

A Lifelong Search for Freedom
An Analysis of Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"

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English1020-R51

3 April 2024

Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" captures the emotional and roller coaster journey of Mrs. Louise Mallard's transformation internally upon hearing news of her husband's death. This narrative not only dives into the complex emotions that are tied to freedom and one's self-discovery but uses realistic imagery and symbolism to question the ways of society of the 19th century, focusing on women and their roles in marriage. This essay shoots to grasp a better understanding of the story's main themes, the use of imagery, and the symbolic significance that plays are pivotal part in making Chopin's insights more accessible.

The core of Chopin's tale revolves around the major them of freedom and its importance. When Mrs. Mallard learns the news of her husband's death, she deep down feels a strong feeling of relief, and a surge of happiness alongside the sorrow that also is active. "She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will- as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been." (paragraph 8) These emotions are not thrown at us to make us think down or poorly on her; but rather Chopin wants us to be aware of her desire of independence that has been suppressed. The story is a true testimony to prompt readers to consider how the expectations in society today and the personal relationships present today can act as barriers to one's true self-expression and freedom. "She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breathe of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves." (paragraph 5)

Chopin uses skills that employ imagery to increase the emotional depth that is taken place in the story. The window in Mrs. Mallard's room, through which is observed as a life outside, but serves as a pivotal symbol. It contrasts the somber mood that takes place indoors with the world is always moving and in motion outside. Mrs. Mallard's personal awakening of the future of her self and the possibilities of her terms begin here. "There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow creature." (paragraph 12) The details of springtime beyond the window are not just about the season, they symbolize a new start, a renewal, a beginning of a new chapter in Mrs. Mallard's life, it is filled with more opportunities than ever and freedom. "But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought. (paragraph 6)

A noticeable pivotal moment in the story is Mrs. Mallard's quiet realization of "Free! Body and soul free"! This notes the peak of her emotional journey, she begins to acknowledge her new purpose in her life. "She said it over and over under her breath: 'free, free, free!' The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body." (paragraph 10) Chopin plays around this complex road of freedom with self-care. Showing us that while Mrs. Mallard pushes for liberty to live a life in which she pleases..., the true reality of grasping in such amount is a problematic and uncertain reality.

However, the narrative takes a wild and unexpected turn with the out of nowhere reappearance of Mr. Mallard, alive but unaware of the chaos and turmoil that he has caused. This moment is an eye open in the illusion sense that Mrs. Mallard had practiced in the past. This shows her true fragility of nature of her own reality and aspirations within her societal role. Chopin notes at the end that “the joy that kills” is the true story of tragedy, particularly in this story and in a woman’s independence and happiness.

In conclusion, “The story of an Hour” to this day is a pivotal story and example of governing marriage and the women’s roles in the late 19th century were a lot different than today. “She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.” (paragraph 14) Through the character of Mrs. Mallard, Chopin explores the circus show of emotions and the multiple realizations that enter her mind on her own quest for freedom. The vivid imagery and symbolism throughout the story not only bring internal struggles to life behind the scenes but serve mainly as the protagonist’s question to the broader societal expectations that define and often confine individuals. Chopin’s narrative is a question of having a middle ground in personal desires and the actual desires that are apart of societal norms today. With the relevancy of the story still today, it shows that these lessons resonate with many people the the longing of freedom and free from any constraints that society might have on one’s self on a daily basis. Through a more thorough and basic examination of its themes, imagery, and symbolism, Chopin’s master work of art still to this day; serves as an accessible and motivating story to invite

readers to reflect their own desires and ask yourself how you will navigate within the societal norms that take place today.

Chopin, Kate. "The Story of an Hour", Story ebook text. Genius.com

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