

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The Awakening

by Kate Chopin

Copyright © 2004 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.*

ISBN: 978-1-60389-511-8

Item No. 201567

Pre-Reading

1. Unlike some writers who are considered “artists,” the writer of this book, Kate Chopin, wrote out of necessity. In other words, she didn’t write to create art, she wrote to make money.

Write a three-paragraph article for a local arts newsletter in which you argue that writers should or should not be motivated to write solely to make a profit. You may take either side.

2. Even though we continue to study Kate Chopin’s work, she was not very well known for her work in her lifetime. Who, among our artists today, do you think is unappreciated? Write a well-developed paragraph in which you describe a person, an artist, a writer, an actor, a musician, a politician, or a sports figure, who you think is not given enough credit for his or her talent.
3. Kate Chopin’s work often depicts various aspects of Creole culture. She attempts to describe the Creole society to those of us who are not familiar with it. What things do you think define a culture? If someone asked you to describe the American culture, knowing that America is made up of people from diverse backgrounds, how would you explain it? Write a letter to a pen pal in another country, describing the aspects that make up the American culture.
4. As you read *The Awakening*, make a list of all of the words you do not know. At the end of each chapter, look up the definitions of those words.

Response Journal

I

5. When we first meet Mr. Pontellier, he is a little perturbed because his neighbor's birds are making a lot of noise, and they are disturbing him. Some states have laws against disturbing the peace. These laws protect citizens from having to listen to unwanted noise. Write an e-mail to a local police sergeant, arguing for or against laws about disturbing the peace. Present your opinion and back it up with facts.

II

6. When Robert and Mrs. Pontellier are visiting on the porch, Mrs. Pontellier reads Robert a letter her sister wrote. Robert is intrigued and asks, "What manner of girls [Mrs. Pontellier's] sisters [are], what [her] father [is] like, and how long her mother [has] been dead." If you were describing your own family to a new friend, what would you say? Write a dialogue in which you describe your family to a new friend. You may choose to begin this way:

Friend: You and I have a lot in common. What is your family like?

You: Well, my family is...

7. After he finishes talking to Mrs. Pontellier, Robert goes over to play croquet with the Pontellier children. Chopin goes on to write that the children loved playing croquet.

What were some of your favorite games to play when you were a child? Write a review for *Games* magazine, rating your favorite childhood game. Be sure to include reasons why you thought that game was so wonderful.

The Awakening



8. Mr. Pontellier “[thought] it was very discouraging that his wife, who was the sole object of his existence, evinced so little interest in things which concerned him.” Do you think it is important for couples to be interested in the things that concern their partners? Write an article for a teen magazine in which you give your opinion about whether happy couples should have similar interests.
9. Mr. Pontellier says, “If it [is] not a mother’s place to look after children, whose on earth [is] it?” Should one parent, in your opinion, take the greater role in raising a child? Write an e-mail to a classmate, stating your opinion about parental responsibility for a child’s care.
10. When Mr. Pontellier criticizes his wife about her inattention to their children’s needs, he says that he is busy at work and he “[cannot] be two places at once.” Imagine, though, that it is physically possible to be two places at the same time. If you had the ability to be two places at once, where would you go? Do you think this ability would help or hinder you? Write a composition of no fewer than two paragraphs in which you explain what you would do if you could be in two different places at the same time.
11. Although she is upset, Mrs. Pontellier does not “lament...Fate” for bringing her to her husband. Do you believe that two people can be drawn together by fate? Do you think that there are some couples that are just meant to be together? Do you think, instead, that you can convince yourself that you are in love, regardless of your destiny? Write a three-paragraph article for a romance magazine, clearly stating your opinion about the possibility of lovers being drawn together by fate.

IV

12. In this novel, as she does in many of her other works, Kate Chopin focuses on the members of the Creole culture. Do a little bit of research. Then, write an essay of no fewer than three paragraphs in which you explain **one** of the following aspects of Creole culture:

- Music
- Dance
- Clothing
- Religion
- Foods
- Role in history
- Family life

13. Mrs. Pontellier, who has two sons of her own, is surprised that Madame Ratignolle openly describes, and in graphic detail, the births of her children. In 1899, when this book was published, such discussions were considered taboo. Write a note to Mrs. Pontellier in which you describe women's roles today, assuring her that she should not be embarrassed to discuss such things as pregnancy.
14. Although she is shocked about some things that Creoles discuss, Mrs. Pontellier "conclude[s] that wonders never cease." The phrase "wonders never cease" is a well-known aphorism, a short phrase that presents a general truth. Make a list of no fewer than 15 other aphorisms that you know. Here are a few to get you started:

It takes one to know one.
It's always darkest before the dawn.
Don't count your chickens before they hatch.

The Awakening

V

15. Make a list of characteristics attributed to Mr. Pontellier and another for Robert. Then, in a short paragraph, compare and contrast each of the men. You may choose to begin your list like this:

Mr. Pontellier
Married to Edna
Older

Robert
Single, but is in love with Edna
Younger

16. It is obvious that Robert cares for Edna Pontellier. Write a dialogue for a television talk show on which Robert is a guest. The topic of the talk show is “Unrequited Love.” You may begin by saying:

Host: Welcome to our show. Our guest today is Robert, who says he has always fallen in love with women he can never have. Robert, please share your story with us.

Robert: Thank you. Well...

VI

17. Mrs. Pontellier starts to consider “her position in the universe...and to recognize her relation as an individual to the world within and about her.” What is your “position in the universe”? What role do you play in society? Make a list of all of the roles you play: brother, sister, band member, basketball player, etc. Then, write a poem entitled “My Role in the Universe.” Be sure to use the information from the list you wrote to develop the poem.
18. Chopin writes that the ocean “invite[s] the soul to wander for a spell in the abysses of solitude.” It is clear that Edna finds peace near the ocean. Where are you most peaceful? Write a well-constructed paragraph in which you describe the place where you are most at ease.