

The awakening conclusion narrative essay



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The Awakening By: Jordan E-mail: emailprotected Analytical Essay THE AWAKENING Throughout Kate Chopin's, *The Awakening*, numerous scenes of birth and renewal are depicted. Various symbols placed throughout the book show Edna Pontellier's awakenings. For instance, many references are made to oceans and water. It is in the water that Edna has her first rebirth, but it is also the place where she chooses to die. Water symbolizes life, which is the reason that Edna's renewal takes place there, but it also symbolizes darkness and death. Birds, which are featured frequently in the story, symbolize Edna, and in many cases they foreshadow what's to become of her, or they show her renewal of life. The imagery of birds throughout the book is used to symbolize freedom, which is exactly what Edna was trying to achieve from her husband, children, and all the other people that antagonized her. Edna has struggled all summer to learn to swim. She has been coached by the men, women, and children on Grand Isle. Swimming provides Edna with strength and joy, and yet makes her feel just like a child. But that night she was like the little tottering, stumbling, clutching child, who of a sudden realizes its powers, and walks for the first time alone, boldly and with overconfidence. She could have shouted for joy. She did shout for joy, as with a sweeping stroke or two she lifted her body to the surface of the water (47). This passage marks Edna's rebirth, or renewal. Here she is described just like a child learning to walk, as she swims for her first time alone. This scene also foreshadows the ending, for here, in the ocean, is where Edna's first rebirth occurs, and in this same place she will take her life. Birds are also major symbolic images in the story. Flight, which is associated with birds, acts as a stand-in for awakening. The ability to spread your wings and fly is a symbolic theme that occurs often in the novel. Mademoiselle Reisz

tells Edna “ the bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings (138). She uses birds to forecast Edna’s future and evaluate Edna’s strength. In order to soar like a bird, Edna must be strong, but Mademoiselle Reisz realizes that Edna is weak. Reisz says, “ it is a sad spectacle to see the weaklings bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth” (138). Mademoiselle Reisz understands that Edna is not like herself and cannot fight society. Later, when Edna realizes the hopelessness of her situation, birds, once again, symbolically foreshadow her fate. Upon reaching the beach on her final walk, Edna looks around and sees: “ A bird with a broken wing was beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water” (189). This bird is the final omen that reflects Mademoiselle Reisz’s words: “ it is sad to see the weaklings bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth” (138). The bird, disabled and weakened because of its broken wing, falls back to earth and suffers defeat. Edna soon does the same when she kills herself because she does not have “ the courageous soul that dares and defies” (106). This bird also symbolizes Edna’s final failure. It is a “ weakling” according to Mademoiselle Reisz because it lacks strong wings that a bird must have in order to “ soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice” (138). In the same way, Edna lacks the strength to overcome tradition. Therefore, she, too, is a “ weakling” and a failure. Edna is awakened in this death scene because she finally realizes that she cant overcome societys expectations of her. Thus, Edna felt, killing herself was the only way to escape what was demanded of her. Throughout the book, Edna is merely expected to run the house, care for the children and do her best to please her husband, Leonce Pontellier, not unlike a bird in a cage. Nevertheless, she finds the role unbearable. She cannot give her life,

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her identity, to others. Edna is willing to live her life for herself and only herself. By committing suicide, Edna escapes from the clutches of her husband and children. Therefore, Edna's death is considered a spiritual defeat. She realized she could not last in a world where she had to live up to society's expectations of simply being a responsible mother and wife. Just as the injured bird fell to the ground, Edna fell because she lacked the strength to overcome all the obstacles in her way.