

# Truth from trauma in the story of an hour by kate chopin and good country people ...

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



People like to think they know who they are, their beliefs, what they like, and how they feel about other people. This is even true for characters who share practically nothing in common such as Mrs. Mallard from Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Hulga from O'Connor's "Good Country People".

However, they are lying to themselves about those feelings and beliefs. They cannot understand these beliefs until they are tested through experience and it must be an experience that shakes them to their core. It must be an experience that traumatizes them. Moreover, they could not have understood their true self until their beliefs were tested through a traumatic experience.

Hulga and Mrs. Mallard both carry core beliefs about their personality. Hulga believes she is an intellectual and a nihilist, and she walks around the house all day berating and degrading everyone because they do not understand what she thought is child's play. Even to the point where when she takes Pointer up to the hay barn she did so to enlighten him because, "True genius can get an idea across even to an inferior mind." She knows that she is smart and everyone around her is dumb and she had convinced herself she was a nihilist and an intellectual that could bridge the gap to this inferior person to show him the error of his ways. She believes this to her core, just as Mrs. Mallard believes that she loves her husband. She believes this to the point that when she heard of her husband's death she ". . . wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment. . ."

Mrs. Mallard immediately cries because she has convinced herself that she truly loves her husband and the proper thing to do was cry about his death.

Hulga knew without a doubt she was smart, and Mrs. Mallard knew that she loved her husband. However, both Mrs. Mallard and Hulga's beliefs were put through a test. Both Hulga and Mrs. Mallard had to experience traumatic events to realize they are lying to themselves. When Mrs. Mallard hears of her husband's death it is horrible for her. As soon as she is able to stop weeping she "went away to her room alone." She is distraught and the thought of her husband being gone shakes her to her core. This event causes her to cry and isolate herself from people who want to help her, and it forces her to think about her true feelings.

As well, the same kind of event happens to Hulga in the hay barn. For most of her life she has been telling herself that she believes in nothing, but then she is horrified to find that she, an intellectual, has been tricked by someone she thought was just "good country people". This shock that Pointer was not who he claims to be shakes her to her core. The most valuable and private thing in her life, her fake leg, is stolen. She never let anyone see or touch it and she "was as sensitive about the artificial leg as a peacock about his tail." So when she finds out the person she thought was a simply country person has tricked her, she is forced to acknowledge how she really thinks and feels.

The conclusion each woman realizes after their event is not what they would have expected. After their respective trauma both Mrs. Mallard and Hulga have to face their true beliefs. When Hulga faces the fact that Pointer is a crook she does not understand. She believes he is "a fine Christian!", however he is not and she has been lied to. Not only by Pointer, but she has been lying to herself. If she was really a nihilist and believes in nothing as

she states, then she would not believe that Christians must be good people and that good country people are unable to steal and lie. She is, as Pointer states, "ain't so smart", because she has been lying to herself for most of her life. She does believe that Christians and good country people honest, and therefore cannot be nihilist because she believes in something. She only came to this realization however after her leg was stolen. It took a her a traumatic moment in her life that for her to understand that she does believe certain things and is not who she thought she was. The same kind of realization happens for Mrs. Mallard. After sitting watching nature she realizes something about her husband, that " she had loved him - sometimes". She now realizes that she felt oppressed by her husband and can now be free to do as she pleases. Again however, this is only possible after she went through the traumatic experience of his death that causes her core beliefs to be shaken. Without this experience she would have simply kept lying to herself that she was happy and fine. With his death she realizes that thing thing that she wants is that " she would live for herself. " She now sees that she can only be happy without her husband and without the oppression that a husband inherently caused for that time period.

Both Hulga and Mrs. Mallard lie to themselves to the point they did not know they were doing it, and for both of them it took a very traumatic experience to show them that lie. It took Mrs. Mallard's husbands death to show her that she really only wanted to be free and it took the theft of Hulga's leg to show her that she was not actually the intellectual nihilist she thought she was.

Both are traumatic events that test their beliefs, shake the core of what they believe, and show them what their true beliefs really are.