

Springtime imagery in the story of an hour

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



In “ The Story of an Hour”, Kate Chopin uses powerful imagery to allow the reader to feel Mrs. Mallard’s true emotions. Visuals in a story can provide an enormous amount of information about a character. What the character sees out a window can tell us their perspective on how they view the world. Imagery helps the reader put themselves in that character’s shoes. The descriptive details allow us to fully experience the story being told. By experiencing what the character feels, important themes can be revealed. One of the main themes in “ The Story of an Hour” is the theme of freedom. This is clear through Mrs. Mallard’s repetition of “ Free, free, free” under her breath but is also seen through Chopin’s use of imagery in a less direct way. In Kate Chopin’s “ The Story of an Hour”, the image of the “ delicious rain” and “ quivering trees with new spring life” both work together to bring out the theme of a new beginning.

After hearing the news of her husband’s death, Mrs. Mallard weeps uncontrollably and proceeds to lock herself in her room. Although she is quite emotional, this is the type of reaction you would expect from a new widow. She sits down in her chair and was “ pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach her soul”(Paragraph 3). Then she decides to look out her window and, “ She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life”(Paragraph 4). This line is very important as spring is associated with a new beginning. Rather than feeling her life is over after the passing of her husband, she feels it is just beginning. Spring represents renewal and birth. Mrs. Mallard is beginning to feel this sense of freedom and realizes what her husband’s death means for her life. Winter has now died, and

spring has finally arrived. Winter is normally associated with isolation or sadness, which are feelings that Mrs. Mallard most likely felt in her marriage. After a long and dreadful winter, Mrs. Mallard is finally seeing the beauty within the world as she looks out the window and sees her new life ahead of her. The open window provides a clear, bright view into the distance and Mrs. Mallard's bright future, which is now unobstructed by the demands of another person. As Mrs. Mallard begins to finally see the world as it is, losing her husband is not a great loss so much as an opportunity to move beyond the "blind persistence" of the bondage of marriages back then. Mrs. Mallard reaches her conclusions of independence through the environment, the imagery of which symbolically associates Mrs. Mallard's private awakening with the beginning of life in the spring season.

The next line in the story reinforces the theme of a new beginning. After looking at the "quivering trees", Mrs. Mallard says that "The delicious breath of rain was in the air." Because Chopin mixes senses by using a word normally associated with taste to describe living ("breath"), her word choice is also an example of synesthesia, which mixes sensory images. More importantly, rain is normally seen as a symbol of sadness or grief. By giving Mrs. Mallard a positive reaction to the "delicious breath of rain", it changes the reader's point of view on the story. Mrs. Mallard's moment of grief quickly passes as her outlook on life changes as she sits in her room and thinks about her future. When she realizes her newly found independence and all that it entails, she feels as if she is beginning life anew. Instead of rain being a symbol of sadness and mourning for her husband, it serves as a cleansing. A cleansing that washes away her past life and gives her a fresh

start. She is now free, free to live her life the way she pleases without having to answer to anyone not even her husband.

These lines together serve as the first clues to the reader to show that there is more going on in the story than just someone who has lost their husband. Although they are two short sentences, the imagery they produce helps the reader feel the experience that Mrs. Mallard is going through. They are pivotal sentences where the mood shifts from mourning death to the prospect of a new beginning. As she sits in her comfortable chair, gazing out her window, dark clouds part to show the blue sky, and the promise of rain also brings the “ new spring life” that she sees in the trees. Springtime imagery gives a sense of renewal that underlines Chopin’s idea that Mrs. Mallard is on a journey to a new life.