

# The awakening essays example

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



In “The Awakening,” Kate Chopin uses quite a few symbols to suggest the true feelings and thoughts of Edna Pontellier, the protagonist of the novel, and to connect scenes that become integral to the novel’s plot. In the concluding scene of the story, Chopin vaguely describes Edna’s actions and feelings in her final moments; instead she conveys them presenting three of the most essential symbols of the novel. The bird, the sea, and clothing symbols are integral to the final scene because they connect that scene with other characters and critical moments in the book, conveying Edna’s actions and the purpose behind them in the process.

The readers find mentions of birds through the novel, which symbolize Edna Pontellier, as well as her actions and feelings. In the beginning, a caged parrot screeches for freedom, a symbol of Edna’s intense yearning to free from her husband and the harsh Creole society. Chopin uses the bird symbol to warn readers of Edna’s demise when she is compared to a bird by Mademoiselle Reisz (98). Even while Edna stands on the beach, facing her death, she sees a bird that has a “broken wing” and it “circl[es] disabled down, down to the water” (136). Even Mademoiselle Reisz wants Edna to succeed but the bird with the broken wing is also a symbol of Edna’s inability to overcome the structures of society that dictated how women can act and what they can do. Like the bird that eventually drowns, Edna’s inability to overcome society also results in her death.

Chopin progressively develops and uses the clothes that Edna wears throughout the novel as a symbol of Edna’s gradual awakening and her developing freedom from the oppressive bylaws of the Creole society. In the beginning, before she has awakened, it seems customary of Edna to wear

the same clothes that are worn by other Creole women. However, once she has awakened, Edna becomes disconnected from society, and consequently, abandons the attire bylaws of society (59). By the end of the novel, Edna has progressed to not wearing any clothes at all, especially when she stands on the beach “ beside the sea” all by herself (136). The fact that she stands there naked symbolizes the fact that she has somewhat managed to free herself from the rules of society. Nonetheless, her freedom from the expectations of the Creole society comes at the price of her own life. Chopin uses the sea to symbolize the love that Edna has for Robert, despite the fact that she is married. Since she spends the entire summer with Robert, and a considerable amount of time with him at the beach, she ends up making a connection between him and the sea. As soon as Edna’s subconscious awakens, she admits that she loves Robert. At several instances she uses words such as “ seductive,” “ clamoring,” and “ whispering” (15, 136, and 137) to describe the sea as if she was describing another person, a man. The lines in which she uses these words are an integral part of the novel since she says them right after awakening, and repeats them once again before committing suicide. However, unlike before, her relationship with Robert has already ended when she repeats the lines since he has already left her forever. Edna just cannot live without Robert, and since there is such a strong connection between him and the sea in her mind, she believes that drowning in the ocean. She believes that she will remain close and connected to Robert by drowning in the sea.