

# Free essay about symbolism in kate chopins the story of an hour

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In “The Story of an Hour,” Kate Chopin strongly employs symbolism throughout the story to intensify the drama. The symbols fit the subject matter of the story perfectly. The short story contains several symbols that make the readers feel a sense of comfort, wellness, and wonderfulness in their mind, somewhat the same feelings that overcome Mrs. Mallard when she learns of the “news of her husband's death.” The symbols in the short story embody Mrs. Mallard's sense of freedom from the moment she murmurs “free” to herself and intensify the story's twist ending.

The very first symbol in Chopin's short story is the armchair that Mrs. Mallard sinks into after she hears about her husband's death and secludes herself from everyone going away to her room. The arm chair is described as “comfortable” and “roomy.” The fact that Chopin writes that Mrs. Mallard is physically exhausted and the fact that she sinks into it, the armchair is a symbol of freedom from the expectations of society and respite from the oppressive life she was living. The location of the armchair is also important since it is facing an open window, which itself is another symbol in the story. Nonetheless, the fact that Mrs. Mallard sits in an armchair that faces an open window is a symbol of the fact that Mrs. Mallard has escaped her oppressive life and is now open to change. The fact that the chair is described as “comfortable” and “roomy” and the fact that Mrs. Mallard “sinks” may also make the readers feel as if the armchair is embracing Mrs. Mallard, as if she feels love and warmth by sinking into it.

The open window through which Mrs. Mallard gazes throughout much of the story is another symbol in Chopin's story. It symbolizes the freedom and opportunities that Mrs. Mallard can avail since her husband is dead. Mrs.

Mallard sees the blue sky, the clouds, and the tops of trees. She hears the cries of a peddler who is demanding attention to the wares he is selling, the singing of a faint song, and the twittering of countless sparrows. She even smells the scent of rain in the air. All of this that Mrs. Mallard experiences through her sense symbolizes new life, the sense of joy that has ignited her senses. She feels the first hints of this great happiness when she gazes at the sky. Once she really delves into this excitement, she feels as if all this life and liveliness is being provided by the open window itself. Not only is a bright and clear view provided by the open window into the distance, but also into Mrs. Mallard's own future, which she expects to be bright since it would no longer be obstructed by her husband's demands. Therefore, considering how strong this symbol is, it is not surprising that Mrs. Mallard literally loses her freedom when she turns away from the open window. Although the "heart disease" that takes Mrs. Mallard's life is a physical malady, it is also a symbol that reflects her contradictory and mixed feelings toward her marriage, and unhappiness she felt due to her lack of freedom. The first thing that readers learn as they begin reading Chopin's short story is that "Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble," and the readers are informed that this is the reason that news of her husband's death must be announced "as gently as possible." After all, such shocking news can be threatening to the well being of a person who has a weak heart. Upon learning of her newfound independence, it causes her heart to race and blood to course through her veins. At the end of the story, when it is diagnosed that she died of "heart disease" it seems relevant, considering that the initial news had not shocked her as much as finding her husband

alive before her. Also, considering the joy she was experiencing after learning of his death, seeing him alive was surely a shock enough to cause her weak heart to cease from beating, thus, killing her. In other words, she was literally heartbroken to see her husband alive since it meant that she had lost her freedom once again, and that feeling killed her.

Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" is a short story, but the symbols such as the ones above make up for the brief length of the tale. While no room is available in a short story for background information, the feelings of Mrs. Mallard are effectively conveyed to the reader through these appropriate, relevant and well thought out symbols.

## References

Chopin, Kate. "The Story of An Hour." Virginia Commonwealth University. Virginia Commonwealth University, n. d. Web. 23 Oct 2013. .