

# Kate chopin --the story of an hour



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## An Analysis and a Reaction to Kate Chopin's The Story of an Hour

Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" explores the feelings and emotions that the main character, Mrs. Mallard, experienced upon knowing of the death of her husband and finding out that such news was not true. She went through a roller-coaster ride of emotions in the span of an hour, thus the significance of the title of the story.

Mrs. Mallard was a typical 19th - century young woman, who suffered the oppressive fate of having to bend to the will of a highly patriarchal society. She was weak-willed and most likely did whatever was expected of her by her husband such as the household chores and her marital obligations. As the text suggests, Mrs. Mallard looked at Mr. Mallard as "a powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature" (par. 13). While the news of her husband's passing caused her grief, she soon realizes that the death of her husband also offers her a newfound freedom (par. 11, 14, 15), something she has been longing to have so badly that the shock she received when she found out that her newfound freedom was actually not hers to claim because her husband escaped the accident caused her untimely death.

The story is filled with symbolisms of a new life that was supposedly waiting for Mrs. Mallard to relish. She was looking out of an open window where she could see blue patches of sky highlighted that the wonders of spring were making everything look beautiful and promising. Even the first name of Mrs. Mallard, Louise, provides an insight into how repressed she was. Her name was not mentioned until the late part of the story, signifying the loss of Mrs. Mallard's identity which was only "found" when she thought that she has

already broken away from her husband's clutches. Furthermore, Louise is simply a feminization of the name Louis, which symbolizes just how much women of her time were strongly dependent on the male members of society.

It was wise of Chopin to use the omniscient point of view because none of the characters in the story could have known the exact thoughts going through everyone's minds. The narrator could also not be Mrs. Mallard as she dies in the end of the story. In addition, the story carried with it an ironic tone as shown by passages which tells of Mrs. Mallard crying for the death of her husband when, in fact, she only loved him sometimes, and oftentimes did not (par. 14). Of course, the most ironic part of the story is when the doctors conclude that Mrs. Mallard died of a "joy that kills" (par. 22) when the reader actually knows that Mrs. Mallard died from the extreme disappointment of having her short-lived freedom taken away from her in an hour's time.

I found Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" both pleasurable and frustrating to read. Of course, reading a creative, well thought out piece is always an enjoyable experience but the ending frustrated me in the sense that the protagonist, Mrs. Mallard, was only able to relish in her happiness for a short while. My sense of frustration also lies in the fact that our society had to go through the period that Mrs. Mallard went through --- a period when women were oppressed and treated as second hand citizens. Indeed, it seemed that, as in the case of Mrs. Mallard, the women of her time were only able to enjoy a sense of freedom when they were already dead.