

# Analysis of the novel "the awakening" by kate chopin

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## **“ The Awakening”**

A tale of a rich women’s plight for freedom away from a life that she feels hasn’t been fully lived. The novel was written by Kate Chopin, an American author from St. Louis, Missouri. Kate Chopin wrote many short stories, novels and one play. Though the story that brought her most fame but also controversy was the story of her character Edna Pontellier in “ The Awakening”. Even now, to this day, critics have studied and analyzed her story. From these seven critics, I am going to read and summarize their points and ideas that they had concerning Kate Chopin’s tale “ The Awakening” and Edna Pontellier’s fate.

In Peter Ramos critique title “ Unbearable realism: freedom, ethics and identity in The Awakening”, the author states that they are challenging the idea of two well-known critical readings. Those interpretations were identified as one stating that Edna Pontellier’s death and actions in the end was a mythical triumph of self for Edna Pontellier against an oppressive patriarchy. The other reading states that Edna Pontellier’s end was a tragic conclusion for the main character, that was bound to happen, who was fighting to live as a mother but also as a free, separate person. Ramos states that their paper argues that the actions of Edna reveal how dangerous it is to remove oneself from the social roles of society by destructive means and they question the value of realism and naturalism as representation. Ramos also states that Chopin’s novella complicates realism by having a character that has a certain amount of power over their lives. It misrepresents realism’s idea of the empirical.

Ramos compares Kate Chopin's "The Awakening" ending to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" last lines about the effects of gender equality or lack of equality in such an era and how they negatively affected the women. Many critics of the time found Edna's end as fate and cosmic justice. Though other critics, like Robert Treu, believe that Edna's last swim does not lead to her planned or accidental suicide. The emphasis on how the patriarch can be domineering is present in both narratives and the leading women are of a certain notability and privilege. Both stories also highlight the fact that both women who look up to fellow women who focus their time as traditional wives and mother in their respective societies leading them to an even deeper feeling of isolation and restrictive roles.