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English 102

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## **The Story of an Hour**

### **Introduction**

The story of an Hour is a short story which was written by Kate Chopin in the year 1894. The story revolves around four characters Brently Mallard, Louise, Josephine, and Richards. As the title suggests the events in the story happen in a short time frame. The story portrays a turnover of event as Louise is informed that Mallard was involved in a train accident and that the accident had claimed his which was not true, Louise believed what the news was true and Mallard was gone, when Brently returns home Louise succumbs to her long time illness of heart complications.

### **Characters**

The story has four characters that have different kinds of relationships; Mallard who was allegedly involved in a train accident is married to Louise because the start sentence refers to Louise as Mrs. Mallard. Louise is the most interesting character in the story as the whole events in the story evolve from the beginning to the end. Richards can be referred to as the minor character in the whole story as he only works with Brently and he is the one who came with the information of Millard been involved in a train accident. Josephine is an important character, she the sister to Louise, in the story as she acts like a bridge between Brently and Louise. She seems to know her sister in a better way and knows what the challenges she has been going through.

## **Symbolism**

One of the symbols of this story is heart troubles. Traditionally the heart is a symbol of personal emotions core. In the first sentence of the story, the writer describes that Mrs. Mallard was struggling with heart complications. Louise's heart problems symbolize her emotional ups and downs. The heart controls physical function and it's the core of emotions too, first, the news of Brently's death is a big threat to the heart condition to Louise both physically and emotionally. When Louise goes and locks her in the room alone and her starts reflecting on how her journey to independence the heart is used as a symbol of freedom.

At the end of the story. Louise dies from a heart problem upon seen Brently back and she knew that he was dead. Furthermore, her emotional heart problems transit to the marriage challenges she has been facing being married to Mr. Mallard. It's evident when she is informed that his husband has lost his life in a train accident as she goes to the room and gets to a self-realization point where she feels relieved after the death of Brently. The open window is also used as a symbol in the story where Louise as she's staring through the window she can see the sky and she can hear people and birds singing which gives her a sense of joy and hope for a new life. Louise sees a bright future through the window as she will be no longer living under anyone's demands.

## **Themes**

The Story of an Hour has two main themes; the first one is the theme of the happiness of independence. When Louise is informed by Josephine and Richards that Brently is deceased she shows her grief and sadness on the sudden news, but when she walks into the room and locks herself up she goes through a manifestation of how independent she could be and this sparks joy and happiness in her. From the story, it seems Louise did have space to enjoy her own life and make her personal decisions; the death of Brently was the beginning of a new journey to a different life full of freedom. At the end of the story when Brentley Mallard returns, the moment Louise had dreamt of is quickly taken away again before she even starts to enjoy it.

Oppressive marriage is another theme portrayed in the story. In the story, we see Louise fully admitting that Brently who is her husband is very kind and also loving but on the contrary when she is informed that her husband has died she goes through a phase of joy and happiness in her heart and thoughts. Despite the love between Louise and Brently, Louise feels like she has rested a heavy load from her shoulders when her husband is pronounced dead. Although Louise doesn't state any specific form of oppression Brently had on her, this gives a narrative that marriages are generally stifled. Marriage Oppressiveness is evident in the story as Louise yearns for her independence.

### **Irony**

The writer Kate Chopin uses situational irony in her story in how Louise reacts to the news of her husband's death, for a moment she wept and showed her disappointment at the news and she goes to her room to be alone and to mourn the moment like any normal human being will do on losing a loved one. But when she gets in the room things change, she suddenly starts having a sense of joy and she feels emotionally and physically free. She utters the word free repeatedly showing how she was excited to have freedom having been in an oppressive marriage. Louise

feels like a captive who has been released and she is optimistic to start a new chapter of life under no one's rules. The irony is well manifested when Louise is happy with her husband's death when she should be mourning.

There is dramatic irony in the story when Josephine who is Louise's sister is calling Mrs. Mallard when she had locked herself in the room telling her to open the door so that she can see her because she felt that Louise was making herself ill. It's ironic how Josephine is thinking that her sister is in pain and she mourning her husband's loss whereas Louise was having a good time imagining how happy and independent she will be in her new phase of life. Moreover, dramatic irony is used by the writer when Louise walks out to the door and sees her husband, the audience expects her to be happy but on the contrary, Louise gets a heart attack due to excitement as it is written and when the doctors came in and examined her they said her death was as a result of heart disease caused by joy, but in reality, the shock of Louise seen Brently back caused her heart attack because the dreams she had of freedom were shut down immediately his husband came back.

### **Conclusion**

The Story of an Hour relates to real life situation like the aspect of oppression in marriage, how people want to make their own choices in life and be free. The story further portrays the roller coaster of emotions in a human being, one moment you are celebrating then the next minute your dreams and hopes are shattered.

### **Works Cited**

Chopin, Kate. "The Story of an Hour."