

The awakening, the story of an hour and desiree's baby

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The Awakening: The novel was titled “ The Awakening,” because the main character Edna Pontellier goes through a series of liberations that cause her to “ awaken” or become aware of her
The Story of an Hour: The title refers to the actual duration of the story. All the events that take place in the story can happen in the time frame of an hour.
Desiree’s Baby: The title refers to one of the main characters, Armand Aubigny, not claiming his child after finding out that the child as of different race; therefore giving all ownership of the baby to the mother, Desiree.

Author & Purpose

Kate Chopin was born Katherine O’Flaherty on February 8, 1850, in St. Louis, Missouri to Thomas and Eliza O’Flaherty. Kate was one of five children and the only one to live past the age of twenty two. Her father was killed in a railroad accident when she was five years old. Kate didn’t grow up with many male role models or around many married couples; she was raised by her mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, vigorous widows that stressed learning, curiosity, and financial independence.

Kate’s great-great-grandmother was the first woman to legally separate from her husband and continue on with a successful fulfilling life in the city of St. Louis.

Kate was formally educated at the Academy of Sacred Heart, catholic school in St. Louis. Two years after graduating Kate married Oscar Chopin, the son of a wealthy cotton planter from Louisiana. Kate gave birth to five boys and one girl all before the age of twenty-eight. When Oscar died in 1882 Kate

took over her late husband's plantation and store for over a year before selling it and moving back in with her mother. Kate began to write to support herself and her kids.

Her novel "The Awakening" was very controversial, and in the end it denied her admission into the St. Louis Fine Art Club. Chopin was very hurt by the reaction to the book, so for the remainder five years of her life she only wrote short stories. Kate Chopin died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of fifty-three.

The purpose of her novels and short stories were to entertain and call attention to the male dominance and woman submission during this timeframe, while expressing her beliefs on the strength of women.

Setting

The Awakening: The beginning of the novel is set during the late 1800's at a summer vacation resort in Grand Isle filled with New Orleans wealthy. The rest of the novel is set in New Orleans. Being set in the 1800's is significant because they story wouldn't make since if it was set in a time where divorce was possible, or independence was supported. **The Story of an Hour:** The short story is takes place inside the home of Louise Mallard. This is significant to the story because the setting reflects Ms. Mallard being trapped and/or caged in her life. **Desiree's Baby:** The short is set in Louisiana before the civil war.

Most Memorable Characters & Motivations

Edna Pontellier: Edna is a respectable wife and mother and the protagonist of the novel. Her motivation was to break free of the confinement's society while trying to find her identity. Louise Mallard: Louise is the fragile wife of the supposedly deceased Brently Mallard. Her husband is "dead." Armand Aubigny: Armand is the father of the baby and Desiree's husband. At the time of the novel society was still prejudice against blacks, so his motivation in the story is to protect his pride and his family's name by casting away his wife and son because they are not fully white.

Plot Summary

The Story of an Hour

In the exposition Kate Chopin tells us that Louise Mallard has a heart condition. This is why Josephine, her sister, has to gently tell her that her husband has died. The deceased Mr. Mallard's friend, Richard, is there in home with them. He originally found out the news while being in the newspaper office when report of the train accident came through.

In the rising action Louise cries passionately in the arms of her sister before deciding to go to her room to be alone. In her room she sits in her armchair feeling depleted facing the window noticing everything and everyone that passes. She sits there quiet except for when she occasionally cries like a child. As she sits there she feels some sort of unknown intelligence coming to her.

The climax consists of Louise feeling a sense of freedom and liking it. She feels more liberated and excited for her freedom than she feels sad about

her husband's death. As her sister pleads at her door telling her to let her in, Louise is fantasizes about her possible new life.

In the falling action the liberated Louise finally joins her sister outside of her room and they descend down the stairs together with Richard waiting at the bottom. Suddenly, Mr. Mallard walks through the door travel-stained and unknowing of any accident. Richard and Josephine try to protect Mrs. Mallard from the sight of her husband but fail.

The resolution of the story consists of the medical examiner saying that she died of heart failure due to being overjoyed.

