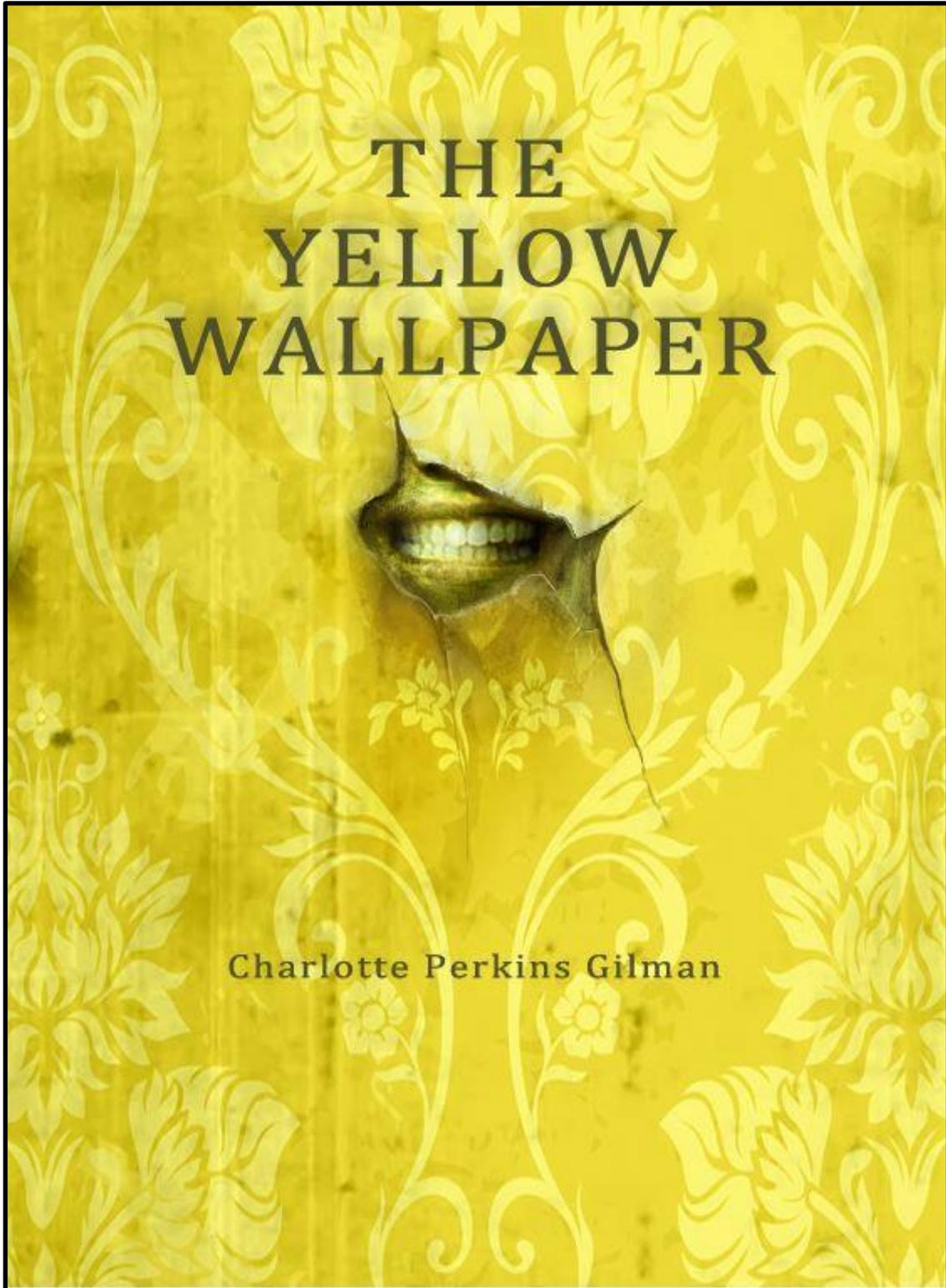


English Literature Year 12
Summer Step Up Work 2023



These tasks will help you prepare for A level study, in particular your NEA (non Examined Assessment) which is 20% of your final mark. The study of English requires confident, critical thinking and analytical skills and the ability to work independently.

