

 Prestwick House

Instant Short Story Pack



Each pack contains:

- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide

Regret

BY KATE CHOPIN

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2, 3, 6



Objectives:

After completing the activities in this packet, the student will be able to:

- analyze the development of two or more themes or central ideas over the course of the story (RL.11-12.2),
- analyze the impact of the author's choice of how to relate elements of a story (RL.11-12.3),
- analyze how an author's choice of where to begin or end a story contributes to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact (RL.11-12.6), and
- analyze cases in which grasping the author's point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement) (RL.11-12.6).

Time:

1-2 class periods

Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (2 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (4 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (2 pages) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (7 pages) – Activities and Graphic Organizers

✓ Teacher Answer Guide

Procedure:

1. Reproduce all handouts.
2. Distribute **Handouts #1** and **#2**.
 - Allow students to read the short biography of Chopin (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Chopin's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
 - Assign the story to be read for homework OR
 - Allow students to read the story in class and perform the two **As you read...** activities.
3. Distribute **Handout #3**.
4. Give students time to read the questions (approximately 5 minutes).
5. Review with students what each question is asking for and what type of information is required for a thorough answer (e.g., references to prior knowledge, quotations from the story, additional reading or research, etc.).
6. Distribute **Handout #4**.
7. Walk the class through Question 1, demonstrating that in order to address a complex issue, it is often helpful to divide it into smaller subtopics. Students can then use the ideas generated by each subtopic to build a complete and thoughtful answer to the full question.
8. Have students answer the questions.

Kate Chopin

Regret

Kate Chopin wrote two novels and approximately one hundred short stories during a career that lasted barely a dozen years. Most of her fiction is set in Louisiana, and her best-known work depicts the lives of strong and intelligent women. “Regret” was written in 1894 and first published in the May 1895 issue of *The Century Magazine*. In 1897, Chopin included it in her second published collection of short stories, *A Night in Acadie*.

The title (“Regret”), a simple plot (a childless woman is recruited to babysit her neighbor’s children), and the main character arc (the independent woman who has never been in love grows to love her neighbor’s children and misses them when they go home) all suggest that this story departs from Chopin’s typical theme of strong women desiring independence. “Regret” seems to be almost a repudiation of the ideas suggested in other Chopin stories.

In Dr. Peggy Skaggs’s study of Chopin’s work, she seems to agree: Skaggs writes, “Mamzelle Aurélie, lacks that important part of a woman’s life, the maternal relationship.” Other critics disagree, pointing out that Mamzelle Aurélie is not the children’s mother and should not be defined by expectations of motherhood. Chopin suggests that when Mamzelle Aurélie first receives the children, she views childcare as not very different from tending to farm animals. It is through her interactions with the children, learning to fill their emotional and physical needs, that she grows to love them. When the children go home, and Mamzelle Aurélie cries, it is likely that she is crying because she recognizes the overall loneliness of her life, not simply because she feels she has lost her chance to fulfill her destiny as a woman.

Before you read:

Know something about the life of the author:

Katherine O’Flaherty was born on February 8, 1850, in St. Louis, Missouri. Her father was Irish and her mother of French descent. Chopin grew up bilingual, speaking both English and French. Her father died in a railroad accident when she was five, and one of her half-brothers died of typhoid fever while imprisoned in a Union prisoner of war camp during the Civil War.

Kate Chopin

Regret

Lexile Measure: 1060L

MAMZELLE AURÉLIE POSSESSED a good strong figure, ruddy cheeks, hair that was changing from brown to gray, and a determined eye. She wore a man's hat about the farm, and an old blue army overcoat when it was cold, and sometimes top-boots.

Mamzelle Aurélie had never thought of marrying. She had never been in love. At the age of twenty she had received a proposal, which she had promptly declined, and at the age of fifty she had not yet lived to regret it.

So she was quite alone in the world, except for her dog Ponto, and the negroes who lived in her cabins and worked her crops, and the fowls, a few cows, a couple of mules, her gun (with which she shot chicken-hawks), and her religion.

One morning Mamzelle Aurélie stood upon her gallery, contemplating, with arms akimbo, a small band of very small children who, to all intents and purposes, might have fallen from the clouds, so unexpected and bewildering was their coming, and so unwelcome. They were the children of her nearest neighbor, Odile, who was not such a near neighbor, after all.

The young woman had appeared but five minutes before, accompanied by these four children. In her arms she carried little Élodie; she dragged Ti Nomme by an unwilling hand; while Marcéline and Marcélette followed with irresolute steps.

Her face was red and disfigured from tears and excitement. She had been summoned to a neighboring parish by the dangerous illness of her mother; her husband was away in Texas—it seemed to her a million miles away; and Valsin was waiting with the mule-cart to drive her to the station.

Kate Chopin

*Regret***STUDENT QUESTIONS:**

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2) Critics suggest two possible interpretations of Mamzelle Aurélie's regret: that she never married and had children; or that, as a human being, she is profoundly alone in her life. What evidence does Chopin provide to support each interpretation?

2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6) Consider each of the following excerpts from the story and explain what each implies about Mamzelle Aurélie and her situation:
 - “At the age of twenty she had received a proposal, which she had promptly declined, and at the age of fifty she had not yet lived to regret it.”
 - “They were the children of her nearest neighbor, Odile, who was not such a near neighbor, after all.”
 - “What about the little white nightgowns that had to be taken from the pillow-slip in which they were brought over, and shaken by some strong hand till they snapped like ox-whips? What about the tub of water which had to be brought and set in the middle of the floor, in which the little tired, dusty, sun-browned feet had every one to be washed sweet and clean?”
 - “And it made Marcéline and Marcélette laugh merrily—the idea that Mamzelle Aurélie should for a moment have believed that Ti Nomme could fall asleep without being told the story of *Croque-mitaine* or *Loup-garou*, or both; or that Élodie could fall asleep at all without being rocked and sung to.”
 - “...she had to accustom herself to his moist kisses—the expressions of an affectionate and exuberant nature.... It took her some days to become accustomed to the laughing, the crying, the chattering that echoed through the house and around it all day long. And it was not the first or the second night that she could sleep comfortably with little Élodie's hot, plump body pressed close against her...”
 - “But at the end of two weeks Mamzelle Aurélie had grown quite used to these things, and she no longer complained.”
 - “But this coming, unannounced and unexpected, threw Mamzelle Aurélie into a flutter that was almost agitation. The children had to be gathered. Where was Ti Nomme?... And Marcéline and Marcélette?... As for Élodie, she was safe enough...”

3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3) What does Chopin's indirect and inferential narrative style contribute to the overall impact of the story?

ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:

Kate Chopin, *Regret*

Question 1: Critics suggest two possible interpretations of Mamzelle Aurélie’s regret: that she never married and had children; or that, as a human being, she is profoundly alone in her life. What evidence does Chopin provide to support each interpretation?

STEP 1: Reread the story and note any actions or exposition that suggests that Mamzelle Aurélie’s regret is specifically about not having children.

STEP 2: Search the story for any actions or exposition that suggests that Mamzelle Aurélie is generally aware of her profound loneliness.

STEP 3: You should now have enough information to answer the question fully.

