

# ***The Awakening* by Kate Chopin** (Published by Prometheus Books, 1899)

Approved for use in Advanced Placement Communication Arts III

## **Summary**

*The Awakening* tells the story of Edna Pontellier, who defies convention in her search for happiness in the restrictive Victorian New Orleans society in which she lives. Her defying of convention places her at odds with her family and her friends.

## **Connection to the Curriculum**

*The Awakening* explores the place of women in society and the conflicts that result when an individual's desire for respect and independence are harshly judged by the society in which she lives. It examines a wife's responsibilities to her husband and children and a husband's responsibilities to his wife. The setting of the novel, late nineteenth century New Orleans Creole society, allows students to not only look objectively at individuals in conflict in a different time, but also see the universality of those conflicts to their lives. As one of America's first major female authors, Chopin weaves multiple motifs and themes into her novel.

## **Standards**

### **Course Objectives (Benchmarks)**

**Reading:** 1.4-The students comprehend a variety of texts.

**Literature:** 2.1-The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

**Writing:** 3.1- The students use writing as a tool for learning. 3.2- The students use a writing process that includes preparing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing to produce a written text.

### **Possible Skills Taught (Indicators):**

#### **Reading:**

1.4.11- The student uses information from the text to make inferences.

1.4.13- The student compares and contrasts characters' traits and motives, themes, and author's purpose.

1.4.17- The student analyzes how the author's style and use of literary devices work together to achieve her purpose for writing the text.

#### **Literature:**

2.1.1 The student identifies and describes different types of characters and analyzes the development of characters.

2.1.2- The student completes an analysis of social and contextual aspects of the setting and their influence on characters and events in the text.

2.1.4- The student analyzes themes, tone, and the author's point of view across a variety of literary works and genres using textual evidence and considering audience and purpose.

#### **Writing:**

3.2.1- The student uses the writing process in journals and reaction papers.

3.2.8- The student produces effective, well-constructed expository writing.

**A Note on the Text:** (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

*Considered controversial following its original publication at the turn of the century, The Awakening deals with a woman who does not conform to the Victorian stereotypical role of wife and mother. As a result, she engages in an extramarital affair and feels as though she has been "awakened." Although the end implies that Edna commits suicide, the text prompts discussion of the tragedy of suicide and the other options available to Edna. This time period is part of the study of the American canon for junior American Literature students.*

## **AP Connections**

Chopin's style is layered with meaning, and her use of motifs is especially apt. The AP student will be challenged with this author's use of syntax, diction, and tone. Inherent in the AP experience is the interplay between the genders and the restrictions of roles and social mores. Chopin's subtle shadings require students to grapple with the ambiguities of the human condition. It has been referenced on AP exams.

## **Additional Unit Design Connections**

Coming soon:

To be completed during future curriculum development activities