Produce a page of notes for each of these tasks - **do not** just print sheets off the internet. You are compiling background research and ideas which you will use in the first lessons of the course and throughout the two years' study. **Bring all your notes and this booklet to your first lesson** in preparation for our reading of 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'

Task 1

Research the life of the American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Task 2

Research the lives of men and women in late 19thC England and America. Focus on the social expectations of men and women in this period, and the separate spheres of public and domestic life they inhabited.

Task 3

Research the treatment of 'Hysteria' in women during this period. Include the meaning and definition of this term; find out about Gilman's personal experience of this treatment and about her famous doctor.

Task 4

Read the poem 'The Angel in the House' written by the English poet Coventry Patmore in 1854, and the background context linked to the poem. Highlight and annotate what you feel are the most important lines that reveal Patmore's views about the ideal woman. How does it link to your research on men and women in the 19thC?

Task 5

Read the short essay 'An Extinct Angel' written by Perkins Gilman in 1891 in which she reacts to this ideal version of womanhood. Make notes and annotations on the text on the ideas and the tone of this short work.

Task 6

Read the short story 'Through This' by Perkins Gilman, 1893. It is a first person account of a woman's day caring for the house, her children and her husband. What are the themes and the tone of the story? Look at the language and the structure of the story - including the use of the word dark/darkness; the description of her mother; the disjointed sentence structure. Can you link it to any of your earlier research?

The Angel in the House : Coventry Patmore 1854

The popular Victorian image of the ideal wife/woman came to be "the Angel in the House"; she was expected to be devoted and submissive to her husband. The Angel was passive and powerless, meek, charming, graceful, sympathetic, self-sacrificing, pious, and above all--pure.



Believing that his wife Emily was the perfect Victorian wife, he wrote "The Angel in the House" about her : an angel-wife held up as a model for all women. Though it did not receive much attention when it was first published in 1854, it became increasingly popular through the rest of the 19thC. Initially, this ideal primarily expressed the values of the middle classes. However, Queen Victoria's devotion to her husband Prince Albert and to a domestic life encouraged the ideal to spread throughout nineteenth century society and continued to be influential into the twentieth century.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote a satirical response in 1891 in 'The Extinct Angel'. For Virginia Woolf, an English writer in the early 20thC, the repressive ideal of women represented by the Angel in the House was still so potent in the 20thC that she wrote, in 1931, "Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer."

The Angel in the House Coventry Patmore (1854)



Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself.
How often flings for nought, and yokes
Her heart to an icicle or whim,
Whose each impatient word provokes
Another, not from her, but him;
While she, too gentle even to force
His penitence by kind replies,
Waits by, expecting his remorse,
With pardon in her pitying eyes;
And if he once, by shame oppress'd,
A comfortable word confers,
She leans and weeps against his breast,
And seems to think the sin was hers;
Or any eye to see her charms,
At any time, she's still his wife,
Dearly devoted to his arms;
She loves with love that cannot tire;
And when, ah woe, she loves alone,
Through passionate duty love springs higher,
As grass grows taller round a stone.

'Through This' Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1893)

The dawn colors creep up my bedroom wall, softly, slowly.

Darkness, dim gray, dull blue, soft lavender, clear pink, pale yellow, warm gold - sunlight.

A new day

With the great sunrise great thoughts come.

I rise with the world. I live, I can help. Here close at hand lie the sweet home duties through which my life shall touch the others! Through this man made happier and stronger by my living, through these rosy babies sleeping here in the growing light; through this small, sweet, well-ordered home, whose restful influence shall touch all comers; through me too, perhaps - there's the baker, I must get up, or this bright purpose fades.

How well the fire burns! Its swift kindling and gathering roar speak of accomplishment. The rich odor of coffee steals through the house.

John likes morning-glories on the breakfast table—scented flowers are better with lighter meals. All is ready--healthful, dainty, delicious.

The clean-aproned little ones smile milky-mouthed over their bowls of mush. John kisses me good-bye so happily.

Through this dear work, well done, I shall reach, I shall help - but I must get the dishes done and not dream.

"Good morning! Soap, please, the same kind. Coffee, rice, two boxes of gelatine. That's all, I think. Oh-crackers! Good morning."

