



SAMPLE MATERIAL

Understanding Stories: Questions, Connections, and Visualizations

Stoughton High School, Massachusetts

Topic: Adolescent Literacy

Practice: Comprehension Strategies

Lori Manning, an English teacher at Stoughton High School, uses these instructional resources to help students develop strategies for understanding text. She uses the Three-Box Worksheet to develop inferencing skills. Students are asked to identify a theme from the text, provide a quote that has made the student infer the theme, and explain how the theme makes them feel and why.

For a lesson on *The Yellow Wallpaper*¹ by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Manning used several strategies to support text comprehension. The Comprehension Questions Assignment asks students to respond to specific comprehension questions about the short story. The Three-Column Note Form example shows how one student used the form to record pre-reading thinking, new information gained during reading of the text, and new thinking resulting from the student's reading and text connections. The

¹ Project Gutenberg (2008), *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, eBook free access source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1952/1952.txt>

Visualization Worksheet example shows how another student drew a picture to demonstrate understanding of the following quote from the story: “I really learned something at last...sometimes I think there are a great many women [behind the wallpaper], and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.”

Three-Box Worksheet: Inferring Themes

Lori Manning, English teacher, Stoughton High School

Instructions:

1. Begin the lesson by reviewing the definition of a theme.
2. Ask students to think of possible themes in the text they are reading and create a Theme Web on the board.
3. Select one theme and model how to complete the worksheet.
4. Ask students to reread a section of the chapter in the text.
5. Have students complete the worksheet with a partner.
6. After giving students a few minutes to complete the three boxes, review their thinking through a class discussion.
7. For homework, ask students to individually complete a worksheet using the next chapter in the text as their base.

Inferring Themes

While reading, highlight or mark a sentence with *TH* for theme when you come upon one of the bigger ideas in the story. Themes stir emotions.

- Write down the theme in the first box
- Write the sentence or quote from the text that makes you infer your theme
- In the third box, explain how the theme makes you feel and why.

The Bigger Idea or Theme:

Quote from Text:

How It Makes You Feel and Why:

Comprehension Questions Student Assignment*

Text: *The Yellow Wallpaper*** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

1. Do you think John is trying to drive his wife crazy?
2. What clues can you point to that suggest that the woman in the story is not an entirely "reliable" narrator? Is there any irony to this fact?
3. Consider the multiple functions that the wallpaper plays in the story. Also, does the wallpaper stay the same throughout the story, or does it change?
4. Who is the figure in the wallpaper?
5. What is the principal social institution against which the narrator of the story struggles?
6. In what ways might the ending of the story be seen as both a victory and a defeat for the narrator? In what ways is her situation both similar to and different from that of the creeping woman in the wallpaper?

* Excerpted from a student assignment prepared by Lori Manning, English teacher at Stoughton High School.

** Project Gutenberg: *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
eBook free access source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1952/1952.txt>

Student Example: Three-Column Note Form

Short Story: *The Yellow Wallpaper** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

* Project Gutenberg: *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman; eBook free access source: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1952/1952.txt>

| What I Think or Thought (Pre-Reading) | What I Read (New Information) | What I Learned (New Thinking) |
|---|---|--|
| <p>I think this story is going to have an important connection from the main character to the Yellow Wallpaper.</p> | <p>The narrator has a nervous issue. Her husband babies her and won't let her do much of anything. She writes to say what she has to say somehow.</p> | <p>I now have a new understanding of mental illness and I would never have understood that without having used the different strategies that we have used.</p> |

Text Visualization Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Text: _____

Quote Selected from Text:

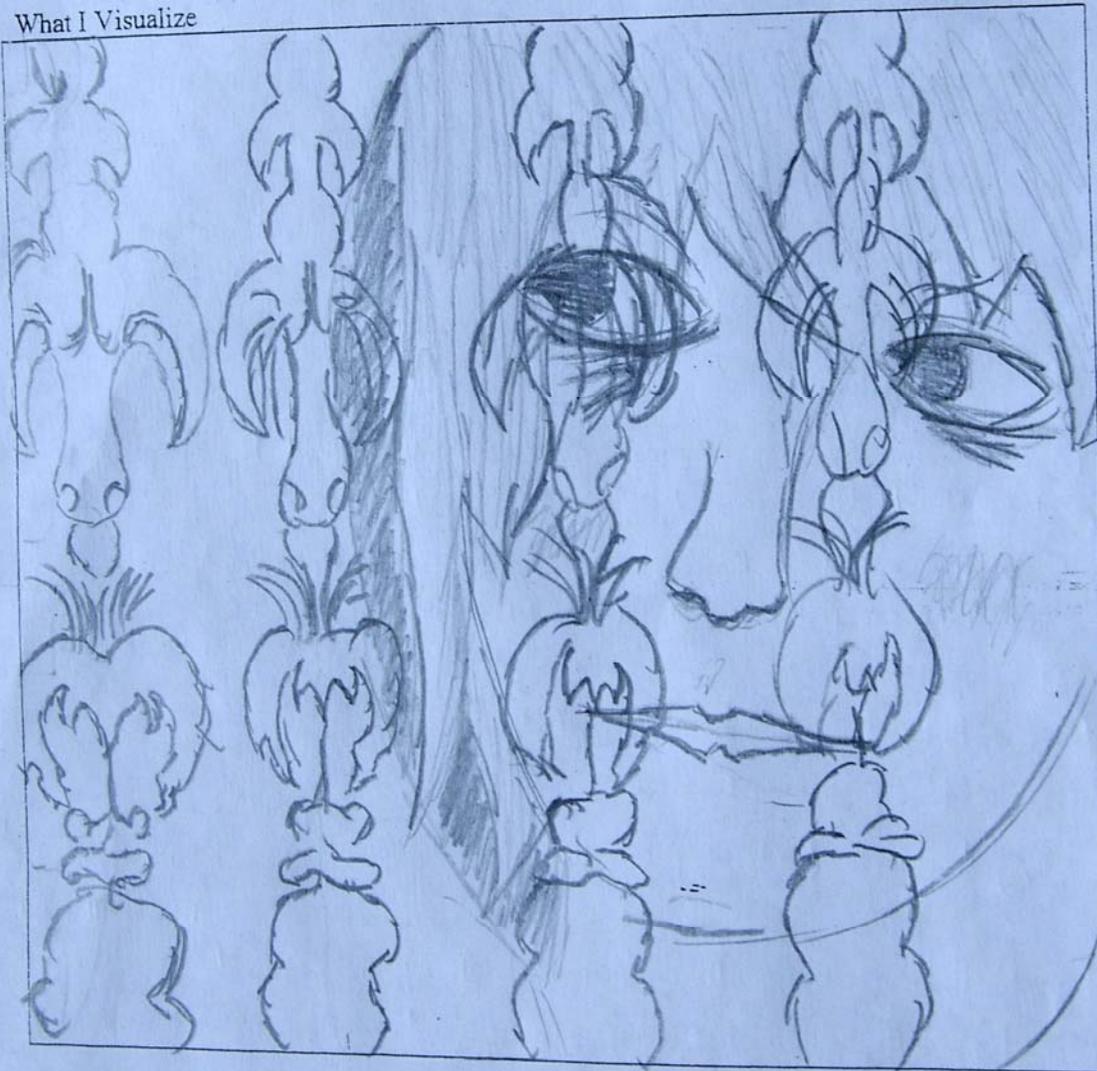
What I Visualize:

Name:
Visualizing

Quote from Text

"I really have discovered something at last... Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind [the wallpaper], and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling strokes it all over." (25)

What I Visualize



yellow
wallpaper
design

woman in
wall paper