

# Example of literature review on the chrysanthemums by john steinbeck a summary

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This paper summarizes the short story “ The Chrysanthemums” (Steinbeck, 1938). Set on a foggy winter’s day in the Salinas Valley, it is focused on a small ranch belonging to Henry and Elisa Allen. Steinbeck’s narrative paints a picture of the general scene, then homes in on Elisa working on her chrysanthemum plants while watching Henry nearby talking to two men in suits. After they leave Henry tells Elisa he’s sold some steers, and proposes that after he’s rounded up his cattle the two of them should celebrate by going out to dinner that evening.

While Henry’s gone, a tinker arrives, soliciting work. Elisa says she has none, but when he professes interest in her chrysanthemums she relents and gives him pans to repair, then some chrysanthemum cuttings for one of his customers, telling him in considerable detail how they should be cultivated.

On another level, frustrated with her menial farm existence with her somewhat insensitive and patronizing husband, Elisa seems to envy the freedom of the tinker’s life, sleeping under the stars, and shows an involuntary, almost sexual attraction towards him.

After the tinker has gone on his way, Elisa bathes and dresses in her best clothes. Henry sees something different about her – not just her best clothes, but also that she looked “ different, strong and happy”. Elisa was clearly deeply affected by her encounter with the tinker, but says nothing to Henry. Then, when Henry’s car follows the tinker’s route towards town, Elisa sees that he has casually discarded the chrysanthemum cuttings, but kept the pot they were in. Overcome with emotion she begins to cry, hiding her tears from her husband.

## **Works Cited**

Steinbeck, John. *The Chrysanthemums*. (1938). 17 May, 2012.