

Main character in kate chopin's the awakening

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



Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* is about Edna Pontellier, a younger married woman who begins a journey of self discovery. The novella is coated with the theme of freedom and the consequences it brings. Set in the 1800s, *The Awakening* takes place in both New Orleans and Grand Isle, where the Pontellier family lives and vacations respectively.

While vacationing one summer, Edna Pontellier falls for Robert Lebrun. Robert is a young man who picks a woman every summer to devote himself to. *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin uses vivid characterization of Edna, foreshadowing, and a metaphor to explore her theme of freedom and its consequences. Thru Chopin's use of very vivid character details, you are able to understand Edna's want for freedom, though initially suppressed. As an article called *The Awakening* put it, Edna does not fit in with the Grand Isle crowd. She is the only person at the hotel who is not a Creole, and she is embarrassed by the Creole society's openness on subjects such as sex and childbirth (*The Awakening*).

The article speaks of early in the book, when Edna is still reluctant to reveal her true wants and desires. This detail in her character is the main one throughout *The Awakening* that is explored, that of her expanding openness to new or suppressed ideas, leading to her discovery of freedom and the strings attached to said freedom. The same article also explained that The more Léonce chastises Edna for her shortcomings, the more resentful she becomes until she finally dismisses his complaints altogether (*The Awakening*).

Edna only develops this trait later on in the book, after Grand Isle.

Essentially, she becomes so unsuppressed in how she acts, that she comes off as blunt and will outright ignore the things that she does not like to hear because she is free to do so. Edna starts off as the previously mentioned shy type, but over time develops into the open and blunt person of later in the book. In her metamorphosis however, Edna falls victim to the allure of infinite freedom, but fails to see the consequences of that. Critic Suzanne Green said that Edna, while initially drawn to the ocean, but physically unable to go, is finally pulled in by the tragically same allure of the same ocean on Grand Isle and ultimately dies as a result (Green).

Edna sees only the ocean and the freedom from mortal toil that it brings, and sees not the pain and consequences that such freedom would bring her. In a quote by John Glendining, he states, Pontellier does not yet understand that she has awakened to a radically new sense of herself, albeit an incomplete one, and thus has jettisoned many of the respectable ideas and behaviors, no longer compatible, she once uncritically accepted (Glendining).

Glendining hopes to show that Edna is fully intent on this new persona that she has created out of the husk of her old self. A new person that is intent on freedom at any cost, even costs that may hurt her family or loved ones, the beginning of which is seen at the first Grand Isle trip with Robert but does not fully take form until later. In addition to her use of vivid details about characters, and her use of subtle foreshadowing, Chopin also uses metaphors, specifically one, to help convey her theme. The specific metaphor is one spoken by Mademoiselle Reisz about a bird. The metaphor

is, The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings. It is a sad spectacle to see the weakling bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth (Chopin 138).

This metaphor is particularly important, as a sequel to this metaphor is said by Chopin at the end of the book when Edna kills herself, it shows that if one wishes to overcome the societal standards then one must have tenacity and desire to break said standards. As previously stated, an epilogue is provided to this metaphor in the quote, A bird with a broken wing was beating the 3 air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water (Chopin 188).

This callback to the previous incarnation of this metaphor shows what the original was referencing, Edna as the bird that failed at struggling. Finally, the overarching theme of *The Awakening* is that of freedom and its subsequent consequences, the consequences that ultimately were Edna cutting ties and committing suicide at the place that she so loved and first awakened at. Freedom is something that is longed for, Edna did her best to suppress this sensation but ends up allowing it to run rampant. Peter Ramos stated in a criticism that he wrote, Edna's refusal finally to dedicate herself to an identity or creatively transform one for herself is a particular failure, one that ends in suicide. (Ramos).

Because of Edna's new, destructive attitude, she inadvertently hurts herself while she believes she is helping herself gain freedom and independence. Telgen and Hile, once again, stated in their article that, Edna wants to be liberated, but she also needs love and appreciation. She desires the freedom

to make her own choices and to determine her own direction. Unfortunately, she finds that society not just her marriage is too restrictive to allow her to do these things. Her new-found freedom is short lived. (The Awakening). Edna is shown not only as being self-destructive, but also shown as being self-destructive for only a short time before the freedom that she so desired consumed her and caused her to take her life.