

The  
chrysanthemums`s  
character analysis:  
elisa allen



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Tran, Hillary John Steinbeck, " The Chrysanthemums" Character Analysis:

Elisa Allen Elisa Allen is first portrayed as a woman who can take on any job as well as any man but in the end, becomes a woman of submissive femininity. The plot revolves around her journey of realization and conversion to femininity, which conclusively, labels her as a dynamic protagonist. She works in a garden and farms and cultivates just as well as a man and never fails to amaze her husband of her skills.

The story starts with her husband asking her to go into town for a nice dinner date night after he goes into the hills with their son to look for some steers. As her husband goes off with the son, a stranger comes along their ranch and seeks for directions, as he is lost. His wagon cover reveals that he is a repairman for scissors, pans, and all other sorts of tools. He strikes a conversation and seems to be extremely interested in Elisa.

However, there is slight tension within their conversation because it is obvious that he is looking for work to feed himself for the night, but she does not want to give in to his marketing scheme. He advertises that he can make any old tool or pan look brand new and it will be of an advantage to Ms. Allen; it is not until he asks for her chrysanthemums as a gift to an old lady friend down the road that Elisa begin to loosen up. Flattered by his praise to her planting work and feeling as if she should owe him something, Elisa digs out some old aluminum stove pots for him to fix.

As he is repairing them, she asks him about life on the road and shows that she would love to live like a man despite his comments that it is dangerous for a woman to live like him. She pays him fifty cents and jokes that he might be coming along some new competition on the road because she too, can  
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ring out the dents of any pots and sharpen scissors better than anyone else out there. They say their farewells and Elisa begins to get ready for dinner. She showers and glams up herself for night and her husband compliments her from looking “ nice” to looking “ strong”.

She questions when he first says nice because she would rather look strong, as she prefers to be portrayed. This marks her transition from a masculine woman to a woman of femininity. Later, as they ride into town, Elisa asks her husband about the entertainment fights, that do women participate and go watch as well. He answers yes they do and asks if she would like to go although he knows she probably will not enjoy it. She replies no and turns up her collar to weep silently “ like an old woman”.

Her weeping symbolizes the end of her transition from a masculine dominant woman to a submissive female. Her transition seems to come from society rejection of the idea that woman are just as good as males. The society of Steinbeck’s story portrays women as not being able to take care of themselves - that they need a man to protect and do hard work for them. Ms. Allen knows that she can do work just as well as a man but she is continuously stricken down and discouraged by the comments from her husband and the repairman.

She feels that even though she has the skills to prove, she will never be seen as equal to a man because of her gender. She may be a strong woman, but she is not strong enough to rise against society. She can well prove herself to the world that woman can be just like men by riding around in a wagon by herself or participating in a fight, but her chances of proving herself are slimmer than her chances of being taunted and picked on by other males.

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This realization, is the motor behind her stepping down from an independent female to a submissive old woman.