

The Story of an Hour Critical Analysis Essay

Introduction

The Story of an Hour was written by Kate Chopin in 1894. It describes a woman, Mrs. Mallard, who lost her husband in an accident, but later the truth came out, and the husband was alive. This essay will discuss *The Story of an Hour* with emphasis on the plot and development of the protagonist, Mrs. Mallard, who goes through contrasting emotions and feelings that finally kill her on meeting her husband at the door, yet he had been said to be dead.

The Story of an Hour Summary

Kate Chopin narrated the story of a woman named Mrs. Mallard who had a heart health problem. One day the husband was mistaken to have died in an accident that occurred. Due to her heart condition, her sister had to take care while breaking the bad news to her. She was afraid that such news of her husband's death would cost her a heart attack. She strategized on how to break the news to her sister bit by bit, which worked perfectly well. Mrs. Mallard did not react as expected; instead, she started weeping just once.

She did not hear the story as many women have had the same with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms (Woodlief 2).

Mrs. Mallard wondered how she would survive without a husband. She went to one room and locked herself alone to ponder what the death of her husband brought to her life. She was sorrowful that her husband had died, like it is human to be sad at such times. This is someone very close to her, but only in a short span of time was no more. This sudden death shocked her. Her sister Josephine and friends Mr. Richard and Louise are also sorry for the loss (Taibah 1).

As she was in that room alone, she thought genuinely about the future. Unexpectedly, she meditated on her life without her husband. Apart from sorrow, she started counting the better part of her life without her husband. She saw many opportunities and freedom to do what she wanted with her life. She believed that the coming years would be perfect for her as she only had herself to worry about. She even prayed that life would be long.

After some time, she opened the door for Josephine, her sister, who had a joyous face. They went down the stairs of the house, and Mr. Mallard appeared as he opened the gate. Mr. Mallard had not been involved in the accident and could not understand why Josephine was crying. At the sight of her husband, Mr. Mallard, his wife, Mrs. Mallard, collapsed to death. The doctors said that she died because of heart disease.

The Story of an Hour Analysis

Mrs. Mallard was known to have a heart problem. Richard, who is Mr. Mallard's friend, was the one who learned of Mr. Mallard's death while in the office and about the railroad accident that killed him. They are with Josephine, Mrs. Mallard's sister, as she breaks the news concerning the sudden death of her husband. The imagery clearly describes the situation.

The writer brought out the suspense in the way he described how the news was to be broken to a person with a heart problem. There is a conflict that then follows in Mrs. Mallard's response which becomes more complicated. The death saddens Mrs. Mallard, but, on the other hand, she counts beyond the bitter moments and sees freedom laid down for her for the rest of her life. The description of the room and the environment symbolize a desire for freedom.

This story mostly focuses on this woman and a marriage institution. Sad and happy moments alternate in the protagonist, Mrs. Mallard. She is initially sad about the loss of her husband, then in a moment, ponders on the effects of his death and regains strength.

Within a short period, she is shocked by the sight of her husband being alive and even goes to the extreme of destroying her life. She then dies of a heart attack, whereas she was supposed to be happy to see her husband alive. This is an excellent contrast of events, but it makes the story very interesting.

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 breath of rain was in the air. In the street below, a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song that someone was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves. 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 (Woodlief 1).

Therefore, an open window is symbolic. It represents new opportunities and possibilities that she now had in her hands without anyone to stop her, and she refers to it as a new spring of life.

She knew that she was not in a position to bring her husband back to life.

Her feelings were mixed up. Deep inside her, she felt that she had been freed from living for another person.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her... She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death, the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead (Sparknotes 1).

The author captured a marriage institution that was dominated by a man. This man, Mr. Mallard, did not treat his wife as she would like (the wife) at all times, only sometimes. This clearly showed that she was peaceful even if her husband was dead. Only some sorrow because of the loss of his life but not of living without him. It seemed that she never felt the love for her husband.

And yet she had loved him sometimes. Often, she had not. What did it matter! What could love the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this procession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being! (Woodlief 1).

How could a wife be peaceful at the death of her husband? Though people thought that she treasured her husband, Mr. Mallard, so much and was afraid that she would be stressed, she did not see much of the bitterness like she found her freedom. This reveals how women are oppressed in silence but never exposed due to other factors such as wealth, money, and probably outfits.

As much as wealth is essential, the characters Mr. and Mrs. Mallard despise the inner being. Their hearts were crying amid a physical smile: "Free! Body and soul free!" ...Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window" (Woodlief 1).

In this excerpt, Mrs. Mallard knows what she is doing and believes that she is not harming herself. Instead, she knew that though the husband was important to her, marriage had made her a subject to him. This was not in a positive manner but was against her will. It seems she had done many things against her will, against herself, but to please her husband.

Mrs. Mallard's character is therefore developed throughout this story in a short time and reveals many values that made her what she was. She is a woman with a big desire for freedom that was deprived by a man in marriage. She is very emotional because after seeing her freedom denied for the second time by her husband, who was mistaken to have died, she collapses and dies. The contrast is when the writer says, "She had died of heart disease...of the joy that kills" (Woodlief 1)

Conclusion

Mrs. Mallard was not able to handle the swings in her emotions, and this cost her life. Mr. Mallard was left probably mourning for his wife, whom he never treasured. He took her for granted and had to face the consequences. Oppressing a wife or another person causes a more significant loss to the oppressor. It is quite ironic that Mr. Mallard never knew that his presence killed his wife.

Works Cited

1. Sparknotes. The Story of an Hour. Sparknotes, 2011. Web.
2. Taibah. The Story of an Hour. Taibah English Forum, 2011. Web.
3. Woodlief. [The story of an hour](#). VCU, 2011. Web.