

Handout: Trifles: Rereading to Understand

Instructions: Working with your group, write your answers to the prompts.

Part 1. Getting To Know Our Characters

When the play begins, Mr. Wright is already dead. We never even see Mrs. Wright. However, we learn a good deal about the Wrights from other characters. Complete this chart, using evidence you find in the play. Include at least three things you learn about each character from the play's dialogue.

Character	Important Things We Learn about the Character	Source of the Information	Why the Information Matters
Minnie (Foster) Wright	Before she was married, Minnie wore nice clothes and sang in the church choir.	Mrs. Hale	After she got married, Minnie didn't socialize. Her husband didn't let her have money for nice clothes. He silenced her.

John Wright	He didn't like to talk much.	Mr. Hale	He didn't give his wife real companionship, which is why the pet bird was so important to her.

Part 2. Constructing a Story

1. By interpreting the clues, the women construct the “story” of what happened to lead Minnie Wright to kill her husband. According to them, what happened? What clues did they identify, and how did they choose to interpret each one?

The Clues	What does each clue add to the “story” of what happened?

2. What motivates Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Hale to tamper with and hide the evidence? Why do they choose to change the story and intentionally alter the truth? (Each character has multiple reasons.)

Characters	Motivation for Altering the Truth	Lines from the Text That Support Your Inference
Mrs. Hale	Remembers Minnie when she was a lively social girl.	

3. The women think that they are also guilty of a “crime,” but not one for which they will be punished. What is the crime? Include the specific quote from the play that answers this question.

Part 3: Figurative Language: Veiling or enhancing the truth?

1. Identify at least three quotations that are ironic AND significant to the play. In your explanation of the irony, explain how the playwright’s word choices affect your feelings or reactions as a reader.

Quote	Significance: Why is it ironic, and how does the word choice affect your reaction as a reader?
“We think she was going to—knot it.”	<p>This is ironic. The men think she’s talking about a quilting technique, but she’s really referring to how Minnie Wright killed her husband.</p> <p>The word “knot” makes me feel unsettled because I know it’s not just a knot in a quilt. It’s actually a knot in a noose that Mrs. Wright used to kill her husband.</p>

2. What examples of metaphors do you find in the play? List at least three, and explain their significance. What is being compared, and how does the comparison enhance your understanding of the subject of the comparison?

Metaphors	What two things are being compared here? In what way does this comparison add to or change your understanding of the subject of the comparison?
The bird in the cage is presented as a metaphor for Mrs. Wright's married life.	

Part 4: Bringing It All Together

Based on how the characters are revealed in this play, how stories are constructed, and how language is used indirectly (through metaphor and irony), what does this playwright seem to be saying about human nature? About the truth? Support your answer with at least three pieces of evidence from the text.