Constance Blackwood is painted in a domestic, motherly light through her devotion to caring for others and her inclination to spend the majority of her time in the kitchen. While Constance’s prevalence in the kitchen is primarily the product of a passion for creating delicious meals and wanting to provide for others, it can often be perceived as succumbing to stereotypical gender conceptions of the time. Women of the mid-twentieth century had their place in the kitchen and that is where they were expected to stay. However, Constance combats this narrow-minded view in effortlessly crafting mouth-watering meals and dishes that she knows her family will enjoy because she wants to. Cooking is Constance’s escape, and just because it paints her in a domestic light does not mean she is falling short of her potential and leaving herself restricted to what was considered “women’s work” during that time.

**MERRICAT BLACKWOOD**

Easily the more sinister and malicious of the two sisters, Merricat Blackwood associates food with less endearing thoughts and intentions. Rather than pioneer a life of domesticity like her sister Constance, Merricat detaches herself from the kitchen and cooking, except for when food can be used to carry out her devious and unsettling actions. Merricat is a character who deviates strongly from the role she is expected to assume as a woman who belongs to the mid-twentieth century, and this rebellion is enhanced through her relationship with food and anything having to do with it. Contrary to Constance who at times succumbs to the conventions associated with women of the time, Merricat is representative of the women of the mid-twentieth century who were protesting against the restrictions placed upon them. That being said, Merricat’s lack of meaningful relationship with food and her inclination to associate it with malicious acts makes her less fit to go out into the world and assume her role as a mid-twentieth century woman.

**CONSTANCE BLACKWOOD**

**FEAST ON THIS**

**FOOD AND UNCONVENTIONAL WOMEN IN SHIRLEY JACKSON’S WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN THE CASTLE**

Food: People often associate this word with a ravenous hunger, a desire to reunite with loved ones over the dinner table, or with holiday meals. However, when analyzing this word in relation to Shirley Jackson’s *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*, food carries much more weight than merely serving as a means of satisfying hunger.

Constance Blackwood acts as the mother figure in the novel whereas Merricat acts as the daughter, and food is the device that reveals much to be known about their characters and their position in relation to other women of their time. Specifically, food reveals how these sisters fit in with the expectations that surrounded mid-twentieth century women.

While Constance Blackwood’s relationship with food is a tight-knit one in which she employs her culinary talent to cater to the needs of her remaining relatives, Merricat’s relationship with the kitchen and cooking, or rather lack thereof, assumes a more detached nature. The juxtaposition of the two sisters emphasizes the fact that not all of the women who existed during the time in which they were living assumed the same role.