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## Lamb to The Slaughter And Jury of Her Peers: Characters Analysis

When an awful crime is committed like murder nobody suspects the doting housewife to be the one that did it. Decades ago women were consistently diminished when they were in the presence of males. Men went to work and women were submissive housewives that cooked, cleaned and did everything for their husbands. This is a representation of gender roles. The theme of gender roles is common throughout two short stories. The character's Mary from Roald Dahl's "Lamb to The Slaughter" and the characters Minnie Foster, Mrs. Hale, and Mrs. Peters of Susan Glaspell's "Jury of Her Peers" are all in a patriarchal society where men hold more power than women politically, socially, and economically. Their stories are perfect examples of gendered hierarchy.

Both Mary and Minnie Foster are childless housewives whose lives revolved around their husbands. Their normal routines were interrupted by an incident that triggered both of them to murder their husbands. Mary doesn't want her life and routine to change and Minnie's husband kills her bird. Mary does the same thing every day; she cooks, cleans, and waits on her husband's hand and foot. Knowing the time that her husband arrives home each day Mary makes sure that their home is immaculate and everything is ready for him. When Mary's husband, Patrick, arrives home he says he has something to tell Mary and it is going to come "as a bit of a shock" (75). Her first instinct was to ignore him and carry on with her routine as if nothing happened.

She went to get supper ready for him and felt like "she couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel anything at all" (90) She came back with a leg of lamb to cook for dinner and walks right up behind him brought it up high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head. After finding out that Patrick was leaving her, she is shocked into killing her husband with the leg of lamb they were having for dinner. This shows that one of Mary's role in the household was to cook and look after her husband. When her role of being a doting housewife was threatened she killed her husband. Similarly, Minnie from the "jury of her peers" puts a rope around her husband's neck and kills him while he is sleeping. When looking for evidence on who committed the murder of Minnie's husband the men make belittling comments about individual women's weaknesses and strengths. The men repeatedly say that items in the kitchen or the items that Mrs. Wright requested didn't matter (23). By doing this the men devalue the women by devaluing the only thing that was left to the control of the women. Mrs. Peter's and Mrs. Hale accept the treatment they receive from the male characters. They contribute to the gender roles by believing that some things are only the men's responsibility, such as finding evidence. It is apparent that Mary and Minnie shared the loneliness, mistreatment, and isolation that came with gender roles. This ultimately led them to kill their husbands.

Although it seems in the stories that both Mary and Minnie were justified in their crimes; neither murder was premeditated. Both ladies were able to get rid of the evidence that tied them to the murders. Mary killed her husband when she hit him in the head with a frozen leg of lamb. Being a detectives wife she knew she had to set up an alibi. She cooked the murder weapon and then went to the grocery store to establish her alibi. She "rehearsed several times" (125) before

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shopping for the evening dinner and was not home when her husband was killed. Mary then called the police and told them that she found her husband dead. After verifying her alibi with the officers she insists on the detectives eating the murder weapon by saying "Please. Please eat it" (270). Similarly, Minnie ties a rope around her husband's neck and kills him. Throughout the story the men couldn't find any evidence that tied Minnie to the murder. While Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters were walking around the house they took notice of the different stitch patterns. They decided to bring the quilt to Minnie to finish. While looking for extra patches they came across a "pretty box" (221). When they opened it up they found Minnie's bird dead and realize "somebody's wrung its neck" (225). The ladies took it upon themselves to hide the box with the bird in it and smuggle it out of the house without the officers seeing it. Without the dead bird as evidence the detectives have no clear reason why Minnie would have murdered her husband. Although both Mary and Minnie killed their husbands they were both able to get rid of evidence that would connect them to the murders.

Mary's husband's actions led her to hitting him in the head with a leg of lamb and killing him. Minnie's husband wrung the neck of her beloved bird so she tied a rope around his neck and killed him while he was sleeping. Both characters show that the gender roles women are placed in can create a toxic atmosphere. Mary and Minnie were both able to get rid of any evidence that connected them with the murders. They were never convicted of the crimes and justice was not served for their husbands.