

# Free research paper on kate chopins novel the awakening

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The Awakening is a novel written by Kate Chopin. The story takes place in the 19th century in a Victorian society. The Awakening focuses on Edna who is the protagonist in the story, and she is the wife to Mr. Pontellier. It is a story about a woman who tried to transform herself from a housewife and mother into an independent woman, but she was not successful. Edna was just a normal wife like the other women in the nineteenth century who played the full role of an ideal woman who obeyed her husband, and cared for her kids. Edna now gets an idea that women need to be independent, and she longs for self-actualization, and empowerment. Her husband was dictatorial, and never gave her the attention she required and never even took care of the children. She fell in love with another man while still married, and this goes against what the society demands from her as a married woman. Edna pursues her desire of being independent but in the end of the novel, she commits suicide to end all her pain of not finding her identity, and ending up all alone.

The awakening is a story that explores a woman's desire to find, and live and an independent life, away from her husband. Edna realized that she was not happy with her life, and the position the society had given her (Toth 113). Edna was devoted and determined to be independent, and she really worked hard for it by giving all her life for it. According to Edna, " Her husband seemed to her now like a person whom she had married without love as an excuse" (Chopin 102). The protagonist moved out of her husband's house because she did not love him anymore. She was obsessed with the idea of becoming an independent woman, and she only thought that she can only become independent when she is away from her husband who she married

because of traditions. She abandoned Robert her husband and her children in her quest for self actualization. Edna was running away from what the society demanded from her. She was running away from mother-wife role, and her problem was to be an independent woman who is not obligated to anyone.

Edna felt that the society oppressed women and she did not want to be part of it. She was escaping from personal and domestic bondage (Taylor 106). She wanted to break the status quo in the society whereby the women are to submissive with no questions. Edna failed to find happiness in her marriage and so, she wanted to try someone new in her life, and that is why she left her husband. In addition, Edna wanted to be free from her responsibilities to her family, and the society.

In the novel, Edna had an identity problem whereby she was living a double life. She was trying to act as a mother and a wife yet, she was also involved with other men. Moreover, Edna demonstrated her affection even towards women. Two of the women Edna got attracted to were; Madame Ratignolle, and Robert Lebrun. Chopin states that she could walk along the beach, and sit while holding hands with Madame Raignolle. Chopin says, “ Seeing that the hand was not withdrawn, she clasped it firmly and warmly. She even stroked it a little, fondly, with the other hand,” (Chopin 21).

In the end of the story, Edna killed herself. She drowned herself because she felt that the society could not accept her new identity. Edna left her husband and children and got involved with other men, there is no way she could come back to her matrimonial home. Edna could not live as a mother figure to her children, and to the society, she was an outcast. In addition, she felt

guilty after abandoning her family, and she could not go back to her children. She was ashamed of herself, and could not stand the pain she felt. In addition, she could not bear the pain she had caused her children, and her husband by abandoning them. Edna feared that if she goes back to her family, she would hurt Robert and her children and so the only option escape from the pain she was feeling through suicide. Edna did not succeed in her plans and could no longer struggle against the social conventions. She wanted more from life and that is why she got involved with three men, and because she could not succeed in her quest, she killed herself. Robert left her a note, “ Goodbye -- Because I love you,” she could not take it anymore (Chopin 147). Edna could not stand when Robert left her, the pain she felt made her decide to end her life so as to free herself from being miserable. Edna’s suicide was an act of liberalization because, she could not identify with the society she was surrounded with. Edna had become a different woman from what the society demanded from her as a mother and wife. She was dissatisfied with the role the society had given her as a mother, and a wife and that is why she ran away from her matrimonial home (Chopin 122). The protagonist could not struggle against the society’s conventions which had initially denied her fulfillment as a woman and as a person forcing her to leave her husband, and children. Edna killed herself in order to be free from the society’s confinement as she termed it (Roscher 290).

An apparent theme in *The Awakening* is the theme of isolation. Edna is faced with the isolation consequence after she abandons her husband and children on a journey to self-actualization (Anastasopoulou 22). Chopin writes, “ She slept but a few hours. They were troubled and feverish hours, disturbed with

dreams that were intangible” (Anastasopoulou 25). Edna alienated herself from the society and what it demanded from her in pursuit for self independence, but in the end, she ended up all alone making her to commit suicide. She felt lonely and at this time, she thought of Robert who was nowhere to be found. Edna’s solitude came as a result of her search for independence when she awakens ultimately all alone after Robert left her. The solitude Edna felt forced her to end her life and escape from the loneliness and the society’s oppressions.

In conclusion, *The Awakening* is a story of freedom, independence, and will power. The story portrays a character that was seeking freedom from an oppressive society. The society kept women away from expressing themselves, and being their true self. Edna was an unhappy, mother who wanted freedom from his husband and the society. The protagonist was struggling against the societal forces that she felt were repressing her. Despite having a husband and children, the protagonist wanted more from life, and this led to her downfall ultimately. She strayed from her responsibilities as a mother and wife, and embraced her intense desire for self fulfillment which she never got in her relationships. Edna in the end committed suicide to escape from the oppressions of the Victorian society she was living in. *The Awakening* is a novel that exemplifies the attempt of American women’s escape from personal and domestic bondage and oppression from a patriarchal society.

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