

# Kate chopin's the story of an hour essay

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Feminism is a prevalent phenomenon nowadays that affects numerous life spheres. In addition to that, it is a central concept of various literary works. As a rule, many famous feminist stories, novels, and plays were written in the mid-late 20th century when there happened the most crucial changes to women's rights. However, there are some exceptions, and Chopin's *The Story of an Hour* that was created in 1894 is among them. Even though it is a short story with not many characters, it manages to discuss essential topics in a way to make readers think through them critically.

The story tells about Mrs. Mallard, who has some heart issues. Because of this, everyone tries to be as careful as possible not to disturb the woman. Once her husband is said to be dead, Josephine, Mrs. Mallard's sister, comes to inform her of this tragic news. Even though Josephine tries to find as gentle words as possible, Mrs. Mallard is still shocked and frustrated. A newly-minted widow locks herself in her room to stay alone with her grief (Chopin, 2014). Inside, her first thoughts are that it is impossible to live further without her husband. They loved each other, and the loss is considered an end of everything for the woman. However, it takes a while for the grief to be replaced by freedom. One should note that it does not mean that Mrs. Mallard did not love her husband; the point is that Mr. Mallard's death makes her free and open to the future. These thoughts in mind, the woman leaves her room and meets her alive husband. This event happens to be immensely shocking for Mrs. Mallard, and she dies.

Even though the given story is based on a simple plot, and it has not many characters, this piece of literature is worth noticing. Chopin managed to discuss crucial topics and show that everything can change in life in a matter

of an hour. This thought is said to be a central one for the story, and it is represented in the title. Furthermore, the author refers to other issues that are revealed with the help of several characters.

The Story of an Hour conveys many vital topics that are understandable even for modern readers. The theme of mortality is said to be the most evident one discussed in this literary work. The author demonstrates that everyone is mortal and that the death of close people can occur unexpectedly. One can be surprised, but communication has a similar implication in this story. The case is that wrongly chosen words can be dangerous or even kill someone. That is why Josephine does her best to find those communicative means that would be less harmful to Mrs. Mallard. From this perspective, the author tells that words can sometimes damage more seriously than physical actions. Besides, Chopin attracts readers' attention to curative properties of time. Once shocked by her husband's death, it takes only an hour for Mrs. Mallard to change her mood dramatically. Thus, the topics above make this literary work exciting for numerous people.

In addition to that, it is impossible to ignore the fact that The Story of an Hour reflects feminist beliefs. On the one hand, Paudel (2019) argues that this piece of writing demonstrates "women's anxieties and struggles for self-identity within the arena of strict social and traditional structures" (p. 97). Her husband overshadowed Mrs. Mallard, and his death makes her free. At once, this freedom scares her, but the fear is soon replaced by happiness. On the other hand, the author presented the thought that the women's role

was underscored in society, often by women themselves. That is why Chopin wanted to show that women could live without men, which was one of the first signals of feminism (Latif Azmi & Hui, 2017). Thus, Mrs. Mallard's example was believed to show that the world was not fair to women. They could be full-fledged members of society, even outside men's shadows.

As has been stated, Mrs. Mallard is the main protagonist of the story. She is the usual woman who lives an ordinary life. Her heart condition stands for the role of all women in society. According to the author, this character demonstrates that women were very delicate and could not withstand any difficulties. Another of her peculiarities is represented by the feelings she had to Mr. Mallard. She loved him, but it was love that disappeared in an hour. Thus, this situation demonstrates one of the main negative features of the man-dominated world in which women are forced to live with men because it is necessary, rather than because they love them.

As for the other characters, Josephine and Mr. Mallard, it is impossible to tell much about them. Josephine appears to be a skillful negotiator because she manages to find some words that would not kill her sister. Besides, the woman takes care of her grieving sister, and it can be a message for all women that they should be concerned about one another. As for Mr. Mallard, he is a reason for the actions to revolve, but he appears in person only at the end of the story. The readers are not told what his profession is or where he was. It seems that he is even more depersonalized than the others. The author might describe this character in this way to show that men who were considered the center of the world were not more important than women.

As far as my personal opinion is concerned, this literary work evokes controversial thoughts. On the one hand, it defies the imagination that a mentally sane woman can be happy when her husband dies. On the other hand, the central message becomes apparent when the story is analyzed through the lens of feminism. That is why it is impossible to tell unequivocally what impressions this piece of literature causes. This thought is supported by Appleman (2015), who states that *The Story of an Hour* has “a set of somewhat more elaborate” elements (p. 132). Thus, there are no doubts that numerous readers will be excited by Chopin's writing.

*The Story of an Hour* by Chopin is a short literary work that manages to refer to many essential topics, though. The author discussed such themes as love, feminism, the role of communication, and mortality. One should note that not many characters were used in this story. The information above allows supposing that the literary work tends to evoke controversial feelings and emotions among its target audience. Thus, there is no doubt that this piece of writing is worth reading.

Appleman, D. (2015). *Critical encounters in secondary English: Teaching literary theory to adolescents* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

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Paudel, K. (2019). Existential angst in Kate Chopin's The Story of an Hour, NCC Journal, 4(1), 97-99.

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