

Analysis

Experience, Meaning of Life



Analysis Chopin titled this piece "The Story of an Hour" because the reader gets a very brief glimpse into the last hour of Mrs. Mallard's life. When the doctors conclude that Mrs. Mallard has died of heart disease, they are correct. However, in this instance of dramatic irony, the other characters believe she has died because she is so overjoyed that her husband is alive, while the reader knows that in truth she has died because she had a glimpse of freedom and could not go back to living under her husband's will again. In a sense, even though Mrs. Mallard has died, her death can be seen as a release from the overpowering will of her husband. Her death, however, has also been seen as an indicator she could never be free from patriarchal oppression. Even if her husband had died she still would have been subjected to oppressive male domination of the time, thus her death reinforces the idea that her soul could never truly be free. Chopin contrasts the budding spring of the world outside of Mrs. Mallard's home with the complacency inside of it. Upon hearing the news of her husband's (supposed) death, Mrs. Mallard retreats upstairs, sinks into a chair, and thinks her own thoughts for the first time. "The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves." The window itself can be seen to take on a different perspective in the story. It is a window into a different realm, free of constraints, where new life is budding everywhere. As such, it contrasts strongly with Mrs. Mallard's judgment of her own life, as something that, up until now, has been restricted and limited. Along with her witty use of diction and syntax, Chopin creates a sense of desperation from the

beginning that death is the only means to an absolution, whether it is the death of a person (Mrs. or Mr. Mallard) or the death of a concept (marriage).