AN OPEN STACKS READING COMPANION

# A Taste for the Strange

*Three books. A little uncertainty. A reading life of your own.*

For Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper, Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and H. G. Wells's The Time Machine.

An invitation to notice more: original context, gentle stopping points, questions that leave room for disagreement, and pages for your own observations.

The books and the existing introductory guide remain free. This companion adds original editorial guidance and a printable journal. It contains no book full texts. The PDF is a print layout; choose the accompanying HTML version for reflowable text and screen-reader navigation.

REVIEW DRAFT - SEPTEMBER 2026. Prepared for owner editorial review. Full texts linked in Open Stacks currently require an internet connection and a U.S. connection. The commentary can be read independently; a purchase would not expand book availability.

**IN THIS SAMPLE: a flexible reading route, a before-reading introduction, and prompts for your first book.**

MAKE A LITTLE TIME

# A route, not a deadline

*Three different scales of attention.*

THE YELLOW WALLPAPER | ABOUT 6,085 WORDS
At the app's estimate of 220 words per minute, allow roughly 28 minutes: two 15-minute visits or three 10-minute visits. It is also a good choice for one uninterrupted sitting. Stop at a paragraph boundary if you divide it.

DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE | ABOUT 25,631 WORDS
Allow roughly 117 minutes: eight 15-minute visits or twelve 10-minute visits. Chapters make useful stopping places, but their lengths vary. The final documents deserve enough time to read without rushing.

THE TIME MACHINE | ABOUT 32,454 WORDS
Allow roughly 148 minutes: ten 15-minute visits or fifteen 10-minute visits. Its changes of scene can provide natural pauses. Keep room for the final framing passages as well as the journey itself.

These are estimates from the prepared Open Stacks editions, not deadlines or measured reading speeds. Reflection, unfamiliar language, and rereading add time. At fifteen minutes per visit, the three books suggest about twenty visits, spread across whatever number of weeks suits you.

In the reader, choose 5, 10, 15, or 30 minutes to receive an estimated stopping point in the actual text. You can change or clear it. Save your place before leaving; completion is a separate choice. Your notebook and reading position remain in the browser, so make a backup before changing devices or clearing browser data.

BOOK ONE - BEFORE READING

# The Yellow Wallpaper

*Charlotte Perkins Gilman | First published in 1892*

A first-person account brings us close to a woman whose daily life is shaped by other people's decisions. The opening gives us a rented house, a marriage, a room, and an account of what is meant to help her. Pay attention to who is allowed to define the situation.

The story's short sections make writing itself part of the experience. Notice occasions when the narrator can write freely, has to stop, or anticipates someone else's response. The voice is not just reporting a predicament; the act of putting it into words takes place inside that predicament.

Gilman published the story in New England Magazine in 1892, under the name Charlotte Perkins Stetson. In a 1913 essay, she connected its writing to her own experience of a rest cure and restrictions on intellectual work. That retrospective account is useful context, not a medical record of the fictional narrator. Read the arrangements the story actually gives you: who makes decisions, and how agreement or resistance appears in the sentences.

You may encounter this work under the title The Yellow Wall-Paper in other editions. This companion follows the title and paragraph structure of the prepared Open Stacks edition. Interpretations here are invitations, not the author's instructions or a clinical diagnosis.

**Before starting: when does being cared for feel different from being heard?**

Open the free book in Open Stacks
Context sources: UVA first-publication transcription; Gilman's 1913 essay.

BOOK ONE - WHILE READING

# Listen to the interruptions

*Follow the conditions under which the account can be told.*

OPENING VISIT
Read until you have a clear sense of the house and the narrator's daily arrangements. Pick one statement about what is good for her. Who makes it? Does the narrator accept it, qualify it, or move away from it? Try to describe the language without deciding immediately who is right.

MIDDLE VISIT
Choose two descriptions of the room from different parts of the story. What has changed: the room, the attention paid to it, the available explanation, or more than one of these? Keep the descriptions separate before trying to reconcile them.

A NATURAL PAUSE
Stop after a paragraph or section, not because a timer has expired. Ask what the narrator can say on the page that she cannot easily say to another character. Look for both explicit restrictions and moments when she anticipates disapproval.

ONE THING TO KEEP
Choose a passage whose tone is hard to name. It might seem light and painful, assured and doubtful, or ordinary and unsettling at once. Record the two tones you hear. Keep both until a rereading gives you a reason to change them.

**Who is speaking with authority here?**

**What does the narrator notice that another character dismisses?**

**Which detail feels different the second time I meet it?**

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