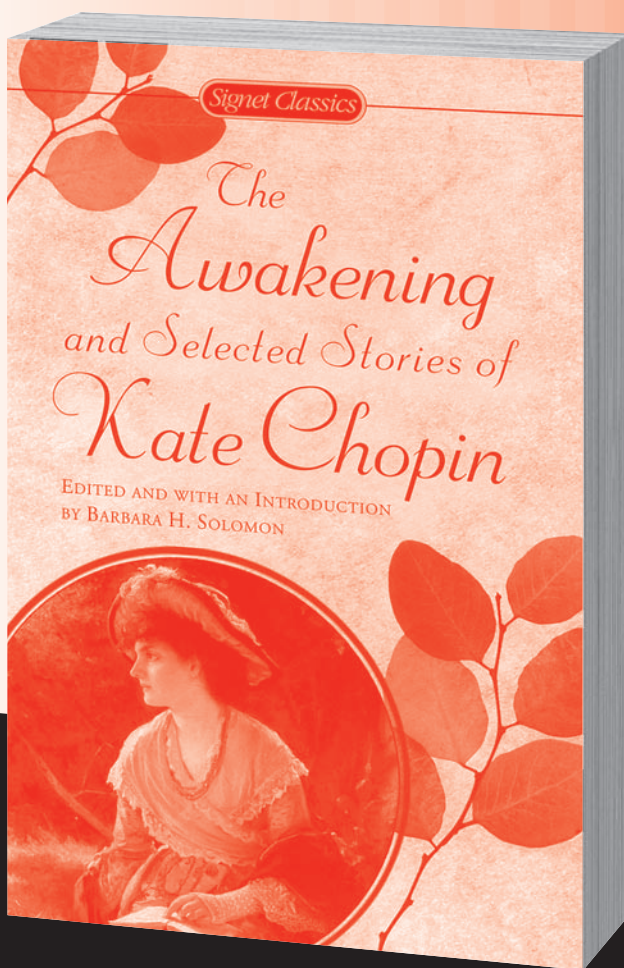


Signet Classics

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF

THE AWAKENING

BY KATE CHOPIN



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INTRODUCTION

On April 20, 2010, British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon exploded, claiming 11 lives, releasing 170 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, and devastating miles of Louisiana and Mississippi shoreline. One of its victims was Grand Isle, Louisiana, a small Cajun community, population 1,500. Before the oil spill, thousands of tourists would converge on the island each summer to enjoy its rustic habitat, warm waters, and abundant fishing. It is a tradition that dates back hundreds of years, and it is the setting of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.

A highly controversial text since its publication in 1899, Chopin's novel explores the spiritual and physical "awakenings" of a young married woman vacationing on Grand Isle. Returning to New Orleans at summer's end, Edna Pontellier struggles to establish an identity outside her husband and children, but she is trapped by the confines of her gender and her culture. Confronted with the timeless conflict between society and self, Edna seeks solace by creating her own personal space and ultimately returns to the solitude of Grand Isle.

Those who might say such struggles are over need only look to contemporary television. Emmy Award-winning *Modern Family* illustrates the vastly different formats "family" can take in the 21st Century, including a gay

couple who have adopted an Asian baby, and a multi-cultural, multi-generational marriage with stepchildren. However, it is the show's central family that parallels Chopin's themes. Claire is a stay-at-home mom who constantly laments that she is defined by motherhood and marriage, wondering if her best years are behind her. Is her dilemma a "modern" one, as the show's title implies? Perhaps, as Barbara Solomon says in her introduction to *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin was "a woman much ahead of her time."

In the classroom, *The Awakening* will serve to connect students to the classic themes of feminism, naturalism, and individualism, as well as the patriarchal society of the late 1800's. When students read Chopin's novel, they will come away with an awareness of the internal and external conflicts linking the author's time to our own.

This guide's pre, during, and post instructional strategies incorporate Kate Chopin's other works and can be used in any combination as teachers design their individual goals and lessons. A focus on technology and literacy skills challenges students to actively engage in reading, and activities are differentiated to appeal to various learning styles and are easily adaptable to the leveled lessons today's educators are looking for.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Main Characters

Edna Pontellier—young wife and mother from New Orleans

Léonce Pontellier—Edna's husband, a wealthy, older businessman

Etienne & Raoul Pontellier—the Pontelliers' young sons

Madame Lebrun—owner of the Grand Isle cottages where the Pontelliers vacation

Robert Lebrun—Madame Lebrun's older son and Edna's love interest

Victor Lebrun—Madame Lebrun's younger son

Adèle Ratignolle—Edna's close friend

Monsieur Ratignolle—Adèle's husband

Mademoiselle Reisz—Edna's confidant, a gifted pianist

Alcée Arobin—Edna's lover

The Colonel—Edna's father

Doctor Mandelet—The Pontelliers' physician

Grand Isle Guests

The Lady in Black
The Two Lovers
The Farival Twins

Island Inhabitants

Madame Antoine
Tonie
Mariequita

New Orleans Acquaintances

Mrs. Highcamp
Mr. and Mrs. Merriman
Miss Mayblunt
Mr. Gouvernail

SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

GRAND ISLE

The novel opens on Grand Isle, Louisiana, where Léonce Pontellier and his family are vacationing. Léonce pursue his own interests, allowing his wife Edna to fill her time as she pleases. One evening, returning late from a game of billiards, Léonce asks Edna to stay up with him. When she declines, Mr. Pontellier criticizes her lack of mothering skills, leaving Edna crying and lamenting her place in the world. The next morning, Mr. Pontellier returns to his work in New Orleans. Edna stays on Grand Isle where she visits with Robert Lebrun, twenty-six year old son of the resort owner, and Adèle Ratignolle, a wealthy young Creole woman. Edna sketches while considering how different she is from the motherly Adèle. When Robert talks Edna into a swim, she feels the voice of the sea calling to her. She begins to recognize herself as an individual, one who has been leading a dual life. Several days later Edna and Adèle go to the beach, where they see two young lovers followed by a lady in black who is reading her morning devotions. Edna shares that she feels like she did as a young girl, wandering aimlessly and unguided through a green meadow. As Adèle comforts her, Edna thinks about the young men she loved before marrying Léonce, and her children, whom she loves but does not feel suited to mother. When Robert and Adèle visit the Ratignolle cottage, Adèle warns Robert not to toy with Edna's affections. Several weeks later, both

Madame Ratignolle and Mademoiselle Reisz play piano for the guests. Edna realizes that Adèle plays to entertain family and friends, but Mademoiselle Reisz is an artist whose music awakens deep passion within her. Robert suggests a night swim, and several guests agree. Though she has been struggling to learn all summer, Edna is able to swim for the first time that night. Exulted, Edna returns to her cottage with Robert. She is alone on the hammock when Mr. Pontellier returns home, demanding that she come inside. When Edna refuses, Léonce insists on staying with her. After a restless night, Edna sends for Robert to accompany her to mass on the *Cheniere Caminada*, a nearby island. Adèle feels stifled and drowsy during the service, so they retire to Madame Antoine's house where she entertains the couple with her Acadian tales. After they return to Grand Isle, Edna cannot stop thinking about Robert. Several days later, Edna is dining with resort guests when she learns that Robert is planning to leave for Mexico. Upset he has not shared this news with her, Mrs. Pontellier returns to her cottage. Robert stops in on his way out, and Edna realizes how much she has come to care for him. Seeing no harm in her obsession, Edna recalls sharing with Adèle her refusal to sacrifice herself for her children or anyone else. Mademoiselle Reisz understands Edna's plight, and invites the younger woman to visit her upon returning to the city.

