

# Why read the story of an hour by kate chopin (1894)



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WHY READ " THE STORY OF AN HOUR" For the story consisting of 1009 words, Kate Chopin's " The Story of an Hour" is a very illustrative literary piece. Operating within little space and time period (events last for only an hour), Kate Chopin embedded in her story a plethora of problems and controversies, both of social and individual nature. From the very beginning of her story, Kate Chopin plays mind games with her audience's expectations. The author concentrates readers' attention on Mrs. Mallard once she hears sad news about her husband's accidental death. Once the audience starts sympathizing to Mrs. Mallard, who having a weak heart, mourns the death of her husband, Kate Chopin introduces a passage, which abruptly pictures window's feelings of relief and freedom and thus this tragic event becomes confusing. Finally, in the exact moment when Mrs. Mallard finds out her allegedly dead husband is alive, she dies of a heart attack. From the critical perspective, the first impression from the story is undoubtedly confusing, however, a more careful analysis reveals that there are many reasons why this literary piece would be important and even necessary to read.

Unlike many literary works that are essential descriptive, Kate Chopin's " The Story of an Hour" teaches a modern reader to understand historical and social context of the story. This most popular piece of Chopin's short fiction was written and published in 1894, and the influence of this historical epoch on the story is evident. Chopin's women are framed and determined by the historical traditions, morals and principles. Women's lives are limited by kitchens, children, families and occasional genteel routs. " Story of an Hour" witnesses a woman dawning on the notion of freedom after she learns of her husband's death. Mrs. Mallard is awe-struck at her own feelings, as she has <https://assignbuster.com/why-read-the-story-of-an-hour-by-kate-chopin-1894/>

too lived her life according to the rules of middle-class white womanhood, but she lets the feelings flow nevertheless, and she makes plans for her new life: “ Free! Body and soul free!” (Chopin, par. 14). Chopin leaves audience with perhaps her most telling dramatic irony: the gathered community, viewing Mrs. Mallard as the pinnacle of respectable true-womanhood, decides her cause-of-death: “ joy that kills” (Chopin, par. 20). As in most of Chopin’s literature, her women who rebel from marriage are not rebelling from their husbands personally; rather, and perhaps worse, according to true-woman ideology, they rebel from the depletion of personal power and selfhood that marriage and motherhood bring. These women seem to recognize that they could be in worse situations, they could have less kind or sensitive husbands. What pushes Chopin’s white women over the brink of respectable femininity seems to be the very fact that they answer to another, that they must squelch their own desires, even those so trivial as stockings, for those of their families.

For audience who is interested in thinking outside the conventional box, Chopin’s “ Story of an Hour” helps to foster this quality. In her very first sentence, Chopin explains that Louise “ afflicted with a heart trouble” (Chopin, par. 1), must have had a spiritual condition rather than a physical one. Like many of author’s heroines and women-contemporaries, Mrs. Mallard is not a completely happy woman. As Chopin later illustrates, Mrs. Mallard “ had loved him - sometimes. Often she had not” (Chopin, par. 13). In addition, abstracting from traditional cliché-like thinking helps interested audience to observe both real and surreal world of Mrs. Mallard, so masterfully composed by Kate Chopin. The exposition of the conflict takes place downstairs while the complication takes Louise upstairs. Whether in <https://assignbuster.com/why-read-the-story-of-an-hour-by-kate-chopin-1894/>

the hallway or the reception room, the news of Brently Mallard's "death" is broken on the bottom floor, in the realm of the real, of the factual. In this setting, both the characters and the reader accept this news as "what is." The darkness of the hallway or reception room reinforces the darkness of the news. In this real world, Louise's inner conflict begins as a storm. Structurally fitting both architecturally and formally, the complication or rising action takes place in Mrs. Mallard's upstairs bedroom. In the realm of the ideal, the conflict transforms character as it escalates. Louise experiences both sensory and emotional fulfillment; there in her surreal world she now "she [can] see ... the tops of trees" (Chopin, par. 5), she sees "what if" or "what might be."

#### WORKS CITED

Chopin, Kate. The Story of An Hour. Available at  
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