

# I Want A Wife Rhetorical Analysis

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**I want a wife** is a powerful phrase that encapsulates the complexities of gender roles, expectations, and the often-unspoken demands placed on women in society. The phrase originates from Judy Brady's essay, "I Want a Wife," first published in Ms. Magazine in 1972. In this rhetorical analysis, we will explore how Brady employs various rhetorical strategies to convey her message about the traditional roles of wives and the societal expectations that accompany these roles.

## Context of the Essay

## Historical Background

Brady's essay emerged during a period marked by the women's liberation movement, which sought to challenge and redefine the traditional roles assigned to women in society. In the 1970s, the notion of a "wife" was often synonymous with subservience, self-sacrifice, and domesticity. Women were expected to manage the household, raise children, and support their husbands, often at the expense of their own ambitions and desires. Brady's essay serves as a critique of these societal norms and highlights the inequities faced by women.

## Purpose and Audience

Brady's primary purpose is to illuminate the unrealistic and burdensome expectations placed on women in their roles as wives. By employing irony and satire, she seeks to engage both men and

women in a conversation about gender roles. Her intended audience includes both those who adhere to traditional gender norms and those who seek to challenge them.

## Rhetorical Strategies

### Irony and Satire

Brady employs irony throughout her essay to highlight the absurdity of the traditional expectations associated with being a wife. By listing the numerous responsibilities and sacrifices expected of a wife, she underscores the overwhelming nature of these demands. The satirical tone serves to draw attention to the societal norms that dictate women's roles, making readers question the validity of these expectations.

### Example of Irony

Brady writes, "I want a wife who will keep my house clean, who will take care of my children, and who will be the perfect hostess." This statement reflects the unrealistic expectations placed on women, suggesting that a wife is merely a servant fulfilling a checklist of duties. The irony lies in the fact that these duties are often taken for granted and not recognized as labor.

### Repetition

Repetition is another key rhetorical device used by Brady. The phrase "I want a wife" is reiterated throughout the essay, creating a rhythmic structure that emphasizes the multitude of responsibilities women are expected to fulfill. This repetitive phrasing not only reinforces the message but also serves to mock the notion that women should be content with such a limited and defined role.

### Parallel Structure

Brady utilizes parallel structure in her writing to enhance clarity and impact. By presenting her ideas in a consistent format, she effectively communicates the various aspects of the traditional wife role. For

example:

1. Emotional Support: "I want a wife who will be understanding and supportive."
2. Domestic Duties: "I want a wife who will cook and clean."
3. Childcare: "I want a wife who will care for the children."

This structured approach makes the essay easy to read while simultaneously driving home the point that these roles are not only extensive but also unrealistic.

## Themes

### Gender Roles

One of the central themes of Brady's essay is the critique of traditional gender roles. By highlighting the numerous responsibilities expected of a wife, she calls attention to the unequal distribution of labor within a marriage. This theme resonates with many readers, as it reflects a broader societal issue that continues to persist.

### Self-Sacrifice and Identity

Brady also explores the theme of self-sacrifice, emphasizing how women often prioritize their husband's needs over their own. The portrayal of the wife as a selfless caregiver raises questions about individual identity and fulfillment. Brady challenges readers to consider how such sacrifices impact a woman's sense of self and agency.

### The Absurdity of Expectations

Through the use of irony and satire, Brady underscores the absurdity of the expectations placed on wives. By presenting an exaggerated list of demands, she forces readers to confront the unrealistic nature of these roles. This theme encourages critical reflection on societal norms and the necessity for change.

## Impact and Reception

### Influence of the Essay

"I Want a Wife" has had a lasting impact on feminist literature and discourse. It has been widely studied in academic settings and continues to be referenced in discussions about gender equality and women's rights. The essay's candid portrayal of the challenges faced by women has inspired subsequent generations to advocate for change.

### Criticism and Controversy

While Brady's essay received acclaim, it also faced criticism from those who felt that it unfairly painted all marriages in a negative light. Some argued that the portrayal of wives as mere servants undermined the agency of women who willingly chose to embrace traditional roles. However, Brady's intention was not to vilify women but rather to challenge societal expectations.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Judy Brady's "I Want a Wife" serves as a poignant critique of the traditional roles assigned to women in society. Through the use of irony, repetition, and parallel structure, she effectively communicates the burdensome expectations placed on wives. The essay resonates with readers by highlighting themes of gender roles, self-sacrifice, and the absurdity of societal norms. As discussions about gender equality continue to evolve, Brady's work remains relevant, prompting critical reflection on the roles women play in both the domestic sphere and society at large. By understanding and analyzing these rhetorical strategies, readers can better appreciate the nuances of Brady's message and the ongoing struggle for gender equality.

## Frequently Asked Questions

## **What is the primary theme of 'I Want a Wife' by Judy Brady?**

The primary theme of 'I Want a Wife' is the critique of traditional gender roles and the expectations placed on women in marriage. Brady uses satire to highlight the burdens women bear as wives and mothers.

## **How does Judy Brady use rhetorical devices in 'I Want a Wife'?**

Brady employs rhetorical questions, repetition, and irony to emphasize the absurdity of societal expectations for wives, effectively engaging the reader's emotions and provoking critical thought.

## **What is the significance of the title 'I Want a Wife'?**

The title is significant as it immediately sets the tone for the essay, indicating a desire for a wife while simultaneously questioning the implications and responsibilities associated with that role.

## **How does Brady's use of first-person perspective influence the essay?**

The first-person perspective creates a personal connection, allowing readers to engage with Brady's experiences and frustrations, making her arguments more relatable and impactful.

## **What societal norms does Brady challenge in her essay?**

Brady challenges the societal norms that dictate women's roles in marriage, particularly the expectation that women should be self-sacrificial, nurturing, and subservient to their husbands.

## **In what ways does humor play a role in 'I Want a Wife'?**

Humor is used as a rhetorical tool to underscore the ridiculousness of the demands placed on wives, making serious critiques more accessible and engaging to readers.

## **How does Brady's essay reflect the feminist movement of the 1970s?**

Brady's essay reflects the feminist movement by advocating for women's rights and equality, highlighting the oppressive nature of traditional marriage and pushing for societal change.

## What impact did 'I Want a Wife' have on discussions about marriage and gender roles?

The essay sparked discussions about marriage and gender roles, encouraging readers to rethink traditional expectations and consider the implications of unequal partnerships.

## How does Brady's essay address the concept of choice in marriage?

Brady critiques the notion of choice in marriage by illustrating how societal pressures often limit women's options, leaving them with little agency over their own lives.

## What role does repetition play in reinforcing Brady's message?

Repetition is used to emphasize the numerous tasks and expectations placed on wives, driving home the point that these roles are overwhelming and often taken for granted.

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