ESPLANADE STREET

Back home in New Orleans, Mrs. Pontellier finds herself unable to return to her household and societal duties. Léonce warns her that her refusal to observe appearances could affect his business relationships and their societal standing. To Edna her children and home feel like an “alien world.” Edna visits Madame Ratignolle and shares her decision to start painting again. Observing the congenial relationship Adèle shares with Monsieur Ratignolle, Edna is depressed rather than soothed. She isolates herself even further, causing Mr. Pontellier to wonder about her mental stability. Edna floats between delirium and depression, applying herself to her painting at a manic rate. Edna visits Mademoiselle Reisz’s apartment, where the pianist shares a letter from Robert and plays Robert’s favorite Chopin piece. Edna sobs as she feels an awakening similar to that at Grand Isle. Mr. Pontellier continues to worry about his wife’s disposition and asks their family physician for advice, but Dr. Mandelet assures Léonce that his wife’s malaise will pass. During this time Edna’s father, The Colonel, visits and joins Edna at the races, where they meet Alcée Arobin. Dr. Mandelet becomes convinced that Edna is involved with another man, and hopes it is not Arobin. Unable to persuade Edna to attend her sister’s wedding, her father and husband both leave for the ceremony in New York. Madame Pontellier takes the two boys home with her to Iberville, and Edna is relieved to be alone. However, she continues to attend the races, winning a good deal of money, and spending time with fellow race enthusiast Alcée Arobin. After dining with her at the Highcamp’s home, Arobin accompanies Edna home. Edna still feels hungry and agitated and sleeps poorly. A few days later, Edna and Arobin attend a race and dine together. Edna feels unfaithful, but her guilt is due to her feelings for Robert rather than for her husband. She asks Arobin to leave, and he sends a note of apology. Edna accepts and they resume meeting on a daily basis. Once again visiting Mademoiselle Reisz, Edna confides that she plans to move

out of her family home on Esplanade Street and into a small house around the corner. Mademoiselle Reisz presses Mrs. Pontellier for the real reason, and tells Edna that Robert is in love with her but is trying to forget her because she is not free. Edna admits she is in love with Robert, and the pianist confides that Robert is returning soon to New Orleans. Mademoiselle warns the younger woman that she must have “strong wings.” That night, Edna allows Arobin to kiss her. Feeling conflicted though not guilty, Edna wishes the kiss was more than physical. The next morning Edna advances her plans to move into the “pigeon house,” and at the same time, plans a farewell dinner at the Pontellier house. Coinciding with Edna’s twenty-ninth birthday, the party is a sumptuous affair. Despite the festive atmosphere, Edna longs for Robert. After the guests disperse, Arobin helps Mrs. Pontellier settle in at the pigeon house, which he has had filled with flowers. The couple consummates their relationship.

PIGEON HOUSE

Mr. Pontellier saves appearances by closing the Esplanade house for renovations while Edna enjoys her new independence. She travels to Iberville to see Etienne and Raoul. Pained at leaving the boys with their grandmother, Edna is over the emotion once she returns to the city. Adèle visits and advises Edna that she should have a female companion in the Pigeon House due to rumors about Alcée Arobin. Seeking refuge, Edna visits Mademoiselle Reisz. The pianist is not there, so Edna lets herself in and is surprised when Robert arrives. They walk back to the Pigeon House and dine together, both admitting they have been thinking of Grand Isle. When Arobin arrives, Robert leaves, but Edna sends the other man on his way as well. Hoping Robert will come back again, Edna realizes he seemed closer when he was in Mexico. The next day, Edna writes cheerful letters to her family, but feels as though she “had abandoned herself to Fate.” When she does not hear from Robert for three days, Edna rejoins Arobin. While visiting a nearby garden, she

sees Robert and asks him why he has stayed away. Robert replies that she is cruel. Robert walks her home, and after kissing, the two confess their mutual love. Robert expresses his wish that Mr. Pontellier might set his wife free, and Edna replies that she is not a possession. The discussion is interrupted by the news that Adèle is in labor and has sent for Edna. After a painful and weary labor, Madame Ratignolle entertains Edna, “Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them!” Edna is dazed by the experience, and as she walks home accompanied by Dr. Mandeleit, she confides that she will not be forced to go to Europe, as Mr. Pontellier plans. Conflicted between her responsibilities to her children and her awareness of self, Edna turns down Dr. Mandeleit’s offer of counseling. Edna returns

home, hoping to be comforted by Robert, but finds only a note saying, “Good-by – because I love you.”

GRAND ISLE

Returning to the scene of her awakening, Edna surprises Victor and Mariequita by arriving at the Lebrun’s resort. Sending them both away on errands, Edna walks down to the beach. The water of the Gulf calls to her, and no living thing is near except a broken-winged bird circling down to the ocean. Edna changes into a swimsuit but then tosses the garment aside and walks into the sea. Thinking of Léonce, the children, Robert, and finally her childhood, Edna continues into the water of her awakening, and she does not return.

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed to deepen students’ background knowledge of literary devices and traditions, and to introduce them to the novel’s major themes. (Note: Consult other Teacher’s Guides to Signet Classics; they contain ideas that can be adapted to prepare students to read and enjoy this text).

I. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE IN HISTORY, CULTURE, AND LITERATURE

Glogster: New Orleans History

Prior to reading the novel, students can build background in New Orleans history and culture by creating interactive, digital posters called “glogs.” Glogster.edu is a free, collaborative, multi-media learning platform where students can showcase their knowledge and skills through a mix of images, text, music, and video. Provide students with topic choices such as Mardi Gras, the French Quarter, Creole culture, jazz music, slavery, or steamboat travel on the Mississippi, and create “expert” groups who research, create, and share their multi-media presentations.

Be sure to discuss criteria for evaluating the presentations. Glog tutorials and samples are available on SchoolTube as well as on the Glogster site: <http://edu.glogster.com/>

Skype an Expert: Cajun Culture

Free Skype software can be used for worldwide collaboration, live video, and instant file sharing, and adds an authenticity to the study of classic novels. Set up an “expert” contact in Grand Isle, Louisiana, hook up a web-cam to your classroom Internet, and watch your students receive instant answers to their questions about Grand Isle’s Cajun history and its current status after Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil spill. Set up a free account and find expert contacts at <http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/home>

Dialectic Journals: Victorian Patriarchy and the Angel in the House

To introduce Victorian Patriarchy and to emphasize the connection between reading, writing, and thinking, students can hold a silent conversation using a foldable dialectic journal. Model for students how to fold a piece of paper into four columns. Label the columns in the following order from left to right.

