

The story of an hour essay

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Reading Reflection Natasha S. King ENG 125 Introduction to Literature

Professor Demeterius Meyers October 29, 2012 I chose to reflect on Kate Chopin's, "The Story of an Hour" for this assignment.

It is about a woman finding out from her sister and friend that her husband was killed in a railroad accident. She initially appears very grief stricken and cries out in her sister's arms. Not long after she retreats alone to her bedroom.

While in her room she realizes that although she loved her husband more often than not she was unhappy. She realizes that she is happy about the fact that she will be able to live a life of happiness for herself. As she goes back out in the living room the front door opens and in walks her husband. It turns out that he was nowhere near the accident and wasn't even aware that there had been one. The wife has a heart attack and dies.

This story initially caught my eye because it started off stating how due to her heart trouble they were trying to break the news of the husband's death to as easily as possible. It pulled me in because death is an issue that I'm currently dealing with and very sensitive to. Before Mrs. Mallard went into her room by herself she appeared to be a very grief stricken woman, as any would and should be when finding out their husband has been killed in a horrible accident. Upon her going into her room I believe ambiguity set in. Our text describes ambiguity as "use of language that has more than one meaning, creating uncertainty about how to interpret what has been stated".

(Clugston, 2010 Section 1. 2) In the story it states, "She said it over and over under her breath: "free, free, free!" For a moment I was confused as to

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whether this was a good or a bad thing. As I continued reading it became clear that it was more so a good thing than a bad one. Imagination is “ the human power that shapes artistic expression; it enables a writer’s work to become an expression of meaning in our world, and allows readers to engage in identifying with what the writer’s work has to say about things that matter”.

(Clugston, 2010 Section 1. 2) Imagination was used in the story a couple times. For example the excerpt that said, “ except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams”. While reading I had to stop for a moment and think back to my time as a child and how I might have cried myself to sleep a time or two. “ Tender hands folded in death; fixed and gray and dead”, also caused me to use my imagination and think back to those I’ve seen in caskets at funerals. My imagination was used in the paragraph that detailed Josephine kneeling at the door trying to see what Mrs. Mallard was doing.

I actually took a moment and imagined a person kneeling at a door with their eye to the key hole. Lastly at the very end of the story it says, “ When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease- of joy that kills”. I imagined Mrs. Mallard spread out on the floor with her hand over her chest and mouth open. The analytical approach that I believe works with this story would have to be the formalist approach. It is the most used when reflecting on literature and focuses on form and development of the work itself. I think the setting is memorable because everyone can relate to experiencing the passing of someone close to them I believe.

When you relate to something and are easily able to identify with it, it makes it easier to reflect on it. The plot was intriguing because no one knew how Mrs. Mallard was going to react to this news and it had you on the edge of your seat, especially with her heart condition. Surprise definitely occurred in the story in two ways.

The first was Mrs. Mallard slightly being happy that her husband had been killed. I initially expected her to go in her room to weep in peace and possibly pray or have a conversation with God. Her being happy about it was the furthest thing from my mind. The second way surprise appeared was when Mr. Mallard walked through the door.

His name being on the list as one being killed, one would think this was a for sure thing. Figurative language was used to create a mood. In the excerpt where Mrs. Mallard first finds out the news it says, “ she wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister’s arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away”. This creates a somber emotional moment where I was able to visualize Mrs. Mallard weeping hysterically.

Mrs. Mallard was described as a young fair skinned woman whose face showed her strength. The story was written in third-person point of view. It was told in narrator style.

Kate Chopin's, *The Story of an Hour* was an excellent literary work that featured different literary terms. It was a great example of a formalist approach to literature and easy to reflect upon for me. The story made me think, imagine certain things, and also made me kind of put myself into the

story to read and understand easily. When one can relate to what it is they are reading it makes it all the more easier to be able to reflect and explain to someone else and I think that is a great aspect of a good story.

All in all it was a good short story . References Clugston, R. W. (2010).

Journey into literature.

San Diego, California: Bridgepoint Education, Inc.