

# Oppressive qualities of society

[Society](#)



The Oppressive Qualities of Society Society's oppressive nature greatly affects the lives of the people within it, and the expectations society sets for its citizens drive people to strive for acceptance from their peers. In "A Respectable Woman," Mrs. Baroda, a young wife, who tries diligently to welcome her husband's friend Gouvernail into their society, becomes enthralled with him, facing temptation that would be viewed with trepidation. Similarly, in "A Shameful Affair," Mildred, a repressed young woman, enticed by a farmhand, faces temptation and forced to fight her personal desires because of society's restriction based on class hierarchy. In "The Kiss," a woman sets aside her personal desire for the image she believes society desires the most in a marriage. In her short stories, Kate Chopin illustrates contrasting imagery and intense and tempting diction to convey that society dictates people's decisions because people worry about their portrayal in society and are forced to concede their personal desires.

Society's expectations tend to reflect an ideal role, and because of this expectation society's restrictions bind people because of their fear of an unjust portrayal in it. Society expects women to act as loving and caring mothers devoted to their children while their husband. For example, "A Respectable Woman," when Mrs. Baroda welcomes her husband's friend Gouvernail, she "imposed her society upon him . . . she persistently sought to penetrate the reserve in which he had unconsciously enveloped himself" (213).

Chopin's use of intense diction such as "imposed" which denotes a forcibly placed restriction, and "persistently" which denotes a tenacious behavior despite of initial opposition, suggests society's strict expectation for woman

to gracefully welcome others in their society by imposing those expected ideals on other people. Mrs. Borada's diligence in welcoming Gouvernail becomes an infatuation when she becomes entranced by his stoic behavior towards her. The heavily stressed importance society places on material objects transferred to the expectations women believe they should strive to.

For example, Nathalie coerces Brantain to become her fiance despite her desire for another, because he "was enormously rich; and she liked . . . the entourage which wealth could give her" (225). Chopin's use of intense diction such as "enormous," which has a denotation of grand, suggests the importance of material objects in society. She reveals how the desire for material objects taints the view of marriage, because of how the status that accompanies them is easily accepted in this materialistic society. These expectations that society sets forth tend to dictate the decisions of women.

People's choices depend on what is acceptable because individuals remain more concerned with the image they portray to society than their personal desires. For example, when Gouvernail goes outside to bring Mrs. Baroda a sweater, she feels drawn to him, but "the stronger the impulse grew to bring herself near him the further . . . did she draw away" (215). Chopin's use of passionate diction such as "impulse," which contains a denotation of a strong urge, conveys the inner conflict that arises when a woman's personal desire clashes with what she believes is right according to society.

In contrast, when Mildred is fishing with the farmhand, "his brown hand came down upon Mildred's white one," (165). Chopin illustrates the differences between Mildred and the farmhand, with Mildred's "white one" conveying that she is pure and innocent, while the farmhand's remains

roughened and tanned by the labor he is forced to perform due to his role in society. Furthermore, Mildred's withdrawal from something she clearly desires shows how she is forced to choose her image in society over her own desires. Women in society must ignore their impulses because harsh and unfair consequences await them if they do not conform.

Lastly, despite the suppression of women's desires, they are still forced to face consequences for their tempting thoughts. For example, after the farmhand kissed Mildred she realizes that "the secret must remain her own, a hateful burden to bear alone" (166). Chopin's use of harsh diction such as "hateful" and "burden" conveys society's negative view on personal desires such as Mildred's attraction to the "Offender," or the farmhand, while "alone" portrays a tone of alienation to suggest the idea that if she were to pursue her desires, then society would scorn her.

Even when people try to ignore their desires in lieu of an image they fight to portray to society, they are still left to suffer. For instance, when Nathalie is married, she expects to receive the wealth and position in society because of her convenient marriage while also having what she truly desires out of society's view, yet she learns that "a person can't have everything in this world" (227). Chopin's figure of speech, that people can't have everything, conveys the idea that loss will exist no matter a person's decision because they cannot have "everything," and will be forced to choose between their desires and those of society.

No matter how hard a person tries to escape the ridicule of society they still face the pain of loss and suffering because of suppressed desires. Fitting in is a controversial topic within society. No matter the change in era or the

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region people occupy, the desire to be deemed acceptable lives strong within everybody. In Chopin's short stories she illustrates contrasting imagery and intense and tempting diction to suggest that society's strict expectations influence the decisions of women because they are more worried about how they are portrayed to society than complying with their desires.