1. "From the Text"
2. "From Me"
3. "From my Classmate"
4. "My New Thinking"

Ask students to read, annotate, and share their thinking about Coventry Patmore's 1854 poem, *The Angel in the House*. In the section entitled "The Wife's Tragedy," from Canto IX, Book I, "The Sahara," the speaker describes the perfect Victorian wife. Ask students first to read independently, highlighting and annotating words and phrases that describe the expected roles of the wife. Next, tell students to record in the first column some of these significant words, phrases, or lines. In the second column, students record questions or inferences about these excerpts. In the third column, classmates exchange journals and respond to or extend on each other's thoughts. Afterwards, ask students to reflect on classmate input and record their new thinking in column four. Here is Coventry's poem, which can also be found at:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/patmore/angel/9.html>

Man must be pleased; but him to please
 Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
 Of his condoled necessities
 She casts her best, she flings herself.
 How often flings for nought, and yokes
 Her heart to an icicle or whim,
 Whose each impatient word provokes
 Another, not from her, but him;
 While she, too gentle even to force
 His penitence by kind replies,
 Waits by, expecting his remorse;
 With pardon in her pitying eyes;
 And if he once, by shame oppress'd,
 A comfortable word confers,
 She leans and weeps against his breast,
 And seems to think the sin was hers;
 And whilst his love has any life,
 Or any eye to see her charms,
 At any time, she's still his wife,
 Dearly devoted to his arms;
 She loves with love that cannot tire;
 And when, ah woe, she loves alone,
 Through passionate duty love springs higher,
 As grass grows taller round a stone.

Feature Analysis Chart: Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism, and Local Color

Four major literary movements (romanticism, realism, naturalism, and local color) influence the narrative style of *The Awakening*. Using the class literary anthology or a set of scholarly articles, lead students in a jigsaw reading about each of these literary traditions. Ask students to draw a 4x5 grid, with the first column labeled "movement." Under that heading, students fill in the blocks with "romanticism," "realism," "naturalism," and "local color." In the first row, after "movement," students write "origins," "beliefs," and "examples." Divide students into four groups, one for each of the literary movements. As groups read about and discuss their assigned literary movement, they write notes on its origins and beliefs, adding an example text if one is given. (Students can also leave the "example" column for novel excerpts during reading). After completing the reading, groups may share with the class on a document camera and complete the rest of the chart. By dividing, focusing, and collaborating on the reading, students are guided in the navigation of difficult critical text.

II. BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH INITIAL EXPLORATION OF THEMES

Gender Stereotypes

Jigsaw Reading: *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*

In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft published the first great feminist treatise, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. The text details the lack of rights, property, and respect afforded females in the late 18th century, a patriarchal culture that continued throughout the life of Kate Chopin. Divide the class into small groups. Assign each group one chapter of the text to read and summarize. Chapters with particular focus on gender stereotypes include: II-V, IX, and XIII. Discuss clues for

identifying main ideas, such as repetition, restatement, and transitional language. After reading and summarizing, students split up into new groups composed of one representative from each chapter assigned. Each student shares his learning. The essay can be found at: <http://www.bartleby.com/144/>

Song Study

Is gender socialization still an issue today? According to many popular female singers, girls are still being raised to capitulate to boys. Play a song or two from the list below, and include the lyrics. If possible, watch the videos, which can be found online at youtube.com and other sites. After students have listened to the songs, read the lyrics, and watched the videos, ask them to discuss:

What are some patterns you noticed in these songs? What message about our society might these patterns suggest? The following is a list of songs about gender roles by modern artists:

Song	Artist
Love Don't Cost a Thing	Jennifer Lopez
One of the Boys	Katy Perry
Promiscuous	Nelly Furtado
Stronger	Britney Spears
Stupid Girls	Pink
Superwoman	Alicia Keys

Ad-Busters

Provide groups of students with magazine, Internet, or television ads that can be perceived as gender specific or sexist. Consider commercials for cleaning products, food, cars, and alcohol. One example is the Carl Jr.'s advertisement with Kim Kardashian. View this one at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J11qUjHiGhs&feature=related>

Ask students to analyze the following:

1. Describe your advertisement in one paragraph. If print, start from the most obvious image and move to the details. If video, describe in sequential order.
2. What, if anything, about the advertisement makes it gender specific or sexist?

3. Is the ad appealing? Why or why not? What is your group's reaction?
4. What is the intended effect of the advertisement on the consumer?
5. Is the company justified in portraying its product in this fashion? Why or why not?

After analyzing, ask groups to create "adbusters," which are parodies of original ads that "bust" the myths about gender, culture, or status. Show students selected adbusters at www.adbusters.org.

Marriage and Motherhood

Text to Text:

Kate Chopin's "Story of an Hour"

"*The Story of an Hour*," one of Kate Chopin's most famous texts, is included in Signet Classics' *The Awakening and Selected Stories of Kate Chopin*. The protagonist of the short story is Mrs. Mallard, a young woman who has just learned of her husband's untimely death. Ask students to read the short story and discuss in small groups or as a class:

1. What does Mrs. Mallard mean by her whispered, "Free! Body and soul, free!"?
2. Analyze the irony in the story's last line: "When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills."

Accessible Text: *Modern Family*

Examining a parallel, contemporary text prior to reading provides material for comparison and contrast later. One link between the popular *Modern Family* and Chopin's novel is the theme of marriage and motherhood. Show a scene from the series that focuses on homemaker Claire Dunphy. Episodes can be found on <http://abc.go.com/shows/modern-family> or on DVD. A good choice which can be found on DVD is from season one, episode fourteen, "Moon Landing." In one scene, Claire compares her life as a mom to that of her previous co-worker, now a Paris executive. Ask students to create a T-chart to use as they view, keeping track of

what each woman has gained as a result of her lifestyle choice, and what each has “lost.” After viewing, this or any clip in which Claire laments motherhood, pair or group students and ask them to discuss their thinking and add to each other’s notes.

Poll Everywhere

To generate thinking about the theme of marriage and motherhood, poll students using an online service. With polleverywhere.com, you pose questions and define a list of possible answers for students to answer via cell phone or computer. For example, compose an opinion statement about motherhood, such as, “Mothers have a responsibility to their children that outweighs their responsibility to self.” The choices might include: A. Absolutely—children come first. B. Yes, but mothers need to take care of themselves, too. C. No way—a mother can’t be effective without first being self-fulfilled. After students submit their individual answers, graphs will display the results in real-time on your digital projector. In this way, every student is engaged, and the answers are immediate and anonymous. Teachers can poll up to 30 students at a time for free. With larger classes, students can submit partner or group answers. Simple directions appear at <http://www.polleverywhere.com/>. For low-tech alternatives, teachers can use “thumbs up/thumbs down” or colored voting cards.

