

The Painted Door by Sinclair Ross - Worksheet

Questions and Answers - The Painted Door – Set 1

1. What is the main idea of The Painted Door?
 - The theme of the short story "The Painted Door" by Sinclair Ross is that isolation and loneliness can lead to desperation and bad choices such as betrayal. The story delves into the consequences of Ann's actions because of her isolation and poor mental state and her loveless marriage.
2. What is The Painted Door short story about?
 - The short story, The Painted Door, focuses on a woman who commits adultery due to her husband's absence and neglect of emotions.
3. What does the door symbolize in The Painted Door?
 - The painted door of the story's title represents Ann's desire for both control and excitement in her life. It also serves as a setting for the twist towards the end of the story.
4. What happened to John in The Painted Door?
 - Ann's husband, John is unfailingly loyal and self-sacrificing, and sees only the best in people. When he returns home late at night to find his wife in bed with their friend Steven, he chooses to quietly kill himself by walking back out into the blizzard rather than confront them.
5. Who is to blame for John's death in The Painted Door?
 - Interestingly while Ann infidelity is the fault of the broken marriage, it did not kill John. John's own lack of control, after discovering his wife's transgression, is the only true reason for his death.
6. Why is Ann unhappy in The Painted Door?
 - Although she loves her husband and appreciates how hard he works, she dislikes the repetitive, isolated nature of life as a farmer's wife.

Questions and Answers - The Painted Door – Set 2

1. What does the ending of The Painted Door mean?
 - The smudge of paint on John's hand shows that he returned home safely, but then saw Ann and Steven asleep in bed and chose to walk back out into the snow to die. He sacrificed his own life in despair, but also so that he would never have to confront Ann and be anything other than loyal and supportive to her.
2. What happened at the end of The Painted Door?

- It's the same paint she used on the door earlier that evening, suggesting that John actually made it home safely, but when he found the two in bed together, he walked back into the snow to die.
3. What is the irony in The Painted Door?
 - The irony of the ending is revealed when Ann finds evidence of smeared paint on the dead John's hand. Ann tried to overcome her loneliness by sleeping with Steven however these actions ironically lead to John's death. She is the only one that knows the truth and will have to live with this for the rest of her life. The second irony in the story is that John had sent Steven over to keep Ann company. This is ironic because John gave Ann the opportunity to cheat on him with his close friend: which is what happened.
 4. What does sacrifice symbolize in The Painted Door?
 - For John, sacrifice is the ultimate expression of love and loyalty. Ann understands the necessity of some sacrifice, but she sees it as a necessary evil and something which makes it more difficult to remain loyal to her husband.
 5. Why does Ann want John to shave in The Painted Door?
 - Ann's attempts to get John to shave implies that Ann wants John to look good for Steven because she cares about how Steven thinks about John, and ultimately her.
 6. What does the double wheel around the moon symbolize in The Painted Door?
 - The night before the story takes place, a "double wheel" appeared around the moon. This double wheel (which is usually caused by ice crystals high in the atmosphere) is taken by all of the characters to represent a coming storm.

Questions and Answers - The Painted Door – Set 3

1. What is the foreshadowing in The Painted Door?
 - Ann looks at the door and Steven says, "Not tonight, you might as well make up your mind." This foreshadows them sleeping together, putting a double meaning to what she has to make up her mind about. Steven tells Ann, "Across the hills in a storm like this- it would be suicide to try." This foreshadows John's death.
2. What does the paint on John's hand imply in The Painted Door?
 - When first she, then John smudges the paint, it not only provides a crucial plot point to the story as the paint from the door on John's hand shows that he did come home and see Ann in bed with Steven.
3. What is the conflict in The Painted Door?
 - The major conflicts throughout the story are man versus self and, man versus environment. Ann struggles to cope with her inner thoughts and faces difficulties

being the wife of a farmer. She is left in isolation, which condemns her to seek emotional support from another male figure.

4. What is the mood and tone of The Painted Door?
 - The mood of the story is one of isolation and despair and the tone is one of hopelessness and loneliness.
5. Why is the setting important in The Painted Door?
 - Without the setting of despair and loneliness, the purpose of the story does not have a framework to stand on. Without the storm in the story, no events may have even happened to the main characters. Without Ann's insecurities, she has no reason to cheat. The setting was also for the sense of despair that occurred later on in the story, finding that her husband was dead in the snow.

Questions and Answers - The Painted Door – Set 4

1. What does Steven symbolize in The Painted Door?
 - Steven is presented as a reflection and a object of Ann's desires which is always in contrast to John. He is presented as everything that she wants in a man. While Steven never directly states that he wants to sleep with Ann, he expresses no anxiety or guilt around their transgression.
2. What is the feminist angle in The Painted Door?
 - In “The Painted Door” by Sinclair Ross it is evident through the Feminist angle that Ann decided to cheat on her husband in an attempt to escape her dull lifestyle. Her actions were caused by her unhappy marriage, her sense of self-importance and her overdependence on men.
3. What factors drive Ann to her decision to commit adultery?
 - The factors that drive Ann to commit adultery are not being content with John, not noticing John's efforts to make her happy, not appreciating John in general. After being unfaithful to John, Ann has an important realization about the difference between John and Steven by which time the damage had already been done.