



STORY SYNOPSES FOR TEACHERS

For ReadWriteThink.org lesson

[“Analyzing Character Development in Three Short Stories About Women”](#)

“The Story of an Hour” by Kate Chopin

This short story is about an hour in the life of the main character, Mrs. Mallard. She is afflicted with a heart problem. Bad news has come that her husband has died in a train accident. Her sister Josephine and her husband’s friend Richards have to break the painful news to her as gently as possible considering the danger to her health.

Ironically, Mrs. Mallard reacts to the news with excitement. She feels she is finally free from the depressing life she was living. She can now live for herself and nobody else.

At the end of the story, Mr. Mallard opens the door. He doesn’t know anything about an accident. With a quick motion, Richards tries to block Mr. Mallard’s view of his wife, but it is too late. The doctors say she died of a heart disease. The story ends with the short phrase “of joy that kills.”

“A Jury of Her Peers” by Susan Glaspell

Martha Hale and her husband are taken by the sheriff with his wife to the isolated home of the Wrights. Hale tells the authorities that on the previous morning he found Mr. Wright strangled to death. Mrs. Wright claimed not to know who killed him. She was arrested and is awaiting charges.

Mrs. Hale and the sheriff’s wife are to gather clothing and see to her preserves. The men mock women’s “trifles” and jokingly caution them not to miss any clues, before they turn to their “more serious” work of finding a motive. In a basket of patches destined for a quilt, the women find a strangled canary. They piece together the difficult life of the third woman and decide to conceal the evidence that could incriminate her.

“A Rose for Emily” by William Faulkner

This story covers several decades in the life of the protagonist, Emily Grierson. The reader is led back and forth over time by an unidentified narrator, known only as “we.” Generations have observed Miss Emily, watching and speculating about her since she was a young woman living with a controlling father.

After her father’s death, Emily lives in the aging family mansion with a manservant as cook, gardener, and general handyman. A few years pass and a handsome laborer from the North arrives as part of a project crew. Emily and this man are seen to be keeping company. One day Emily goes to the pharmacy and buys arsenic. The man in question is not seen again by the townspeople.

Thirty years pass, and Emily does not leave her home. She ages; grows fat with long, iron-gray hair; becomes increasingly reclusive; and eventually dies. The now elderly houseman admits the city fathers to the home. As the townspeople go through the house they discover a locked door, which when broken down leads into a dusty, faded room. In the bed lie the skeletal remains of a man whose clothes and toiletries occupy the room. On the pillow next to the remains is a single, long, iron-gray hair.