Freedom and Imprisonment: The Gilded Cage

Art Criticism

Evelyn de Morgan’s 1919 painting, *The Gilded Cage*, portrays a woman who lives in luxury yet yearns for freedom from her older husband and from her restrictive society. Essentially an allegory for the captivity of women, the painting’s depiction of birds, children, and sky echoes much of the symbolism in *The Awakening* while presenting an alternative picture of motherhood. After showing the painting to the class on a document camera or LCD projector, ask students to complete the following response:

1. Draw a quick thumbnail sketch of the painting.
2. Write a brief description of the painting. What is the most dominant image? What is on the periphery? Include discussion of color, medium, and style.
3. Write a brief analysis of the painting based on your description above. Why does the painter choose to make certain images dominant and others marginal? What might be the significance of the two birds? Does the painting evoke a certain mood or theme? How? Why? How might the title of the painting affect the analysis?

After students are finished with individual responses, invite them to discuss their thoughts in partners or as a class. Explain that the mood and themes evoked by the painting are the same elements they will be seeing in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening* and other works from both the Romantic and Victorian Eras. Record these on the board. Lists should include characterization of nature as a freeing force, emphasis on human individuality, and the advocacy of free thought. (Those characteristics not obvious to students may be added by the teacher). An image of the painting can be found at:

<http://www.artmagick.com/pictures/picture.aspx?id=6232&name=the-gilded-cage>

Companion Pieces

To extend the art criticism activity above, ask students to compare the woman in Morgan’s painting to the one in Harry Von Tilzer’s 1900 song, “A Bird in a Gilded Cage.” In the song, a woman has traded independence and love for a luxurious home and an older husband:

She’s only a bird
 In a gilded cage,
 A beautiful sight to see,
 You may think she’s happy
 And free from care,
 She’s not
 Tho’ she seems to be,
 ‘Tis sad when you think
 Of her wasted life,

For youth cannot mate with age,
 And her beauty was sold
 For an old man's gold,
 She's a bird in a gilded cage.

Students can read the lyrics or watch a video of the song being performed on youtube.com. Ask students to highlight the *line* from the song that is most significant. Next, ask students to highlight the *phrase*, and finally, the *word* that best portrays the theme. Discuss as a class.

Ask students, Why is it significant that Chopin's novel, Morgan's painting, and Von Tiltzer's song were all created in the same era? What does this imply about the role of artists?

Self-Awareness

Children's Literature: Tackling Differences

Older students can use children's picture books, or "thin books" as a fun and accessible method to make connections and build background knowledge before reading more difficult text. Gather students around a rocker or use a document camera to show the pictures while you read aloud from a picture book about being considered "different." One popular text is *Tacky the Penguin*, by Helen Lester. Before reading, ask small groups to create a multi-flow map that illustrates the causes and effects of a person being considered different. Direct groups to draw a box in the middle of a large piece of paper, and write in the box "a person is considered different." Next, ask groups to draw several boxes to the left of the center, and several more to the right. Arrows point from the left boxes towards the center, and from center towards the right in order to show cause/effect relationships. Ask groups to generate reasons why a person might be considered different, and to label the boxes on the left. Groups might choose race, religion, appearance, culture, intelligence, talent. On the right, ask students to generate the effects of being considered different. Groups might consider isolation, bullying, strong character,

determination. Remind students to consider both positive as well as negative causes and effects. While reading, ask students to look for additional information. After reading, groups can add additional boxes to their maps and share their thinking by posting them on the wall.

Quickwrite: Challenging Societal Norms

Ask students to free-write for five to ten minutes on the following prompt: "What is one belief you or someone you know holds that might cause controversy in the family, school, or society? Consider beliefs about race, religion, relationships, politics, etc. What are the possible costs and/or benefits of publicizing this belief?"

Self-Portrait: The Artistic Temperament

In *The Awakening*, Edna Pontellier is a painter who downplays her talent until she builds a sense of self. Mademoiselle Reisz, Edna's pianist friend and mentor, warns Edna that she'll need "strong wings" to "soar above the level plain of tradition." Introduce students to this connection between self-awareness and artistic skill through the work of Frida Kahlo. Work, analysis, and biography can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/weta/ FridaKahlo/worksofart/index.html>.

Discuss Kahlo's themes of bodies, birth, death, and survival and explain that one third of her paintings were self-portraits. Ask students to journal, "turn and talk," or discuss as a class:

1. How might Kahlo's body of works parallel her journey to self-awareness?
2. Do Kahlo's paintings provoke a sense of strength or doubt? What evidence can you provide?

Female Self-Destruction

Making Connections: Victorian Drowning Ladies

The choice made by Edna Pontellier at the end of *The Awakening* is undoubtedly controversial. Yet she is not the only fictional female of her time to take her own life. Often, suicide

was depicted as a female malady, or as the act of a fallen angel (as opposed to the “Angel of the House).” Multiple poems, paintings, and novels from the Victorian era explore this topic. These works might be used to introduce the theme of female self-destruction through art analysis, journal responses, or class discussions. Examples include:

<i>Bleak House</i>	Charles Dickens	novel
<i>Bridge of Sighs</i>	Thomas Hood	poem
<i>Found Drowned</i>	George Frederick Watts	painting
<i>Jane Eyre</i>	Charlotte Bronte	novel
<i>The Lady of Shalott</i>	Alfred Lord Tennyson	poem
<i>Ophelia</i>	John Everett Millais	painting

One example activity is to have students illustrate a Victorian poem. For example, as the class reads aloud *The Lady of Shalott*, students can draw what they hear. When students draw the Lady in her tower far up the river from the lively village of Camelot, they can visualize the Lady’s isolation, imprisonment, and despair.

Parallel Plot Devices: “Desiree’s Baby”

Included in the Signet Classics’ *The Awakening and Selected Stories of Kate Chopin* is “*Desiree’s Baby*.” In this short story, Chopin depicts another trapped female protagonist who chooses to escape the only way she can. Reading this story prior to *The Awakening* introduces students to significant themes from the novel, and provides an opportunity for comparison later. After reading “*Desiree’s Baby*,” ask students in small groups or as a class:

1. What happens to Desiree and her baby? How do we know?
2. How is the story’s ending an example of situational irony?
3. How does the title of the short story foreshadow the story itself?
4. What 19th century views about race, class, and gender are evident in *Desiree’s Baby*? How do these ideas contribute to Desiree’s actions?

Rebirth, Renewal, and the Sea

Word-Clouds

Brainstorm with students their immediate associations with water. Using one post-it note for each word, ask students to write down any idea or emotion that water provokes. Students might write, “freedom,” “peacefulness,” “summer,” or “swimming,” “playing,” or “danger.” They might also think of “baptism,” “purity,” or “re-birth.” (Teachers can help prompt these deeper connections). Compile post-its and eliminate duplicates. Using the brainstormed words, students can create digital “word-clouds” that illustrate the theme of water through language, font, color, and size. Students choose which words should receive greater emphasis and which colors and font demonstrate meaning. For instance, the word-cloud on water might be in blues and greens, with text support such as “summer,” “swimming,” “rebirth,” and “renewal” in larger font. Using wordle.net, students indicate their preferences and Wordle does the rest. The word-clouds are created and posted to Wordle.net in real-time and can be viewed immediately by the class using a digital projector. Or, clouds can be printed off and serve as concept maps on the classroom walls. In any format, the word-clouds promote engagement, analysis, discussion, and critique. The Wordle website address is <http://www.wordle.net/>.

