

# Kate chopin and the awakening

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What features make *The Awakening* a "local color" story? The amount of detail that is spent on the area and is significant. Every time a character that is colored is introduced, limited time is spent describing the character. Local color is what defines an area, town or people. "*The Awakening*" touches deeply on all of the local color of the area it is describing. What customs and beliefs of Edna Pontellier's society are significant in relation to her psychological development? To be a good person in Edna's society meant being a mother figure who completely surrenders her sense of self in favor of her husband and children.

Edna is trying to become a human being the best way she knows how. Edna refuses to take the mother road. Instead, she seeks her humanity. What attitudes and tendencies in the Creole characters does Edna have trouble adjusting to? Creole society is very open when it comes to sexuality, and Edna has trouble with that. She was not brought up in the Creole society, so she has trouble accepting it. Examples can be seen when they pass around the novel that has explicit sexual content while on vacation. It can also be seen in Robert's behavior.

He is very openly flirtatious with Edna, and he has the reputation of being a flirt in the past with other women. Why did Edna marry Leonce? Is he the model husband? She married him because she didn't want her father to choose her husband. She wanted the freedom of being able to choose herself. "Was he the best choice?" Probably not for Edna but it was who she chose. What incidents in the novel reveal that he may not be a good husband for Edna? As a traditional Creole gentleman of the times, Leonce

believes it is his duty to provide financially for the family and it is Edna's duty to be devoted to him, their two children, and their home.

When Edna suggests she is not interested in these domestic duties, Leonce is incapable of comprehending what she means. In his mind, this line of thinking is utterly ridiculous. Against that backdrop, Leonce's inability to communicate effectively with his wife expands the problem. When Edna shares her feelings with Leonce, he dismisses them. When her behavior contradicts his expectations, he dismisses them. By dismissing Edna and her concerns and never communicating with her about them, Leonce severs any ties that exist between the two. How do Mlle. Reisz and Mme.

Ratignolle function in relation to Edna and the novel's view of women as mothers and artists? Mme. Ratignolle shows the society's view of women as mothers. Her advice to Edna is to "remember the children." Ratignolle is loving and nurturing, but devoid of independence or personality. Mlle. Reisz, though, is living her life as she desires, not caring what society thinks of her. She is able to be extravagant and lavish, fully embracing her artistic capabilities because she does not have other obligations. She denies society's structure, and encourages Edna to do the same.

This free lifestyle is what Edna comes to desire and seek for herself. What kind of mother is Edna? What kind of artist is she? Painting evokes the passion that Edna lacks in her life. There are suggestions that Edna's art is somehow flawed. Madame Reisz cautions Edna about what it takes to be an artist, the "courageous soul" and the "stronged wings." Edna also loves her children, however she would not give herself to her children but rather

sacrifice herself for them. She realizes that she has lives in a society filled with limitations, therefore sees her only way out by freeing herself permanently from society.

How are the background characters such as the young lovers and the lady in black at the shore, significant in Edna's story? These minor characters all serve to contrast with Edna and her struggles with her own identity and place in society. The young lovers are a stark contrast to the marriage of Edna and Leonce, at least as Edna perceives her marriage. The young lovers are described as walking shoulder to shoulder, suggesting they are equals and connected. Edna does not feel this with Leonce. The lady in black is likely an old widow who is now living out the end of her life in the expected way.

She wears the color of mourning and serves as a visible picture of what the last phase of what life is like in this society. In detail, explain how the flashbacks to Edna's past function. How does her father compare to the other men in her life? In the first one, Edna is talking to Robert and recalls a "summer day in Kentucky, of a meadow that seemed as big as the ocean." This memory reveals to us that Edna's interest in running away and being engulfed by something larger than herself has its manifestations in her childhood and is not something that she is just starting to consider as an unhappy wife and mother in Creole New Orleans.

