

THE MULHERN STORY LIBRARY — SALON READING GUIDE

# The Story of an Hour

Kate Chopin · American Realism / Feminist · first published 1894

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AUTHOR	Kate Chopin
PUBLISHED	1894
ERA	American Realism / Feminist
THEMES	Freedom, Marriage, Irony
READER PATHWAY	College seminar / adult discussion

## INTRODUCTION FOR THOUGHTFUL READERS

Told her husband has died in a train accident, Louise Mallard retreats to her room and, to her own surprise, feels a dawning sense of freedom. When her husband walks in alive an hour later, the shock kills her.

## HISTORICAL & LITERARY CONTEXT

First published as 'The Dream of an Hour' in *Vogue* in 1894, Chopin's compressed masterpiece interrogates the constraints of nineteenth-century marriage. It is a cornerstone of feminist literary study and the irony of the final line.

## DISCUSSION FOCUS

Situational and verbal irony, the compressed time frame, symbolism (the open window, spring), and feminist theme. A concise text ideal for close reading of marriage, freedom, and the shock of self-recognition.

## SALON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does Chopin make liberation feel both morally troubling and psychologically undeniable?
- What is the significance of the open window as sensory image, symbol, and structure?

## READ & RESEARCH

1. Full text at Wikisource — [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Story\\_of\\_an\\_Hour](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Story_of_an_Hour)
2. The Awakening, and Selected Short Stories at Project Gutenberg — <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/160>