Directed Reading Activity: Interactive Notebooks

A directed reading activity using interactive notebooks introduces students to Chopin’s themes and style by focusing attention on a manageable excerpt and by delving into its diction, syntax, and tone. Have students read the following excerpt from Chapter X, where Edna learns to swim:

“But that night, she was like the little tottering, stumbling, clutching child who of a sudden realizes its powers, and walks for the first time alone, boldly and with over-confidence. She could have shouted for joy. She did shout for joy, as

with a sweeping stroke or two she lifted her body to the surface of the water. A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given to her to control the working of her body and her soul. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before.” (p. 32)

Direct students to mark the text as they read: draw a star next to words, phrases, or sentences that reflect the theme of awakening, rebirth, or renewal. Draw a question mark beside text they find confusing or questionable. Have them re-read these words or phrases aloud. Allow classmates to address each other's questions. Before adding teacher input, ask students for the words and phrases they marked with stars. Ask for peer response. In this way, the teacher allows students to make meaning of the text on their own and with the help of peers rather than immediately relying on teacher input. Focusing on reader questions also provides an illustration of how style affects comprehension.

To further this activity, ask an open-ended question that encourages readers of all levels to participate by writing an answer in their interactive notebooks. Students can share what they wrote and respond to each other's observations. The quietest students can at least read their answers aloud, thus participating in class discussion. The teacher's role during this activity is to encourage students to cite the text. While there are no wrong answers to an open-ended question, ask students, “what part of the passage led you to believe” Possible open-ended questions from this chapter of *The Awakening* include:

1. Why does Edna compare her learning to swim with a child learning to walk? What might this comparison signify about Edna's self-perception?
2. Why does Chopin use swimming as a metaphor for rebirth?
3. How might you characterize Chopin's syntax? Give an example from the excerpt.

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

These activities encourage students to utilize research-based comprehension strategies such as predicting, connecting, summarizing, and determining main ideas while reading *The Awakening*. Whether the novel is read in class or at home, teachers can choose appropriate assignments from the ideas below.

I. ANALYZING THROUGH GROUP RESPONSE

Discussion Questions

Discussion questions on *The Awakening* ask students to analyze the author's purpose, themes, and literary techniques, and to take a second look at the text. Students generally feel more comfortable sharing their ideas with a small group of peers first. When group discussions are complete, student spokespersons can discuss their findings with the class as a whole.

Grand Isle (chapters 1-XVI)

1. How is Léonce Pontellier characterized by his observation of his sun-burned wife? (p.2)
2. In what ways are Edna Pontellier and Adèle Ratignolle character foils? (p. 9)
3. Why might Chopin choose to personify the sea with a “seductive” voice? (p. 15)
4. Discuss the symbolic effect of Madame Ratignolle's all-white attire. (p. 17)
5. Edna felt as a young girl that she “must walk on forever, without coming to the end” of the tall grass. Then she admits feeling this summer “as if I were walking through the green meadow again” What is the significance of this memory? How might it serve as foreshadowing? (p. 19)

6. Contrast the effects of Madame Ratignolle's and Mademoiselle Reisz's piano playing on the resort guests. What does Edna's reaction indicate about her sense of awareness? (pp. 28-30)
7. Why does Madame Pontellier need to be alone after her first successful swim? How is this evening a turning point for Edna? (p. 32-33)
8. Why is Edna fascinated with Mariequita? What might the Spanish girl represent to her? (p. 39)
9. As she sails across the bay with Robert and Mariequita to the *Cheniere Caminada*, Edna feels "as if she were being borne away from some anchorage which had held her fast, whose chains had been loosening – had snapped the night before when the mystic spirit was abroad, leaving her free to drift whithersoever she chose to set her sails." What theme is evident in Chopin's diction? (p. 40)
10. Edna proclaims, "I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself." Is this a paradox, or does her vow make sense? Explain. (p. 56)
5. Compare Mademoiselle's (add Reisz) apartment to Mrs. Pontellier's house on Esplanade Street. How does the comparison serve to characterize the two women? (pp. 72-73)
6. Dr. Mandelet compares Edna to "some beautiful, sleek animal waking up in the sun." Discuss the figurative language. What type of "awakening" is referred to here and in the title? (p. 82)
7. When Mrs. Pontellier finally has the house to herself, she sits in the library and reads Emerson. What might be Chopin's purpose in Edna reading this particular author? (p. 86)
8. After dinner at the Highcamps' home, Edna returns home and raids the pantry. How is her "hunger" symbolic? (p. 88)
9. Why does Edna continue to visit Mademoiselle Reisz if she finds the pianist "offensive"? Does Edna actually dislike the woman or is she fearful of what the artist represents? (p. 92)
10. Describe the atmosphere of the dinner party Edna hosts. How is color significant in this scene? (pp. 102-106)

Esplanade Street (chapters XVII-XXXI)

1. How does the setting of the Pontellier's New Orleans home compare with that of Grand Isle? How does the house contribute to Mr. Pontellier's attitude towards his wife? (p. 58)
2. In what way does Edna behave like a child after Léonce admonishes her for neglecting societal conventions? Why might Chopin have chosen to characterize her this way? (p. 62)
3. After visiting Madame Ratignolle and observing her comfortable marriage, Edna pities Adèle's "colorless existence." Is Edna's opinion justified? Why or why not? (p. 66)
4. How has Edna's view towards her artistic ability changed since her "dabbling" at Grand Isle? What might be the reason for this change? (p. 68)

Pigeon House (chapters XXXII-XXXVIII)

1. How is Edna's move into the pigeon house symbolic as well as physical? What does it represent in the development of her self-awareness? (p. 111)
2. How might Edna's relationship with her two boys be characterized? Why does she leave them in Iberville if she is "again alone" without them? (p. 112)
3. Is Madame Ratignolle justified in her comparison of Edna to a child who acts "without a certain amount of reflection which is necessary in this life"? Is Adèle only referring to societal expectations? Or should Edna reflect on other considerations? Discuss. (p. 113)
4. Why, when Edna admits she has been thinking of their time at Grand Isle, does Robert say, "Mrs. Pontellier, you

- are cruel"? Is Edna cruel, or is she naive? Discuss. (p. 119).
- Why does it seem to Edna that Robert "seemed nearer to her off there in Mexico"? What does this realization indicate about Edna's sense of reality? (p. 122).
 - How might a psychiatrist diagnose Mrs. Pontellier, who feels "no despondency" but also "no hope"? What is the nature of the internal conflict which has led her to this point? (p. 124)
 - Describe the irony in Robert's desire to make Edna his wife. (pp. 127-128)
 - Analyze the meaning behind Adèle's, "Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them!" What is the significance of uttering this to Edna after childbirth? (p. 131)
 - Does Dr. Mandelet appear to understand what Edna is feeling? Is her refusal to talk to him a mistake? Defend your answer (p. 132)
 - Robert's note reads, "I love you. Good-bye—because I love you." What is the reason behind the note's contradiction? (p.133)
- sacrificing herself for her children? What is the "unessential?" Explain. (p. 136)
- What is the significance of the broken-winged bird circling down to the water? How does this symbol relate to a previous warning by Mademoiselle Reisz? (p. 136)
 - Why are Edna's last thoughts centered on her childhood and the long, green grass? How has she come full circle since her last trip to Grand Isle? (p 137)

Literature Circles

In order to teach inferencing and self-regulation of comprehension, assign small groups of students individual strategies to use as they read an excerpt of *The Awakening* out loud:

- **Summarizer:** summarizes the assigned section of text.
- **Themester:** connects action in novel to themes discussed in class.
- **Texter:** finds specific location of text support.
- **Visualizer:** creates a visual depicting the discussed themes and inferences.

