

Symbolism in the story of an hour



In “ The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin, the main character, Mrs. Mallard, was described as a young, calm, but repressed wife with heart disease, to a husband who was thought to be dead in a train accident. Although not much was said about the relationship of the couple, the author slightly describes Mrs.

Mallard’s negative feelings towards her husband that she had repressed. She was not able to reveal these feelings until she learned of her husband’s death. The use of symbolism is an important part of the story; a number of symbolic representations are used by the author Kate Chopin as a way of showing the long-hidden feelings of Mrs. Mallard towards sides of her married life. This brings us deeper to the theme of the story: Knowing that her husband had passed away, Mrs.

Mallard was of course saddened, but she surprisingly found within herself a great desire for freedom and self-discovery; she found a chance to have an identity of her own. She saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome. ” This was all in her mind at that one confusing moment. A common reaction to terrible news like the death of a husband would be denial, “ a paralyzed inability to accept its significance” and moments of weeping.

Surely, Mrs. Mallard reacted that way at first: “ She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister’s arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself, she went away to her room alone. ” She did not want to be

followed there. Once inside, she felt that she was really exhausted. She must have been tired because of the bad news.

In that part of the story, Kate Chopin created light but obvious symbolism of hope and relief that differed from all that Mrs. Mallard felt before entering the room in privacy. Two of the first representations were of the “ open window” and “ comfortable, roomy armchair”. An “ open window” is often used as a symbol for escape: while a “ comfortable and roomy armchair” represent freedom to move. The author used stronger and clearer symbolisms to illustrate the theme of the story. “ She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life.

” The “ treetops” and “ spring” symbolism obviously means vitality or life. Spring is a period in time that represents the beginning of new life; it is notable that spring also signals the end of a very long and cold winter. Another clever symbolism that was used to describe the mixed feelings of the main character was the “ delicious breath of rain” present in the air while Mrs. Mallard was looking over her window.

Obviously, the weather was rainy and cloudy, which normally suggests a sad and gloomy mood. However, the “ delicious breath of rain” can be interpreted as a mix of both the beauty and sadness of the character’s experience. The character was able to see rain, not as a symbol of misery, but as a symbol of hope. We can say in connection, another important symbolism is shown by the author in the following statement: “ There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met

and piled one above the other...” See that the clouds were described to be “piled one above the other”; this means that they are thick and dark. However, it was also said that “ patches of blue sky showing here and there” were actually seen.

To strengthen the theme of the story, the author combines these two symbolisms to show the contrast of emotions that the character felt. The dark and heavy clouds represent the grief and the patches of blue sky represent her chance of finding her own identity and freedom. The symbolisms illustrated by Kate Chopin were important and successful in revealing the true theme of the story, which is about a woman’s strong desire to for freedom and self discovery despite a tragic loss. Of course, there was grief, and then what followed was a mix of different emotions brought about by sadness, a “ repressed” desire for freedom, excitement and hope for the future, and a chance at a new life—just like spring after a very long and cold winter.