Desiree's Baby

In the Exposition Madame Valmonde drives over to see Desiree and her baby for the first time in a month, she remembers when Desiree herself was a baby. Her husband had found Desiree sleeping next to a pillar as he rode through the gateway of the Valmonde home in southern Louisiana eighteen years before. No one knew where she came from or who put her there, but it was believed that a group of Texans purposely left her there. The Valmonde's adopted her and loved her as if she were their flesh. Armand Aubigny had known her since he was eight, when his father brought him to America from Paris after his mother died. When Desiree was fully grown Armand one day saw her and instantly fell in love, and they were married despite her unknown background. When Madame arrives she is surprised at how much the child has grown in four weeks, and Desiree tells her how much Armand has changed. She says that Armand is so proud to be a father that

he stopped frowning as much and hasn't punished the slaves once since the baby was born.

His happiness makes Desiree feel ecstatic. The rising action consists of Desiree feeling uneasiness and people who see the baby getting a sense that something is unusual about it. Armand starts to avoid Desiree and the baby while in the home and he even starts to stray away for long periods without giving an excuse to Desiree. Desiree dared not to ask for an explanation. The climax consists of Desiree sitting on her bed one hot afternoon, and noticing that her sleeping child and the quadroon boy fanning him are the same color. She dismisses the boy and asks Armand who arrives a short while later what it means. He tells her that it means that she and the baby are not white.

In the falling action Desiree writes a letter to Madame telling her of what's going on and asking her to tell them that it's untrue. Madame replies to the letter, but neither confirms nor denies Desiree being white. She simply tells her to return home with her baby. Desiree shows the letter to the scornful Armand and asks him whether he wants her to go and he insists on her going. Desiree immediately takes her baby from the nurse and proceeds to walk into the fields, without changing her clothes, to never be seen again. In the resolution Armand is burning all of Desiree's and the baby's belongings including a drawer full of letters she sent him during before they were married. In the same drawer he finds a letter from his mother to his father revealing that Armand is black.

The Awakening

The novel is set with Leonce Pontellier, a businessman, and Edna Pontellier, a respected wife and mother, vacationing in Grand Isle, a summer vacation resort popular to the wealthy of New Orleans. Leonce is busy handling everything business-related, leaving Edna to spend time with the liberal Creole people. Especially Adele Ratignolle, the perfect Victorian mother and wife. The more time she spends with these people the more she starts to learn about freedom of expression and coming aware of her non-existent feelings for her husband, starting her “awakening”. During this time Edna innocently starts to get to know Robert Lebrun. During the rising action Edna falls in love with Robert Lebrun and learns how to swim which sparks her awareness of her sexuality and her independence, including hearing Mademoiselle Reisz. Leonce remains to be dominating and is oblivious to the fact that Edna is in love with someone else. Robert feeling that he and Edna’s relationship is getting out of control he retreats to Mexico. In New Orleans Edna spends her time painting instead of housekeeping, and stops making the usual social calls on Tuesdays. Leonce believing that his wife is becoming mentally ill insists help from Doctor Mandelet.

Mandelet tells Leonce to let her do as she pleases assuming that this phase would pass, but not mentioning it to Leonce, he suspects that she is having an affair. In the climax Mademoiselle Reisz letting Edna read the letters from Robert and knowing of Edna’s plans to move out, tells her basically that if she is going to be independent that she needs to be ready for the consequences that come with them. Edna moves out of her extravagant home with Leonce and moves into a house around the block nicknamed the “pigeon-hole.” Edna has an affair with the town seducer Alcee Arobin, who

finally satisfies her sexually. Afterwards she doesn't feel bad that she just committed adultery, but is uneasy about having sex with someone other than her love Robert. In the falling action Robert professes his love to Edna, unknowing that she has read his letters.

Robert mentions marriage, only to be rejected by Edna. She tells him that she isn't property to be transferred from one man to another. However, they're still in love with each other. Edna asks Robert to wait while she runs off to help deliver her friend's baby, but when she returns, Robert is gone. In the resolution Edna recedes to Grand Isle claiming that she needs to rest. When she arrives in Grand Isle she makes plans to have dinner with Adele and her husband Victor, and proceeds to go skinny dipping. While in the water she thinks of all her triumphs and tribulations as well as her freedom. She swims far out into the ocean and drowns. The book ends with a question of whether or not she committed suicide.

