

Susan Glaspell (1876 –1948): Philosophy major, journalist, writer, Pulitzer winning playwright, and actor.

Trifles first performed by the Provincetown Players at the Wharf Theatre, Provincetown, Mass., August 8, 1916. Glaspell herself played Mrs. Hale

Trifles's backstory and future version

Murder of John Hossack, in which his wife Margaret Hossack was accused, which Glaspell reported as a journalist

The play was soon followed by the short story, "A Jury of Her Peers" (1917)

Characters

GEORGE HENDERSON (County Attorney)

HENRY PETERS (Sheriff)

Mr HALE, A neighbouring farmer

MRS PETERS

MRS HALE

Absent:

JOHN WRIGHT

MRS WRIGHT (born Minnie Foster)

Frank (Deputy Sheriff—mentioned twice)

Harry (another neighbour, interested in the 'party telephone'—mentioned twice)

The Rivers (neighbour—mentioned once)

Plot and genre

Who does the detection? What do they detect? How do they gain this insight?

Why do the law officers miss what they are looking for (motives and evidence of Mrs Wright's state of mind)?

Setting

Immediate

Socio-political (women's vote 1848-1920, property owning—grant of married women separate economy, control over their earnings, independent trade licence—1860-1900, waged labour 1900-1920)

(Women in Jury: Hoyte vs. Florida 1961)

Situation

Point of view

A play: action and words (gaps, pauses, gestures, who speaks when and how much, who is allowed/invited to speak and who is not, who is interrupted and when, question of tone)

Character unfolding and development

- what the reader surmises

- what characters present about each other, both information and perceptions

- changes during the play

- what functions do they perform in/for the story

Title

Imageries and symbols

Critique

- In terms of the genre

- In terms of the social reality: justice and law

- Subject to law/Subject of law