Grand Isle (chapter XXXIX)

- What is the real reason Mrs. Pontellier sends Victor and Mariequita on errands away from the shore? How does this lend insight into her state of mind? (p. 135)
- Consider Chopin's diction in "The children appeared before her like antagonists who had overcome her; who had overpowered and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days. But she knew a way to elude them." How does the author use word-choice and imagery to illustrate Edna's thoughts? (p. 136)
- Edna remembers clearly her vow to Adèle that "she would give up the unessential, but she would never sacrifice herself for her children." Yet, *is* she

Reciprocal Reading

A version of literature circles that focuses on literacy skills, reciprocal reading groups take on the following roles.

- **Questioner:** poses questions that focus on main ideas and themes.
- **Summarizer:** summarizes the action.
- **Clarifier:** clarifies difficulties in understanding.
- **Predictor:** makes a prediction about future content.

Students may keep their roles for the entire selection, or they may alternate. An alternative is the ReQuest strategy, where the teacher models questioning after a segment of the text is read, and then students imitate such questioning after the next segment.

Facebook Wall

Students can create fake “Facebook” profiles for Edna, Robert, Arobin, even Kate Chopin. This wall generator allows students to analyze characters, make modern connections, and engage with their classmates in a safe environment. Students can each choose a different character from *The Awakening* and create a profile complete with marital status, favorite songs, quotes, television shows, books, movies, and causes. For example, Edna might select “Man, I Feel like a Woman” for her song, and post photos of Grand Isle on her wall. She may list “National Organization for Women” (NOW) as her cause and invite others to join. As students progress through the novel, they can post messages, such as “I feel out of sorts today. Thinking of my childhood . . . Still trying to swim.” Students can respond to each other’s posts in character. For example, Adèle might respond, “Oh, Edna dear, you poor thing. Go look at your darling boys . . . they’ll make you feel better!” Mr. Pontellier might post, “Anyone know of a good elixir for my wife? She isn’t herself these days.” See samples and create fake walls for free at <http://www.myfakewall.com/>.

Give One-Get One

In this interactive strategy, students set up a barter system to demonstrate their comprehension of major themes in *The Awakening* and to exchange ideas with peers. Prepare a grid for students with six to twelve empty boxes on a sheet of paper. Label the boxes with response prompts, such as, “I believe . . .” or “I think the most important action was . . .” or “One thing I like about Edna Pontellier is . . .” Ask students to choose three of the prompts and record their personal opinions or knowledge. Next, students mingle and ask their peers to provide opinions and knowledge to fill in the remainder of the boxes. For each box they “get,” students must “give” one as well. Once students have completed the boxes, ask them to share ideas that are unique, helpful, interesting, or profound. If students did not get all boxes filled in, they may do so during the group discussion.

II. ANALYZING THROUGH INDIVIDUAL RESPONSE

Student Generated Questions

Student-created questions that lead to interpretation and analysis are more effective comprehension tools than traditional end of chapter questions. Discuss with the class the different levels of questions and how more critical questions lead to interpretation and analysis. A good resource is Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy (BRT) with accompanying question starters: http://www.uni.edu/stdteach/TWS/BloomRevisedTaxonomy_KeyWords-1-1.pdf. Ask students to generate one or two questions per chapter and to jot questions down on post-it notes, one per note. At least one question in each chapter must be from the higher end of BRT. Post-its are affixed to the page of text they reference. In class, students can categorize these questions on the board or on a concept chart, and discuss possible answers with their peers.

Double-Column Inferencing

Double-Column Notes encourage students to take a second look while reading, and to read for analysis, not simply plot. The best notes are composed as the student reads, not after the reading is completed. In this way, students prove to themselves and their teachers that they are thinking as they read. Ask students to find one or more significant event or quotation from each chapter in *The Awakening*, and record it on the left side of a double-columned sheet of paper. On the right side column, students record their thinking about the event or quotation. They might comment on patterns they see developing, themes they see evolving, commentary they see being made, or connections they believe tie the novel to modern society. Students could also use the second column for making predictions. As the double-column notes progress, students should see their responses falling into categories that illustrate their comprehension of

Chopin's significant themes and stylistic devices. Notes can be handwritten or submitted via email. Teachers may choose to add comments in the second column, responding personally to inferences students may not be willing to verbalize in class.

Character-Foil Double-Bubble Maps

In *The Awakening*, Both Mademoiselle Reisz and Adèle serve as foils to Edna. To help students compare and contrast Edna with one of these secondary characters, ask students to label one bubble “Edna Pontellier,” and the other with another character, such as “Mademoiselle Reisz.” In the bubbles shared by the foils, students record similarities, such as “both are artists.” In the bubbles specific to each of the characters, students record parallel differences, such as “restricted by society” and “disregards society.” After students fill in and consider their double-bubble maps, they can write a summary statement illustrating the significance of the comparison. Students might also turn and share with a classmate or the class, adding to their maps as the discussion ensues. Possible character foils from *The Awakening* include the following:

1. Edna and Adèle
2. Edna and Mademoiselle Reisz
3. Robert and Léonce
4. Robert and Arabin

Diagrams of double-bubble and other thinking maps are online at:

http://drb.lifestreamcenter.net/Lessons/process_maps/.

Wanted Posters

Literary Wanted Posters help students articulate significant themes from classic novels. Show students example wanted posters, both actual and student-made. Google Images has both FBI and literary examples. You might ask students to create a wanted poster for “Mother-Woman,” and describe Madame Ratignolle. Or have them design one for

“Mr. Patriarchy,” and use Mr. Pontellier as a model. Students can be creative describing the character's “crime” and “reward.” For example, Edna might be accused of abandonment or “female-madness.” Adèle's reward could be “eternal fulfillment” or “the adoration of the masses.” A free template is available at <http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/english/files/wantedposter.pdf>.

RAFTS

RAFTs are short, creative writing prompts with assigned Role, Audience, Format, and Topic. For instance, students might be asked to take the role of Raoul Pontellier, writing to his mother in the form of a letter, why he'd like to come home from Iberville. Or ask students to write a song from Mademoiselle Reisz to the guests at Grand Isle about what makes an artist.

