

# Birds in the awakening

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



To maintain a good reputation, women must conform to society by being a loyal, obedient wife and mother. In her book *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin uses the symbolism and imagery of birds and wings to display Edna Pontillier's struggle to free herself from society's cage. Edna wishes to act within her own discretion rather than her husband's, and ultimately, find true happiness.

In the first chapter, a green and yellow parrot (Chopin 1) hanging in a cage is introduced. The bird wishes to be alone, so it shouts, *Allez vous-en! Allez vous-en! Sapristi!* (1), which translates to *Get out! Get out! God damn it!* This causes Mr. Pontillier, who is trying to read the newspaper, to leave. Like the parrot, Mrs. Pontillier also strives for solitude. After her husband leaves, *A radiant piece settled upon her* (187), revealing Edna's unhappiness in her marriage, as well as a connection between her and the parrot. A second way the parrot represents Edna is that both are trapped in a cage and treated with ownership. After the parrot is introduced, it is said that it's *The property of Madame LeBron* (2) and that Mr. Pontillier had the privilege of quitting their society they ceased to be entertaining (2). This shows that the parrot is kept for the pleasure of others. In relation to the parrot, Edna is also treated and seen as property by Mr. Pontillier. After going for a swim, she's told by her husband that she is *Burnt beyond recognition*, while he *Looks at her, as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage* (4). Mr. Pontillier's possessiveness over Edna creates a sense of confinement and an unhealthy marriage, just like the parrot's confinement in a cage.

Edna experiences her first sense of freedom after moving to the pigeon-house and leaving behind her broken marriage and social obligations. Her first night there is already free from her husband's possessive manner. Consequently, she sleeps with Arobin, after he continued to caress her (242). Thus, The pigeon-house pleased her and each step which she took toward relieving herself from obligations added to her strength and expansion as an individual (245). Chopin uses the pigeon-house to symbolize Edna's freedom, but also her Feeling of having descended in the social scale (245). In contrast to the parrot, pigeons are free range, but also looked down upon. That being said, pigeons symbolize Edna and her current situation.

Although Edna finally broke free from her cage, she failed in her quest for happiness. Each morning she awoke with hope, and each night she was a prey to despondency (272), and after so long, she gave up on her depression. The last symbolism that Chopin uses is a broken-winged bird, resembling Edna's own brokenness and lost hopes. As Edna swims out to sea for the last time before committing suicide, she watches a Bird with a broken wing beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water (300). Because the bird has a broken wing, its hard for it to fly. It gives up on trying and falls to sea. The bird and its situation symbolizes Edna's own giving up.