

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

# The Awakening

by Kate Chopin

Copyright © 1999 by Prestwick House Inc., P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938. 1-800-932-4593.  
www.prestwickhouse.com Permission to copy this unit for classroom use is extended to purchaser for his or her  
personal use. This material, in whole or part, may not be copied for resale. Revised, April 2003.

ISBN 978-1-60389-705-1

Item No. 200710

# The Awakening

## Notes

Grand Isle and New Orleans are the two settings for this novel. The story is structured to show how Edna Pontellier gradually “awakens” to her true nature against a backdrop of the rigid moral and social restrictions of conventional 1899 society.

This novel deals with both adultery and suicide; therefore, it may be necessary to consider the maturity of students before assigning this work.

All references come from the Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Press edition of *The Awakening*, copyright 2005.

# The Awakening

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, students will be able to:*

1. discuss nineteenth-century social attitudes toward women, children, and family.
2. identify and distinguish among the types of women presented in the novel.
3. analyze Edna Pontellier as a wife and a mother.
4. trace the progress of Edna's awakening.
5. identify and discuss the use of the literary devices symbolism and imagery.
6. understand ideas that are implied but not directly stated.
7. analyze the purpose and the effect of specific settings:
  - Grand Isle / New Orleans
  - Léonce's house / the "pigeon house"
8. consider the influence of the following men on Edna's life:
  - the Colonel
  - Léonce Pontellier
  - Dr. Mandelet
  - Robert Lebrun
  - Alcée Arobin
9. discuss the ending as the logical choice, given Edna's situation in the society of the time.
10. relate the title of the novel to the major theme of the work and support a statement of theme by referring to incidents and comments from the novel.

# The Awakening

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Kate Chopin uses “awakening” in many ways in the novel. Discuss the ways in which Edna is awakened. Use specific examples.
2. Support or refute the following statement: Kate Chopin sympathizes with Edna but does not pity her.
3. Discuss two of the following images as unifying elements, making specific references to the novel: the sea, the sand, and the sky.
4. Contrast Adèle Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz, making specific references to the novel.
5. Compare Edna Pontellier and Adèle Ratignolle as mothers, making specific references to the novel.
6. Support or refute the following statement, making specific references to the novel: Robert really loves Edna.
7. Discuss the significance of the two lovers and the lady in black, making specific references to the places they appear in the novel.
8. Contrast Robert Lebrun and Alcée Arobin.
9. Compare the house on Esplanade Street and the “pigeon house.” How does each reflect the character of Edna Pontellier?
10. Discuss the purpose and effect of the song, “*Si tu savais*.”

# The Awakening

## Chapter I

### Vocabulary

**chamomile** – a plant  
**gaunt** – thin, bony  
**lugger** – a small boat with a sail  
**quadroon** – a person who has one African-American grandparent

1. Explain how the parrot and the mockingbird are used to introduce this chapter.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. Describe Léonce Pontellier.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. What does the following quotation tell you about Léonce's attitude toward his wife? He looked "at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage."

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Chapter VI**

Vocabulary

**abysses** – immeasurably deep spaces  
**ponderous** – difficult to handle

1. What question does Robert pose to Edna after Madame Ratignolle leaves? Why does this question pose a problem for Edna?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

2. How is the sea used symbolically in this chapter?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Chapter XX**

Vocabulary

**bantered** – exchanged amusing remarks  
**emphatic** – forceful  
**glibly** – smoothly

1. Why does Edna go to the Lebrun home in New Orleans?

---

---

---

---

---

2. How is this house described? In what way is this description related to Edna’s desire for Robert?

---

---

---

---

---

3. Edna meets Robert’s brother, Victor. How is Victor a kind of exaggeration of Robert?

---

---

---

---

---

4. What does Edna learn about Robert while she is there? Why does this depress her?

---

---

---

---

---

5. What excuse does he give for not writing to Edna during his absence? Why do you think he says this?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

6. Later, during dinner at the pigeon house, what does Edna learn is the reason for Robert's return? How does she feel?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

7. What is the feeling between them at the end of this chapter?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---