Advice Column

To examine point of view, ask students to write a “Dear Abby” type letter and response. They might advise Edna how to survive back in New Orleans or warn Robert about falling in love with a married woman. Students can post their responses on a bulletin board (paper or digital) for all to see and discuss.

Character Sketches

Character sketches are often used in drama classes to encourage actors' understanding of the parts they portray. However, character sketches are very useful in literature classes too, as an examination of a character's history, motivation, and thinking can lead to better comprehension of the novel as a whole. In the character sketch, students answer simple questions about the character they choose or are assigned. Afterwards, the assignment can be extended when students write their own monologues or deliver a monologue from the text. Character sketches are particularly enlightening for minor characters, such as Mademoiselle Reisz or Dr. Mandelet.

The Character Sketch asks:

1. What does this character look like? How does he/she carry himself? How does he/she dress?
2. How does this character speak? Does he/she have any identifiable speech patterns?
3. Where was this character born? How was he/she raised?
4. Describe the time period in which this character lives. How do the times affect this character's thinking and actions?
5. What is this character's main motivation?
6. Describe any redeeming qualities this character may have.
7. Analyze the character's personality flaws. From what do they stem? How do they affect the choices he/she makes?
8. Choose an object this character holds or would hold dear. Explain the connection.
9. Does this character have any secrets? If so, explain.
10. Who would be this character's contemporary counterpart? Explain your choice.

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

These activities encourage students to deepen their interpretation of *The Awakening* by helping them make connections between themes and issues in the novel, in other works, and in the outside world.

I. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND ESSAYS

Thematic Analysis

Now that students have read the entire novel, they can return to the text for a deeper understanding of its significant themes. The following topics and questions can be used for whole class and small group discussion or as essay topics.

1. Much of the action in *The Awakening* is interior, taking place in Edna Pontellier's mind. Yet without question, she faces conflict throughout the novel. Select a physical, moral, intellectual, or emotional conflict and analyze its effect on Edna.
2. On several occasions at Grand Isle, Edna spots the two lovers, followed by the woman in black. What role do these minor characters play? What is their connection to Edna?
3. Edna at first considers her sketching and painting mere "dabbling," but by the end of the novel she is selling her work. What is the significance of art and the artist in Chopin's novel? Consider Edna's developing relationship with Mademoiselle Reisz.
4. Mulattos and quadroons appear throughout *The Awakening*, yet remain silent. Is Kate Chopin making a statement about the social role of African-Americans in the early 20th century? Explain.
5. Throughout Chopin's story, the author includes images of birds and wings. Trace and discuss the references to freedom and flight in *The Awakening*.
6. Even before Adèle's entreaty to "Remember the children," mothers and their offspring are central to the plot of *The Awakening*. Why might Chopin focus on this topic?
7. Compare Edna's relationship with Robert Lebrun to her affair with Alcée Arobin. What does each man provide? What is the irony in these relationships?
8. Edna refuses to "sacrifice herself for her children," yet, because she cannot give them what they need, she takes her own life. Is this not a sacrifice? Discuss Edna's paradox.
9. At the end of the novel, Edna's "sense of reality had gone out of her life; she had abandoned herself to Fate, and awaited

the consequences with indifference” (p. 123). Is Edna’s final decision to walk into the water of Grand Isle a matter of free-will, fate, or something else? Explain.

- Virginia Woolf wrote in 1931, “Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer.” How does her claim apply to Kate Chopin and *The Awakening*?

II. ACTIVITIES WITH TECHNOLOGY

Weebly.com

Weebly is the digital answer to tri-fold project boards. Weebly.com is a free, easy, cloud-hosted website building platform where students can post blogs, slideshows, maps, photo galleries, video and audio clips about *The Awakening*. Ask student teams to post group discussions, song and photo links, reviews, and other required responses to the novel. Or let students design their own responses. For example, students might post links to websites about Kate Chopin and New Orleans, a student video of a scene from the novel, and an audio podcast that reviews some of Chopin’s other works. Be sure to discuss criteria for an effective multi-media presentation. To extend the assignment, students can observe and critique each other’s work and even share their weebly with another school. <http://www.weebly.com/>.

Online Vacation Album

The concept of place is very significant in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*. In fact, Edna Pontellier’s “awakenings” are directly aligned with her moves between the Grand Isle resort and the two New Orleans homes she inhabits during the story. Ask students to consider how photo albums they have created in the past help them recall a meaningful experience, such as a vacation or camp. Ask them to create a digital photo album for Edna’s travels, commemorating both her physical and spiritual “journeys.” Using an online photo

organizer, students can download or upload photos and create a photo album complete with text such as, “My trip to Grand Isle,” or “My First Swim!!!” Just like in a traditional vacation album, students can add commentary to the margins. Photo editing software also allows students to create CDs, photo collages, and slide shows. The digital projects can be posted on the class website, group weebly, or in the “cloud” at the photo management site. For an extension, students can create a hard-copy of the album. Instructions can be found at: <http://picasa.google.com>.

Animoto.com

Students can create a music and video presentation on *The Awakening* using Animoto.com. The program is a quick, user-friendly website where students choose music and images from the Internet to illustrate their comprehension of character or theme. The result is a digital story told by music, art, and minimal text, such as quotations from the novel. After teacher discussion of how music and visuals can portray certain tones or themes from Chopin’s work, students simply choose the pieces, and Animoto puts them together in a professional-looking presentation. Students can post the presentations on the class website, where the clips can be viewed either collectively or at home. To extend the assignment, students can critique each other’s work. Sample presentations and registration instructions can be found at the following website: <http://animoto.com/>.

Book Review Podcasts

Ask students to write and record a review of an additional work from Signet Classics’ *The Awakening and Selected Stories of Kate Chopin*. Prior to assigning the review, model the format using contemporary examples of book, movie, and television show reviews, which can be found in popular print publications such as *Entertainment Weekly* or online sites such as <http://www.pluggedinonline.com/tv/>. Ask students to take the role of critic and read/review “A Respectable Woman” (pp. 212-216), “Athenaise” (pp.

228-261), or “Charlie” (pp.273-310). Topics might include plot, characterization, style, significance, and connection to Chopin’s other works. Students should support all input with text. In this way, critiques are based on valid examination of the story itself, not merely personal preference. This assignment provides practice writing to specific audiences and for specific purposes. In this case, students are critics writing to potential readers of Chopin’s works. Writers can share their critiques with the rest of the class or school community via podcast, including a sample reading from the text.

To create a podcast, students need only a microphone and an audio-editing software program like Audacity, which can be downloaded for free at <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/download/>.

Students create an MP3 file with their information and include transitional commentary. Next, students upload the podcast to a free site such as iTunes, or post it to the class website. Classmates, parents, and other community members can listen to the recordings online or download them to their mp3 players.

III. GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS

Carousel

In this cooperative learning activity, divide students into groups of four or five. Assign each group one of the major themes that have been addressed throughout the reading of *The Awakening*, such as gender stereotypes, motherhood, patriarchal society, and freedom and imprisonment. In front of large sheets of paper posted around the room, groups meet at one of the posters, which are pre-labeled with the names of the themes. Students brainstorm and write down all textual evidence and commentary they can think of about the theme. When the teacher says, “continue the carousel” (or plays carousel music), students move to the next poster and read what the previous groups have written before adding their own commentary. The carousel continues until the

groups have seen and contributed to all themes and have returned to their original poster to discuss what has been added by classmates.

