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Dr. Pennington

English 305, Proposal

8 October, 2018

Feminist Literary and Gender Criticism Theory Assignment Proposal

“The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin

<https://archive.vcu.edu/english/engweb/webtexts/hour/>

**Overview**

“The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin is a thousand word short story that takes you through the hour of freedom that ultimately leads to the death of Mrs. Mallard. In this story, readers are introduced to two different Mrs. Mallards -- the married Mrs. Mallard and the widowed Mrs. Mallard. These two women contrasted but represented versions of women that were completely acceptable within the terms of married and widowed. “The Story of an Hour” takes us through multiple definitions of what it is to be a woman throughout its one thousand words. What it means to be a woman changes with status. A single woman, a married woman, a widowed woman all alter the definition and freedoms of what it is to be a woman. I believe that this is a strong thesis because it is broad enough that I can find supports on different levels, whether it be about marriage or widows, but also concrete enough that it is obvious what the paper will be about.

**Outline**

Also you need to provide a detailed outline of the intellectual development of your argument. In this outline I want you to use *topic sentences* to define the main idea of each section--you also need to state how your topic sentence relates to your overall thesis.

**Comment [1]:** Great working thesis! I know you were planning on using single, married, and widowed but then decided single wasn't really addressed. Edit your thesis to reflect that.

**Comment [2]:** Agreed! It is a concrete idea that is broad enough to be explored. Maybe try to condense it to one sentence to make it a little stronger/more direct?

I. Introduction

A. Thesis Statement : “The Story of an Hour” takes us through multiple definitions of what it is to be a woman throughout its one thousand words. What it means to be a woman changes with status. A single woman, a married woman, a widowed woman all alter the definition and freedoms of what it is to be a woman.

II. Support 1 : Widows are accepted forms of free women as they are freed from the constraints of marriage.

A. Topic Sentence : As widows, women are free to be free without the judgement of society weighing down on them.

1. How this relates to overall thesis : Widows are an accepted form of free women, showing that a widowed woman is different than a married or single woman.

Comment [3]: Great job being explicit about your argument and providing support!

B. Louise Mallard “...dies, ironically and tragically, just as she has been freed from a constricting marriage and has realized self-assertion as the deepest element of her being” (Berkove 152).

1. Self-assertion is “the confident and forceful expression or promotion of oneself, one's views, or one's desires” (dictionary.com).

C. “Yet radical departures from literary convention within a minority tradition are especially likely to be censured and suppressed by the dominant culture, because they violate social as well as aesthetic stereotypes and expectations” (Showalter 203).

III. Support 2 : Married women are servants to their families.

A. Topic Sentence : Married women have the expectation to serve others in their marriages, trapped within its obligatory restraints.

1. How this relates to overall thesis : Married women differ from other women in that they have limited freedom within the constraints of marriage.

B. Brigham Young claimed that “it is the calling of the wife and mother to know what to do with everything that is brought into the house, laboring to make her home desirable to her husband and children, making herself an Eve in the midst of a little paradise of her creation” (Embry 396).

#### IV. Conclusion

#### Abstracts

- Lawrence I. Berkove’s article “Fatal Self-Assertion in Kate Chopin’s ‘Story of an Hour’”, he alludes to Louise Mallard’s self-assertion in the story was her downfall, as she was too confident with her supposed freedom, and how the aforementioned self-assertion after the news of her husband’s death was what ultimately led to her death of shock when he turned up to be alive. From this article, I am
- Jessie L. Embry’s chapter “Women’s Life Cycles: 1850-1940” from the book *Women In Utah History: Paradigm or Paradox?* the roles of women in Utah throughout their lives is explored. From this chapter, I focused on the married woman and her defined role in the family.
- Elaine Showalter’s essay “Tradition and the Female Talent: *The Awakening* as a Solitary Book”, Edna Pontellier’s solitude is pulled into perspective. Chopin’s risks in her writing are also highlighted in the previously mentioned essay. I will use this essay to incorporate

**Comment [4]:** Great choice! I have encountered this author multiple times in my research and am planning on using one of her articles as well.

some of the struggles Chopin had in taking the societally defined role for a woman in marriage/widowhood and dwelling into the possibility that women are not satisfied within said roles.

### **Timeline**

- September 28th - Product Assigned
- October 1st - Topic Decided
- October 5th-8th - Prewriting
- October 8th - Proposal peer review
- October 10th - Proposal due date
- October 17th - Product due date

### **Works Cited**

Berkove, Lawrence I. "Fatal Self-Assertion in Kate Chopin's 'The Story of an Hour.'" *American Literary Realism*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2000, pp. 152–158.

Embry, Jessie L. "Women's Life Cycles: 1850 to 1940." *Women In Utah History: Paradigm Or Paradox?*, edited by Patricia Lyn Scott et al., University Press of Colorado, 2005, pp. 394–415.

Showalter, Elaine. "Tradition and the Female Talent: The Awakening as a Solitary Book." *New Essays on the Awakening*, pp. 33–58.