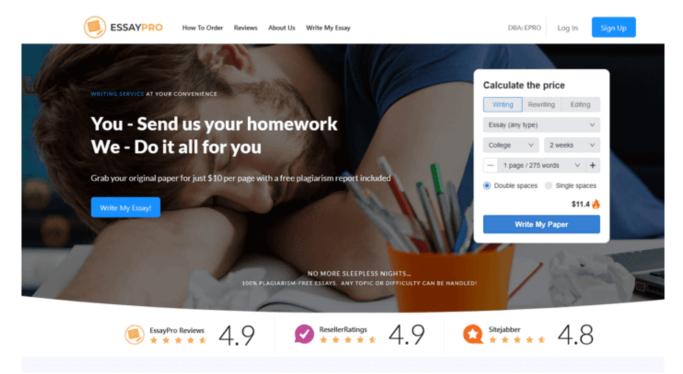
Kate Chopin's The Awakening



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In Kate Chopin's novel The Awakening, written approximately one hundred years ago, the protagonist Edna Pontellier's fate is resolved when she 'deliberately swims out to her death in the gulf'(Public Opinion, np). Her own suicide is indeed considered as a small, almost nonexistent victory by many, nevertheless there are those who consider her death anything but insignificant. Taking into consideration that 'her inability to articulate her feelings and analyze her situation [unattainable happiness] results in her act of suicide...'(Muirhead, np) portrays Edna as being incapable of achieving a release from her restricted womanhood as imposed by society. Others state that the final scene of the novel entirely symbolizes and realizes Edna's victory on a 'society that sees their [women's] primary value in their biological functions as wives and mothers?(Kate Chopin, np).

In short, The Awakening is the tragic story of a woman who in a summer of her twenty-eighth year, found herself and struggled to do what she wanted to do; be happy. Although ?from wanting to, she did, with disastrous consequences?(Recent Novels 96). For those who wanted it to be a truly, and ironically, life achieving instead of life ending end, it was. But those who disagreed with Chopin?s choice ending found themselves losing

some sleep over another magnificent author gone wrong (96). Various readers and reviewers alike found the ending to be sold short and unsatisfactory since it did not deliver the promise of a rewarding happy life to the protagonist who so valiantly endured her obstacles throughout the novel.

Had she lived by Prof. William James? advice to do one thing a day one does not want to do [in <u>Creole</u> Society, two would perhaps be better], flirted less and looked after her children more, or even assisted at more accouchements- her chef d?auvre in self denial-we need not have been put to the unpleasantness of reading about her and the temptations she trumped up for herself. (96)

Irony plays an inexplicable and majestic part in the conclusion of The Awakening. One can say with confidence that in a story a protagonist, or heroin in this case, is expected to fulfill a happily ever after ending not only from a repetitious guarantee but from the incisive determination by such character, whom through hardships, earned it. Edna Pontellier...

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