

Irony in story of an hour



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Irony in the "Story of an Hour" By Kate Choplin

The Story of an Hour by Kate Choplin is about an older woman who struggles with coercion brought about by her husband and her surreptitious yearning for freedom. Mrs. Mallard does not truly know how miserable she was until she finds out that her husband has died in a terrible train accident. Kate Choplin writes this story in a limited, third person point of view; however, it is still quite exciting with how it was structured.

Choplin expresses her theme of oppression with her extensive use of situational irony and symbolism throughout the story. In The Story of an Hour, Kate Choplin makes much use of situational irony and symbolism, this helps add to the drama and excitement of the short story, especially since she wrote it as a limited, third person narrative. Choplin starts the story out by mentioning that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with heart complications and that an immense amount of care needs to be taken to break this heart wrenching news of her husband's horrible death with ease.

Josephine, Mrs. Mallard's sister, and Richards, her husband's friend, broke the news to her in broken sentences to try and soften the blow. Josephine and Richards thought that this would really hurt Mrs. Mallard, but she did not take it as most people would have. Louise immediately started to cry, but suddenly stormed off into her room, alone, she wanted no one to follow. The irony in this first part of the story stands in her heart troubles.

The heart, in a traditional sense, represents one's emotional core, the irony stands in that, her heart problems are a symbol for her emotional conflicts in her marriage. The irony in the mentioning of her heart problems is also that, the heart of a family and a marriage lies in that the

relationship between man and woman is the essential groundwork of a family. Mrs. Mallard's heart tribulations coincide with the peril in which the late nineteenth century institution of marriage finds itself on account of the inequalities between man and wife. Louise is ironic in and of herself.

Chopin uses her and her failing heart to represent the women during the late 1800's who were not able to find happiness in marriage, not because it could not be found, but because of the extremely limited amount of freedom they were allotted. Chopin writes, " There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul. She could see in the open square before her house the tops of the trees that were all a quiver with the new spring life.

The delicious breath of rain was in the air... there were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window," (Paragraph 4 & 5). Chopin uses this as irony in that being able to see the square before her house and the tops of the trees that were " a quiver" with new spring life, in that her heart, too, is " a quiver" with a new life and new hope. It is not that Mrs. Mallard did not love Brently, it is that she did not have any freedom.

Just as the spring represents new beginnings, new life and renewal of hope, the death of her husband represents the same. She can now do things she never imagined of doing because her husband dictated her life. "...a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky," (Paragraph 8), this seems to be representing the light at the end of the tunnel, per say, for Mrs. Mallard, and this goes along with

the new life that comes with spring. Choplin uses much symbolism throughout the story. When Mrs.

Mallard finds out that her husband died, she ran upstairs to her room and "... she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul" (Paragraph 4), the armchair symbolizes the rest from her oppressive life and the freedom from societal expectations that women from this time period were burdened with. Another situation in which Choplin uses irony in the story, which is the most important aspect, is Brently walking in the door. When Louise sees her husband who is supposed to be dead, she is beyond overwhelmed and drops dead. The doctors' say that Mrs.

Mallard died from being overjoyed in finding out that her husband was actually alive, when in fact she died from being heartbroken. The hopes of her new life of being a free woman were over, she could not live her life out how she dreamed and this is what killed her. Ultimately, Kate Choplin uses an extensive amount of situational irony and a lot of symbolism in her short story, *The Story of an Hour* to really bring in some excitement into it and express her feelings towards feminism in the late 19th century. Much of the irony depicted in this short story is used in the fact that Mrs.

Mallard has a weak heart. Her sister and Brently's friend never thought that Louise would be able to withstand hearing about her husband's tragic death; they thought that her poor heart would give out. This, however, is clearly not the case. Louise is overjoyed; she was finally, " free, free, free! "(Paragraph 10). The ironic part is when she finds out her husband is still alive, she drops dead and the doctors claim that, "...she had died of heart disease—of the joy

that kills,” (paragraph 20) when in fact she died for the completely opposite reason.

Her days would no longer be hers. This new beginning was gone. Outline I. Introduction a. Thesis: Choplin expresses her theme of oppression with her extensive use of situational irony and symbolism throughout the story. II. Body Paragraph I a. Irony in Mrs. Mallard having a bad heart b. Mrs. Mallard finds out Brently died III. Body Paragraph II. a. Irony in the way that the weather is and the season IV. Body Paragraph III a. Mrs. Mallard finds out Brently is still alive b. Irony in why Mrs. Mallard dies V. Conclusion a. Restate thesis