Title Search

Ask students to examine the intriguing title of Chopin’s novel: *The Awakening*. For Edna, the title represents more than a physical awakening from her frequent exhaustion. Give students the following prompt for a journal response or timed writing: what are the various “awakenings” Edna experiences? What did Chopin think about turn-of-the-20th century society? After writing, students can share journal responses individually, with the teacher, or collectively to the class.

Musical Memoir

Ask students to choose a character from *The Awakening*, either a major one like Edna or a minor one such as Adèle or Robert. Students record their thoughts about the character’s inner and outer conflicts, motivations, and actions, using both the text and their own inferences. Next, students will research and select songs with titles and lyrics that reflect this characterization. The goal is to create a musical “memoir,” which can take the form of a CD insert, a digital photo story, or an essay. Memoirs should include titles, lyrics, and explanations that justify the choice of selections and connect them to the book character. It will be useful to discuss with students how memoirs differ from autobiographies in that the recollections of the character may be altered by emotion and experience. The result is a study in Chopin’s characterization.

Book Jackets

In this activity, groups create and portray a living book cover for an illustrated edition of the novel. In picking a quotation from the book and in portraying an illustration that depicts the quotation’s meaning, students take on the role of the bookseller or publishing house who must decide how best to get across the point of the novel to an audience who has not yet read it. Ask groups to follow this process:

1. Pick one quotation from the novel that is particularly significant, that seems to speak to one of Chopin's major themes or intents, and that would make good sense on the cover of the book.
2. Write out the quotation on a long, narrow piece of paper in large enough print to be seen from the back of the classroom.
3. Decide how to portray the quotation in a frozen tableau. Rather than presenting a scene from the book, create a picture that illustrates the quotation. For instance, the struggle between Edna's duty to her family and her duty to herself might be portrayed as a tug of war. This activity requires students to illustrate comprehension and synthesis by turning their understanding into performance art.
4. At the front of the class, students arrange themselves in a frozen tableau and either hold or post their quotation so that it is part of the "book cover." Groups hold the scene for thirty seconds so that the rest of the class can read and appreciate the "illustrated classic."

Closing Arguments Speeches

In this activity, students take the role of attorneys presenting their "closing arguments" at the end of a criminal trial. In this case Edna Pontellier is on trial. Her crime can be varied: suicide, abandonment, addiction. Ask students to choose whether to defend or prosecute Edna. To prepare their case, they list all the possible arguments from both sides. For example, if they plan to defend Edna, they list not only all the arguments they plan to use but also as many arguments as they can think of that will be used by the prosecution. Then, they'll list possible responses to the opposition's points. In this way, students not only consider both points of view but also illustrate their skills in persuasive writing and speaking. Students should be encouraged to use their own opin-

ion but should also be required to cite the text whenever possible to encourage close reading. Prior to preparing their arguments, students might watch a closing argument on video, such as the scene at the end of John Grisham's *A Time to Kill*, found online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C7f-BgDgpmE>. Such a model provides ideas for rhetorical strategies such as repetition, storytelling, and gestures. Students present arguments orally to the class.

Literary Criticism Summaries

Literary criticisms provide additional insight and development of themes discussed throughout the reading of *The Awakening*. Students also benefit from reading criticisms when they incorporate them in literary research papers. Criticisms can be found in the Introduction (pp. vii-xxix) and Selected Bibliography (pp. 311-312) of the Signet Classics' *The Awakening and Selected Short Stories of Kate Chopin*, in school libraries, and in online subscription services. So that students can illustrate their reading, comprehension, and synthesis of their research, ask them to write short (one to three pages) responses that summarize the critic's main ideas. Summary helps students understand that literary research is a multi-stepped process, and that literary dialogue can only happen effectively if readers first understand what the critic is saying.

A discussion of research strategies and source validity is helpful in order to discourage online searches of Internet work that has never been pre-published or vetted before an editorial board. Directly on the photocopied criticism, ask students to highlight main ideas and summarize paragraphs in the margin. This note-taking step discourages summaries that are simple translation and instead encourages comprehension of global concepts prior to writing the summary. Ask students to write a summary, which introduces the author, title, and focus of the article before presenting an explanation of the critic's main ideas. Along with the summary, students should include a works-cited entry that

includes the criticism's original and reprint publication information. After summaries are submitted, ask students to present their critic's ideas to the class for discussion. When other students react or follow up with a similar or opposing criticism, a natural, student-led discussion often ensues.

Rewrites and Peer-Editing Circles

Because the ending of *The Awakening* has spurred controversy since its publication, ask students to rewrite the ending of the novel, making clear whether or not Edna takes her life. Students should parody Chopin's writing, illustrating their comprehension of her style. To extend this assignment, provide students with a rubric prior to beginning writing. The rubric indicates components that will be assessed, such as adherence to Chopin's style, complexity of character and theme, editing, and effort. Upon completion of the scene, ask writers to form peer editing groups and assess two other classmates' scenes using the rubric. Editors should write helpful comments directly on their peers' work as well as on the rubric where appropriate, and discuss their observations with writers. In this way, students practice writing to specific audiences and for specific purposes. Later, ask writers to share their scenes with the rest of the class.

Extended Reading

In her "Introduction" to the Signet Classics' *The Awakening and Selected Stories of Kate Chopin*, Barbara Solomon suggests that "Prizing her freedom above all else . . . Edna gives back her life to the waters that had awakened it" (p. xxix). Ask students to read or watch another work from the list below that depicts the roles of freedom, self-awareness, or gender in a protagonist's demise or redemption. Students can make a double-columned comparison chart depicting the similarities and differences between the character and Edna Pontellier.

Students should consider the following questions as they read/view:

1. What character traits, dramatic elements, or plot events depict the protagonist as being self-aware?
2. Does this character illustrate a moral or social code of behavior? If so, describe it.
3. What is the character's greatest desire?
4. What ultimate price is the protagonist willing to pay to reach his/her objective?
5. Detail the outcome of the protagonist's struggle with gender stereotypes.
6. Does the protagonist regret his/her decision? How do you know?
7. Is the protagonist ultimately redeemed or condemned for his/her choices?

The following titles focus on themes of gender roles and self-awareness, and are appropriate for both independent reading or literature circles where each group of students reads a different work on the same theme. Ask students for their own additions to the list.

Gender and Freedom

Baby Boom. Dir. Charles Shyer. United Artists, 1987.

Bray, Libba. *A Great and Terrible Beauty*. NY: Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2003.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. NY: Scholastic, 2010.

Donnelly, Jennifer. *A Northern Light*. Boston: Graphia, 2004.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. NY: Norton, 1963.

Halse Anderson, Laurie. *Wintergirls*. NY: Penguin Young Readers, 2010.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes were Watching God*. NY: Harper, 2006.

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