There, I forgot the eggs! I can make these go, I guess. Now to soak the tapioca. Now the beets on, they take so long. I'll bake the potatoes - they don't go in yet. Now babykins must have her bath and nap.

A clean hour and a half before dinner. I can get those little nightgowns cut and basted. How bright the sun is! Amaranth lies on the grass under the rosebush, stretching her paws among the warm, green blades. The kittens tumble over her. She's brought

them three mice this week. Baby and Jack are on the warm grass too-happy, safe, well.

Careful, dear! Don't go away from little sister!

By and by when they are grown, I can - there! the bell!

Ah, well!-yes I'd like to have joined. I believe in it, but I can't now. Home duties forbid. This is my work. Through this, in time- there's the bell again, and it waked the baby! :

As if I could buy a sewing machine every week! I'll put out a bulletin, stating my needs for the benefit of agents. I don't believe in buying at the door anyway, yet I suppose they must live.

Yes, dear! Mamma's coming!

I wonder if torchon would look better, or Hamburg! It's softer but it looks older. Oh, here's that knit edging grandma sent me. Bless her dear heart!

There! I meant to have swept the bed-room this morning so as to have more time to-morrow. Perhaps I can before dinner. It does look dreadfully. I'll just put the potatoes in. Baked potatoes are so good! I love to see Jack dig into them with his little spoon.

John says I cook steak better than anyone he ever saw, Yes, dear?

Is that so? Why, I should think they'd *know* better. Can't the people do anything about it?

Why no—not *personally*.but I should think *you* might. What are men for if they can't keep the city in order.

Cream on the pudding, dear?

That was a good dinner. I like to cook. I think housework is noble if you do it in a right spirit.

That pipe must be seen to before long. I'll speak to John about it. Coal's pretty low, too.

Guess I'll put on my best boots, I want to run down town for a few moments - in case mother comes and can stay with baby. I wonder if mother wouldn't like to join that - she has time enough. But she doesn't seem a bit interested in outside things. I ought to take baby out in her carriage, but it's so heavy with Jack, and yet Jack can't walk a great way. Besides, if mother comes I needn't. Maybe we'll all go in the car—but that's such an undertaking! Three o'clock!

Jack! Jack! Don't do that - here - wait a moment.

I ought to answer Jennie's letter. She writes such splendid things, but I don't go with her in half she says. A woman cannot do that way and keep a family going. I'll write to her this evening.

Of course, if one *could*, I'd like as well as anyone to be in those great live currents of thought and action. Jennie and I were full of it in school. How long ago that seems. But I never thought then of being so happy. Jennie isn't happy, I know--she can't be, poor thing, till she's a wife and mother.

O, there comes mother! Jack, deary, open the gate for Grandma! So glad you could come, mother dear! Can you stay awhile and let me go down town on a few errands?

Mother looks real tired. I wish she would go out more and have some outside interests. Mary and the children are too much for her, I think. Harry ought not to have brought them home. Mother needs rest. She's brought up one family.

There, I've forgotten my list, I hurried so. Thread, elastic, buttons; what was that other thing? Maybe I'll think of it.

How awfully cheap! How can they make them at that price! Three, please. I guess with these I can make the others last through the year. They're so pretty, too. How much are these? Jack's got to have a new coat before long - not today.

O, dear! I've missed that car, and mother can't stay after five! I'll cut across and hurry. Why, the milk hasn't come, and John's got to go out early to night. I wish election was over.

I'm sorry, dear, but the milk was so late I couldn't make it. Yes, I'll speak to him. O, no, I guess not; he's a very reliable man, usually, and the milk's good. Hush, hush, baby! Papa's talking! Good night, dear, don't be too late.

Sleep, baby, sleep! The large stars are the sheep, The little stars are the lambs, I guess, And the fair moon is the shepherdess.

Sleep, baby, sleep! How pretty they look. Thank God, they keep so well.

It's no use, I can't write a letter to-night-especially to Jennie. I'm too tired. I'll go to bed early. John hates to have me wait up for him late. I'll go now, if it is before dark. then get up early to morrow and get the sweeping done. How loud the crickets are! The evening shades creep down my bedroom wall-softly slowly.

Warm gold - pale yellow clear pink - soft lavender - dull blue -dim gray - darkness.