As the chapter progresses we learn that Edna had some "loves" in her past, but that they were more of her imagination than any possibility of reality. "With all of this flashback information, it comes as no surprise then that when

Leonce woos her, even though she doesn't love him. Leonce is everything her father isn't, and that is part of his appeal. Edna even openly admits that the fact that Leonce is Catholic and that that would irritate her father is one of the reasons she agreed to marry him. This flashback gives us a very complete picture of Edna's history in regards to men and establishes the foundations of her marriage to Leonce.

This has a great effect on the reading of the novel. It makes Edna's character more complex and more interesting. How does the view of romantic love develop in the course of the novel? What is the doctor's view of marriage and childbearing? The genuine affection that develops between Edna Pontellier and Robert Lebrun is a form of romantic love. They shared their thoughts on a range of subjects that might appear uninteresting to others. As their friendship grew, they become more comfortable with one another. Robert rests his head on Mrs. Pontellier because it is comfortable.

His goal is not to be forward or flirtatious. Robert's romantic feelings for Edna increase as this intimacy grows. Robert leaves for Mexico very soon afterwards. He hopes to escape his feelings because he realizes that he has fallen in love with Edna. His love developed naturally over time. His feelings morphed from a close friendship into emotional intimacy/understanding and then into love. Can you think of an emotional attachment and/or a romantic obsession you have studied in a previous work? How does that incident or character compare with Edna's emotional and romantic relationships?

In a book I recently read, the main character's wife has a small dilemma. She loves the man she is married to but rejects him at the same time. The reason

she rejects him is because she was chosen as his wife and she did not get to choose him. Its a bit more complicated than this but this is a basic summary. This compares to Edna because she doesn't want a husband to choose her. She wants to choose the husband. She picks a man based on how he woos her nicely. This causes the ultimate problem that she ends up not loving her husband. The similarity is in the differences.

Both took a different path to get to the same area. The end result was the same though. The women in the book I read, ran away. Edna committed suicide in order to run away. What are the main images and symbols in the novel? One of the main themes is the Sea. At the very end of the novel, Edna drowns herself. The irony of the scene is that Edna has learned how to swim, so here she is certainly exhibiting an act of agency by swimming far out into the water that used to scare her. Now, she is not scared and as she swims she recalls all the troubles and misunderstandings of her life.

Her drowning symbolically represents her freeing herself from what she felt was a life of restriction. Here in the water, she experiences that which her life did not allow. The novel starts with the symbol of a caged bird, and references birds in several other chapters as well. The caged bird is a clear symbol for Edna as she feels caged in her roles of wife and mother and in the expectations that the Creole society has imposed on her. Later in the novel Reisz questions whether Edna has strong enough wings to fly above the social conventions of the time to be truly free of the rules and norms of the day.

In the end, Edna sees a bird with a broken wing, just as she is not strong enough (or willing enough) to struggle on this society. Why does Edna get involved with Alcee Arobin? Alcee Arobin follows Edna around and spends a great deal of time with her while Mr. Pontellier is not home. At first it is just friendship, Edna takes no real interest in Alcee because her love lies with Robert. She has secretly always hoped for Robert, but Alcee is conveniently there. Sick of her old life, Edna simply takes up Alcee as a lover for the companionship. In a sense, she lives out her relationship-fantasy of Robert with Alcee.

Why do you suppose critics were outraged at this novel in 1899, saying it committed "unutterable crimes against polite society" and should be labeled "poison" to protect "moral babes"? The story showed a woman reaching the ultimate low because of rules society laid out. She killed herself because she felt that everything constricted her too much. I think that the reason they called it so horrible is because it showed the darker side to the norms of society. It also showed how oppressed women really were. What is your reaction to the end of the novel? Do you agree or disagree with the reasons for Edna's final action?

I agree with her final action because I think too much damage had already been done. If she had gone back and told her husband she wanted a divorce, I think he would have brushed it away. She had a person who would have loved her and treated her like an equal. He saw that he had fallen in love with her and left to Mexico. The best opportunity for her to get what she needed stepped out the door right then. The story also hints that she has always run

away from her problems and not looked at them straight on. This means that all her problems have been building up over her life. I don't think that amount of damage is reversable.