Themes

The Awakening: In "The Awakening" as well as in "The Story of an Hour" marriage is a barrier to happiness and individual fulfillment with the female main characters. All Edna Pontellier in "The Awakening" wanted was to have freedom and independence just like her husband had. The Story of an Hour: Time is one of the many themes in this short story. I think Kate Chopin wanted to show us that even an hour can change our lives. Louise Mallard found out that her husband died and cried about it, she felt liberated that she finally had freedom from her marriage, and then she found out that her husband was alive and then she died. All of this happened in the short

timeframe of an hour. Desiree's baby: Real love is colorblind is one of the underlying themes within this passage. Armand no longer loved Desiree because he felt that her race was an injury to his name. While on the other hand, Desiree tells her mother of what's been going, and her mother still accepts her and tells her to return home with her baby. Real love is colorblind.

Symbols

The Awakening: The birds in the story represent the entrapment of Edna as well as the entrapment of all Victorian women. The parrot and the mockingbird at the beginning of the story represent Edna and Mademoiselle Reisz. The caged parrot shrieks at Mr. Mallard which gives a voice to Edna's unspoken feelings, and shows her imprisonment. The narrator tells that the mocking bird is the only one who can understand the parrot's Spanish. This would have to be Mademoiselle Reisz because she is the only one capable of understanding Edna. **The Story of an Hour:** The open window represents all things that are possible now that her husband is dead. Everything that she sees in the distance through the window hints that her new life will be bright and clear. When she turns away from the window she loses her freedom and those possibilities. **Desiree's Baby:** The October sunset mentioned in line 127 represents the ending of Desiree's and Armand's marriage.

Meaningful Quotes

The Awakening: page 184 paragraph 3- " The years that are gone seem like dreams—if one might go on sleeping and dreaming—but to wake up and find —oh! well! Perhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer, rather

than to remain a dupe to illusions all one's life." The quotation means that it is better to live life for you, rather than following someone else's expectations and standards. The Story of an Hour: paragraph 4- 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. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination The quote means that past ties and expectations, stripped of " a kind intention or a cruel intention" are revealed as shackles that have been tying her down.

Even the love can keep someone feeling imprisoned. Desiree's Baby: paragraph 37 -Because of the injury she had caused him, he no longer loves her. Now it is her time to suffer, he thinks, and well she should The " injury" Armand is referring to, is Desiree supposedly being black and it defacing his family name. He no longer loves her because of her race and thinks that she should be punished for " lying" to him. It is meaningful because it shows just how much racism was apparent back in the 1800's, to the point where you would give up your whole family because being black was looked down upon.

Rhetorical Analysis

All three of the stories were written in third person omniscient point of view which gave them a sense of gravity. Not being written in first person, allowed the stories to seem serious and somber. Uses of words such as immense and empathic in " The Awakening" make the style of writing formal and exact. Chopin gives lots of details in order to emphasize an event or an object's importance, and she quickly summarizes the insignificant details so

we don't waste time thinking about it. "Desiree's baby" is informal and ironic. All of the sentences are filled with numerous details to emphasize and provide imagery. The tone of "The Story of an Hour" is subtle yet cruel, because Ms. Mallard was believed to be vulnerable and sad and in reality she was ecstatic that her husband died. The style was ironic and withholding because the narrator and the reader know the feelings Ms. Mallard has about her husband's death. She couldn't have died from joy so the real cause of death is unknown.

All of the stories portrayed a theme of male dominance and female submission. In "the Awakening" Leonce tried to dominate Edna in the beginning, and her friend Adele was the perfect example of a submissive wife. In "The Story of an Hour" from what we are told it seemed as if Brently Mallard was a dominating husband and Louise Mallard was a submissive wife. All she talked about in the story was freedom. In "Desiree's Baby" Armand was a dominating husband and Desiree was the submissive wife. Kate Chopin's message is that women deserve independence and freedom and are the property of no one.

Change one Detail

The Awakening: I would change the fact that Mademoiselle Reisz let Edna read the letters. I would like to see if she would still have the same emotions for Robert if she didn't know for a fact that he loved her. Would she fall in love with Alcee? The Story of an Hour: I would change the fact that Josephine and Richard let her go to her room alone. I wonder if they were sitting in the room with her would that change her liberation in any way. Desiree's Baby: I

would change the fact that Armand let Desiree and the baby go. I wonder what would have happened if he said he wanted the baby to stay but Desiree had to go.

Reader Response

My opinion is that all three books were entertaining and had a great message to them. Kate Chopin is a great writer whose stories capture the essence of a marriage in the 1800's beautifully. Her use of details let you visualize every event in her writing. There isn't anything that I don't like about her stories except for endings that kept you wondering.