An Extinct Angel 1891

There was once a species of angel inhabiting this planet, acting as 'a universal solvent' to all the jarring, irreconcilable elements of human life.

It was quite numerous; almost every family had one; and, although differing in degree of seraphic virtue, all were, by common consent, angels.

The advantages of possessing such a creature were untold. In the first place, the chances of the mere human being in the way of getting to heaven were greatly increased by these semi- heavenly belongings; they gave one a sort of lien on the next world, a practical claim most comforting to the owner.

For the angels of course possessed virtues above mere humanity; and because the angels were so well-behaved, the owners were given credit.

Beside this direct advantage of complimentary tickets up above were innumerable advantages below. The possession of one of these angels smoothed every feature of life, and gave peace and joy to an otherwise hard lot.

It was the business of the angel to assuage, to soothe, to comfort, to delight. No matter how unruly were the passions of the owner, sometimes even to the extent of legally beating his angel with a stick no thicker than his thumb,' the angel was to have no passion whatever-unless self-sacrifice may be called a passion, and indeed it often amounted to one with her.

The human creature went out to his daily toil and comforted himself as he saw fit. He was apt to come home tired and cross. and in this exigency it was the business of the angel to wear a smile for his benefit-a soft, perennial, heavenly smile.

By an unfortunate limitation of humanity the angel was required, in addition to such celestial duties as smiling and soothing, to do kitchen service, cleaning, sewing, nursing, and other mundane tasks. But these things must be accomplished without the slightest diminution of the angelic virtues.

The angelic virtues by the way were of a curiously paradoxical nature.

They were inherent. A human being did not pretend to name them, could not be expected to have them, acknowledged them as far beyond his gross earthly nature; and yet, for all this, he kept constant watch over the virtues of the angel, wrote whole books of advice for angels on how they should behave, and openly held that angels would lose their virtues altogether should they once cease to obey the will and defer to the judgment of human kind.

This looks strange to use today as we consider these past conditions, but then it seemed fair enough; and the angels - bless their submissive, patient hearts! - never thought of questioning it.

It was only perhaps to be expected that when an angel fell the human creature

would punish the celestial creature with unrelenting fury. It was so much easier to be an angel than to be human, that there was no excuse for the angels's falling. It seems perhaps hard that the very human creature that the angel fell on, or fell with or fell to - however you choose to put it - was as harsh as anyone in condemnation of the fall. He never assisted the angel to rise, but got out from under and resumed his way, leaving her in the mud. She was a great convenience to walk on, and, as was stoutly maintained by the human creature, helped keep the other angels clean.

The amount of physical labour of a severe and degrading sort required of one of these bright spirits was amazing. Certain kinds of work - always and essentially dirty - were relegated wholly to her. Yet one of her first and more rigid duties was the keeping of her angelic robes spotlessly clean.

The human creature took great delight in contemplating the flowing robes of the angels. Their changeful motion suggested to him all manner of sweet and lovely thoughts and memories; also, the angelic virtues above mentioned were supposed largely to inhere in the flowing robes. Therefore flow they must, and the ample garments waved unchecked over the weary limbs of the wearer, the contiguous furniture and the stairs. For the angels unfortunately had no wings, and their work was such as required a good deal of going up and down stairs.

It is quite a peculiar thing, in contemplating this work, to see how largely it consisted in dealing with dirt. Yes, it does seem strange to this enlightened age; but the fact was that the angels waited on the human creatures in every form of menial service, doing things as their natural duty which the human creature loathed and scorned.

It does seem irreconcilable, but they reconciled it. The angel was an angel and the work was the angel's work, and what more do you want?

There is one thing about the subject which looks a little suspicious: The angels - I say it under breath—were not very bright!

The human creatures did not like intelligent angels-intelligence seemed to dim their shine, somehow, and pale their virtues. It was harder to reconcile things where the angels had any sense. Therefore every possible care was taken to prevent the angels from learning anything of our gross human wisdom. But little by little, owing to the consequences of repeated intermarriage between the angel and the human being, the angel longed for, found and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge. And in that day she surely died.

The species is now extinct. It is rumored that here and there in remote regions you can still find a solitary specimen-in places where no access is to be had to the deadly fruit; but the race as a race is extinct.

Poor dodo!

