

Sea as a major symbol in the awakening

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



Throughout the novel, *The Awakening*, the protagonist, Edna Pontellier, has a revival in which she desires for her freedom and individuality. Kate Chopin uses the sea to symbolize this in Edna within the Victorian society, where it's viewed as wrong for a woman to express herself outside of the traditional gender role. Unfortunately, Edna had to come to a realization for the limitations in her life.

The sea aided Edna for the discovery of her desires and freedom within her female role as a mother and wife. She was able to emerge through a state of spiritual awareness within the sea in which the body of water represented freedom, self discovery, and escape.

Prior to the story, through the literature's perspective, a body of water was commonly used in order to express hardships and life. Edna struggled to fit into the patriarchal society in which she rebelled to the social norms. Danger and beauty was the first outlook of the ocean. Early in the story's development, it was stated that The voice of the sea speaks to her soul, which stimulated her senses. Edna Pontellier was able to become more self aware of herself as well as more aware of her desires. Her dreadful fear of the ocean later became a more senseful outlook for her. Edna constructed a new divergent perspective of the sea and the compelling force in her life. As Edna's relationship with the ocean becomes more intimate, Edna later becomes more hungry for discovering her inner feelings within the sea. The sea was a big benefactor to Edna's transformation from a girl who obeyed all social norms, to a rebelling girl who followed what she thought was right which ultimately broke all the gender norms.

The sea was also used to show the fine line between the sea and Edna's independence. While it was physically difficult for Edna to go out into the ocean, her mental state held her back even more. When she was finally able to swim out and come to a realization of how deep she went, she was able to take full control of her body. Her sudden terror of how far out she was, showed that without the sea's help, she may have not been able to venture out and go out as far. From the text, "...A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength, her body was able to experience the full capability of moving freely (Chopin 36). It was very clear that when she was able to learn how to swim and venture out, she also took her first step out to independence.

The sea also represented solitude and escape in the end for Edna. When she was no longer able to survive through her duty of mother and wife in the victorian society, death was brought upon as the only aspect of her life that she was able to take complete control over. The ocean in the end was her final escape from society. She was able to escape her reality within the ocean in where she looked beyond pain and suffering. In the beginning of the story, the readers were told that Edna was struggling to reconcile her relationship with Robert, herself, and Mr. Pontellier. Edna's infatuation implicated much pain onto her. She ended with, She did not look back now, but went on and on, thinking of the bluegrass meadow that she had traversed when a little child, believing that it had no beginning and no end (Chopin 351). Her suicide through the sea was more than just to show her

breaking point, but it was indeed her stepping stone to which she held onto her values till the day she died.

To conclude, Edna emerged through a state of spiritual awareness through the sea. Kate Chopin used the sea in order to convey the deeper meaning on the effect of Edna in the victorian society. While Edna struggled to fit into the patriarchal society, through the rebellion of social norms, as mother and wife, the sea helped uncover the power of upbringing. It allowed her to uncover her independence and self desires through self discovery as well as her escape through suicide. By breaking traditional roles, Edna was able to take control of her future. She is an inspiration and by breaking social and gender norms, it had an effect on the whole story line. Edna was never able to find the happy side of being mother and wife and staying in the social norms but through the sea, she was able to pursue her infatuation with Robert and staying true to herself.