

Core English 314

American Literature

UNIT 4

02. 'The Story of an Hour'

-By *Kate Chopin*

01. About the Author:

△ ***Born: 8 February 1850, St. Louis, Missouri, United States,***

△ ***Died: 22 August 1904 (age 54 years), St. Louis, Missouri, United States.***

△ **Kate Chopin *Katherine O'Flaherty;* was an *American author of short stories and novels based in Louisiana.***

△ **She is considered by scholars to have been *_a forerunner of American 20th-century feminist authors of Southern or Catholic background, such as Zelda Fitzgerald_,* and she is one of the more frequently read and recognized writers of Louisiana Creole heritage. She is *best known today for her 1899 novel 'The Awakening'.***

△ ***She married and moved with her husband to New Orleans.* They later lived in the country in *Cloutierville, Louisiana.***

△ **From *1892 to 1895,* Chopin wrote *short stories for both children and adults* that were published in national magazines, including *The Atlantic Monthly, Vogue, The Century Magazine, and The Youth's Companion.***

△ **Her stories *aroused controversy because of her subjects and her approach; they were condemned as immoral by some critics.***

△ **Her *major works were two short story collections and two novels.***

△ ***Within a decade of her death, Chopin was widely recognized as one of the leading writers of her time.***

△ In ***1915, Fred Lewis Pattee wrote “some of [Chopin’s] work is equal to the best that has been produced in France or even in America.***

△ ***Her Most Famous Works:***

Chopin published two collections of short stories during her ***life: A Night in Acadie in 1897 and Bayou Folk in 1894.***

Her two most famous short stories, “***The Story of an Hour”** and “***Desirée’s Baby,***” are excellent examples of Chopin’s feminist ideals.

△ ***Kate Chopin, who was born in 1850, did not win any awards in her lifetime.***

”_The voice of the sea speaks to the soul”_.

- Kate Chopin, The Awakening

****02. About the Story:****

△ “The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin is about ***Louise Mallard, a woman in a traditional Victorian marriage, who receives the news that her husband was killed in an accident. After her grief subsides, she begins to see opportunity and freedom in her future.***

△ The Story of an Hour” is a ***short story written by Kate Chopin on April 19, 1894.***

△ It was ***originally published in Vogue on December 6, 1894, as “The Dream of an Hour”.***

△ It was ***later reprinted in St. Louis Life on January 5, 1895, as “The Story of an Hour”.***

△ The title of the short story refers to **the* time elapsed between the moments at which the protagonist, Louise Mallard, hears that her husband, Brently Mallard, is dead, and then discovers that he is alive after all.***

△ ***Featuring a female protagonist who feels liberation at the news of her husband's death*** , “The Story of an Hour” was ***controversial by American standards in the 1890s.***

△ In ***1984, director _Tina Rathbone_ released a film adaptation of the story titled ‘The Joy That Kills’.***

****03. Characters:****

*(1) Louise Mallard:*

A woman whose husband is reportedly killed in a train accident. When Louise hears the news, she is secretly happy because she is now free. She is filled with a new lust for life, and although she usually loves her husband, she cherishes her newfound independence even more. She has a heart attack when her husband, alive after all, comes home.

*(2) Brently Mallard:*

Louise's husband, supposedly killed in a train accident. Although Louise remembers Brently as a kind and loving man, merely being married to him also made him an oppressive factor in her life. Brently arrives home unaware that there had been a train accident.

_(3) Josephine:*

Louise's sister. Josephine informs Louise about Brently's death.

(4) Richards:

Brently's friend. Richards learns about the train accident and Brently's death at the newspaper office, and he is there when Josephine tells the news to Louise.

04. Setting:

The story takes place in a house and specifically in the bedroom with a window to the world. The limited space of the house is like the cage in which Louise feels she is living. The room is where her thoughts can come forth in privacy, like the privacy of her own mind.

05. Theme:

The main theme is the importance of the independence of women and having a voice in their own world.

This sort of independence went contrary to societal norms during the Victorian Era, in which this story takes place.

06. Dialogues:

(1) * *”When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease — of joy that kills.”* _ *

- Louise Mallard

(2) * *”She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister’s arms.”* _ *

- Narrator

(3) * *”She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength.”* _ *

- Narrator

(4) * *”And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.”* _ *

- Narrator

07. Critical Appreciation:

Louise Mallard has heart trouble, so she must be informed carefully about her husband’s death. Her sister, Josephine, tells her the news. Louise’s husband’s friend, Richards, learned about a railroad disaster when he was in the newspaper office and

saw Louise's husband, Brently, on the list of those killed. Louise begins sobbing when Josephine tells her of Brently's death and goes upstairs to be alone in her room.

Louise sits down and looks out an open window. She sees trees, smells approaching rain, and hears a peddler yelling out what he's selling. She hears someone singing as well as the sounds of sparrows, and there are fluffy white clouds in the sky. She is young, with lines around her eyes. Still crying, she gazes into the distance. She feels apprehensive and tries to suppress the building emotions within her, but can't. She begins repeating the word Free! to herself over and over again. Her heart beats quickly, and she feels very warm.

Louise knows she'll cry again when she sees Brently's corpse. His hands were tender, and he always looked at her lovingly. But then she imagines the years ahead, which belong only to her now, and spreads her arms out joyfully with anticipation. She will be free, on her own without anyone to oppress her. She thinks that all women and men oppress one another even if they do it out of kindness. Louise knows that she often felt love for Brently but tells herself that none of that matters anymore. She feels ecstatic with her newfound sense of independence.

Josephine comes to her door, begging Louise to come out, warning her that she'll get sick if she doesn't. Louise tells her to go away. She fantasizes about all the days and years ahead and hopes that she lives a long life. Then she opens the door, and she and Josephine start walking down the stairs, where Richards is waiting.

The front door unexpectedly opens, and Brently comes in. He hadn't been in the train accident or even aware that one had happened. Josephine screams, and Richards tries unsuccessfully to block Louise from seeing him. Doctors arrive and pronounce that Louise died of a heart attack brought on by happiness.

****08. Conclusion:****

Consequently, the ending of the story is double-sided.

But readers can infer that ***Louise Mallard died of the grief of a freedom she never had, then found, then lost once more.*** Readers can interpret Louise's death as her experience of true grief in the story—that for her ideal life, briefly realized then snatched away.

##△##