

Cultural context



This paper will compare and contrast the significance of the Edna Pontellier's suicide in *The Awakening* with Ben Thomas' in *Seven Pounds*. In *Seven Pounds* the film begins with a 911 report of an imminent suicide (Muccino, 2008). This shows that from the outset, Ben's ultimate mission is to take away his life as restitution for the seven people that were killed due to his reckless driving – driving while texting. Ben's suicide is therefore premeditated, planned and purposefully executed. On the other hand, in *The Awakening*, the narrative does not explicitly explain Edna's suicide. The reader is left to make the judgment on whether her suicide is an act of selfless love or if it is just another act of selfishness. Nevertheless, both suicides have some semblance. Both Ben and Edna are driven majorly by acts of selfishness. It could be argued that Edna is driven to kill herself because she discovers that no one else dares to join in her overt defiance towards the day's cultural expectations on women. Robert, for instance is able to restrain himself despite his profound love for her, while she openly mocks him over his apprehensions on adultery (Chopin, 2011). Edna feels too superior to acquiesce to societal norms or what is real. On the other hand, though it could be argued that Ben's suicide has got little to do with society's expectations on him, his selfishness and superiority complex is as evident in his quest as much as Edna's. Ben never personally selected his victims yet he assigns himself the role of selecting those whom he thinks deserves to benefit from his suicide. Inasmuch as we may opt to champion for certain causes in the world, we must also acknowledge our limitations. It is our duty to seek to involve others in our quests so that the merits and demerits of our intentions may be laid out and clarity sought. Even though many historical icons stood out because of their persistence to a different

way of thinking, they always sought to include others in their causes. It is for this reason that I neither empathize with Ben Thomas nor Edna Pontellier.

References Chopin, K. (2011). *The Awakening*. SoHo Books. Muccino, G. (2008). *Seven Pounds*. Drama, Columbia Pictures.