

# A view of death and women

Literature



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When Mrs. Mallard learns about her husband's death from the news, her initial reactions are not the same as other women who lose their husbands. Others would have cried out loud unceasingly but Mrs. Mallard just "wept at once, with sudden abandonment, in her sister's arms." This reaction may not be fully suggestive of the theme but it could lead someone to distinguish her reaction from people who lost their loved one in real life. With her heart problem that came about in the end, Mrs. Mallard should have fainted upon hearing the news. However, the news about her husband's death did not really affect her negatively, thus she just cried out loud. At the end of the story, the truth about Mr. Mallard's luck makes her faint and die, thus showing the real reactions towards the incident that happens.

Mrs. Mallard's thoughts confirm her feelings about the death of her husband. They also illustrate the theme better. Alone in her room, she keeps on whispering to herself, "Free body and soul, free!" Thoughts about freedom illustrate how she welcomes the recent news about her husband. Likewise, they demonstrate the view that not all bereaved women are saddened by their husband's death. In particular, it is made clear that Mrs. Mallard embraces the freedom that she thinks she could have after the burial of her husband. She feels ecstatic in thinking about her freedom. Although the author does not indicate how Mr. Mallard has treated his wife, it is clear that the protagonist wants to be free from her obligations as a wife. Mrs. Mallard's need to be free could lead readers to investigate further about her reason for wanting her freedom badly. It also leads to the idea that Mr. Mallard, despite the love he has shown his wife, has been an obligation. Such an idea further implies the unequal treatment that women in the time of Chopin suffered from. In the end, Mrs. Mallard's submission to death

illustrates the serious need of the character to gain her personal freedom. The death of her husband makes her free from the traditions of patriarchy. “ There would be no 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” (644). This statement confirms the patriarchy that women suffered from at the time of the author.

The descriptions for Mrs. Mallard’s environment further elucidate the secret happiness that she feels regarding her husband’s death. The “ comfortable, roomy armchair” (645), the “ delicious breath of rain” (645), and “ the countless sparrows twittering in the eaves” (645) contribute to illustrate the joy that Mrs. Mallard feels upon realization of her fate. The condition of her environment actually seems all positive because of the positive feeling that the protagonists feel. However, all this disappears at once when she sees her husband. The sudden death of Mrs. Mallard connotes the desperate want for freedom, which she realizes she could not have.

Overall, the uncommon behavior of the main character towards the possible death of her husband suggests the desperate need to be free. As such, Mrs. Mallard may be considered as a round character whose personality is not easy to decipher. The submission to death at the end also suggests the roundness of her character, for she is capable of doing things that are non-stereotypical. Her fate also strongly emphasizes the need of the woman to be free, leaving the readers to see the importance of freedom and the joy that it brings to a long-suppressed heart.