

In to the terrible news
as one



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In "The story of an Hour," Kate Chopin reveals the complex character, Mrs. Mallard, in a most unusual manner. The reader is led to believe that her husband has been killed in a railway accident. The other characters in the story are worried about how to break the news to her; they know she suffers from a heart condition, and they fear for her health. On the surface, the story appears to be about how Mrs. Mallard deals with the news of the death of her husband.

On a deeper level, however, the story is about the feeling of intense joy that Mrs. Mallard experiences when she realizes that she is free from the influences of her husband and the consequences of finding out that her new-found freedom is not to be. At first, Mrs. Mallard seems to be genuinely affected by her grief: "She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment.. .. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone.

She would have no one follow her"(14). At this point in the story, the reader is able to look into the mind of Mrs. Mallard; she now noticed, as she looked from her window, "the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the distant song"(15).

She noticed the "there were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds"(15). The other characters in the story have one impression of Mrs. Mallard; she seems to have reacted to the terrible news as one would expect, but the reader is aware that a distinct change has come over her. The story unveils its theme at this point: Mrs. Mallard, for the first time in her life, experiences a new-found freedom. Instead of dreading

the future without her husband, “ she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely”(15). She could now live her life and be absolutely free of the imposing will of her husband: There would be no one to live for her during the coming years; she would live for herself. There would be now powerful will bending hers in the blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow creature.

(15)Mrs. Mallard had, “ in that brief moment of illumination”(15), stumbled upon a truth: she was now her own person, free from the confines of her husband. She had loved her husband, “ sometimes”(15), but that didn't matter: “ What could love .

...count for in the face of their possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!(15). THE theme of the story unfolds at this point: Mrs. Mallard, through the death of her husband, is able to experience the joy of the realization that she is in control of her own destiny. She is now “ free, free, free!(15.

Mrs. Mallard's new-found freedom is not to be, however, as the story takes an ironic, fatal, twist. On the surface, this story appears to be about how Mrs. Mallard accepts the news of the death of her husband; on a deeper level, however, this story examines how Mrs Mallard accepts the possession of her own being which she recognizes as “ the strongest impulse of her being”(15). As she looked out of her window, she was looking at life as she had never seen it before: “ she was looking drinking in the very elixir of

life”(16). She had never before looked to the future with any optimism, only dread.

She could hardly live with this new-found joy that she had discovered within herself, and ironically, she would not live with new discovery for long. As the story takes an ironic twist, Mr. Mallard turns the latchkey and walks into the room: he had been nowhere near the scene of the accident. The realization that her new-found joy was not to be was too much for Mrs.

Mallard's weak heart to take, but she had at least lived for a few, brief, shining moments in the realization of her new-found freedom.

Bibliography Chopin, Kate. "The Story of an Hour."

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