

The story of an hour response

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Oliva Professor English 2030-021 February 22, 2012 The Short Happy Life of Louise Mallard “ The Story of an Hour, ” by Kate Chopin displays the internal battle of Mrs. Mallard and her struggle with independence. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Mrs. Mallard’s negative outlook on her life and marriage suddenly changed into a confident and independent glimpse of the future. What was initially a negative outlook on matrimony, quickly developed into a confident and independent demeanor. The audience is vividly exposed to Mrs. Mallards change in identity regarding her role as a woman, and her optimism. The reader experiences a rapid transformation of wife to woman through Chopin’s creative use of irony and symbolism, alongside a theme of co-dependency and feminism. From start to finish, Chopin supplies the reader with a descriptive glimpse into what is going on in the mind of the main character, instantly trapping her audience. Most captivating, however, was the creative use of different symbolisms to give the main character as well as the reader, support by foreshadowing a positive outcome. These symbolisms can be located in almost every other sentence. I will touch on a few of which I found to be the greatest supporting roles of symbolism. Chopin sets up “ The Story of an Hour” with a brief introduction of the protagonist, Mrs. Mallard, who has an ongoing struggle with heart trouble. The reader is given a vision that Mrs. Mallard is a sensitive and soft hearted woman, and depending on the interpretation of the reader, the first hint of symbolism is introduced. Mrs. Mallard’s heart condition insists on a gentle disclosure of the recent news of her husband’s confirmed death in a train accident. Once told, “ She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its

significance. " (para. 3) This throws a sudden twist, and leaves the audience to ponder what happens next. Mrs. Mallard quickly disappears by herself into her bedroom, which also appears to be the main setting of the story. The main setting is supported by two exclusive items, both seeming to be rather strong climatic symbolisms. " There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted over her body and seemed to reach into her soul. "

(para. 4) The comfortable and roomy armchair is one of the first strong symbolic references to exist in the bedroom. This chair provided Mrs. Mallard with an embraced feeling of comfort as she began the exploration of her inner thoughts regarding the recent shocking news of Mr. Mallard's death.

The placement and direction of this chair was essential to the duo of symbolisms, directing the focus towards the open window, which I found to be the strongest symbolic representation provided throughout Chopin's story. Ordinarily, we find ourselves opening windows inside houses for one of two primary reasons, assisting us in letting unwanted and stale air out or inviting new fresh air in, when it is comfortable to do so. The already open window located in front of the cozy chair more than likely symbolizes Mrs. Mallard's option to replace her past way of life with a fresh new take, which just an hour ago could have only been present in a dream. With another creative addition, a suggestion is placed with the reader that this dream more than likely has been reoccurring for some time, and is supported by the chair's strategic placement in front of the window which was already open from the last sitting. Would this soon turn into a dream that would not be worth waking up from? As she started to transition her mind's focus outside of the

window, above and beyond of the entrapment of present day feminism and her role as a house wife, the colors of the picture began to brighten immensely. " She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. " (para. 5) The new spring life is a strong symbolism that she may now move forward into the next stage of her life, and the delicious breath of rain in the air is symbolizes that the worst has passed, and now she is awaited by a more placid future. " She saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. " (para. 11) She was realizing that she would no longer be living in the shadow of her husband, and no longer would she be simply Mrs. Mallard. She was now Louise, and embraced her new feeling of independence and freedom from the cliché role of a house wife. This introduced Chopin's last major creative insertion of symbolism in " The Story of an Hour. " Concluding her reflection time away in the isolation of her room, she was prepared to address not only the people waiting outside the door of her bedroom, but the vast future found on the other side of that bedroom door. " There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. " (para. 18) The goddess of Victory was symbolic of her defeat over the gender battle that was often lost to feminine oppression, along with the elimination of the strong restriction of individualism that came with wedlock. Louise was free, as she exited her bedroom and met her sister to head down stairs to find Richards. In the next short outbursts of twists, Brently Mallard, her husband, walked through the door, seemingly unaware of any train accident. " When the doctors came, they said she had died of

heart disease—of the joy that kills. " (para. 20) This ending assumption liberates the irony of the train accident that was thought to have killed Mr. Mallard throughout the entire story, but upon the last sentence ends up being the demise of Mrs. Mallard. The ending of " The Story of an Hour" is not only questionable and arguable, but immensely creative. I believe most would agree the Mrs. Mallard did not die from happiness, but died from having the new joy of her independence and freedom gained within the hour quickly revoked from her. The creative use of irony and symbolism throughout the story provided for the main character, and the reader, a strong sense of support. Louise transformed her identity from a simple and forgotten house wife to an independent and self-sufficient woman who was prepared to embark on the next leg of her journey through life. This clearly became the dream from which she desired never to wake. Works Cited
Chopin, Kate. " The Story of an Hour. " [http://www. vcu. edu/engweb/webtexts/hour/](http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/webtexts/hour/)