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The Awakening
Kate Chopin



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Kate Chopin



Prestwick House

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ISBN 978-1-60389-511-8

Item No. 201567

Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

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.

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

47. “All the mystery and witchery of the night seemed to have gathered there amid the perfumes and the dusky and torturous outlines of flowers and foliage. She was seeking herself and finding herself in just such sweet, half darkness which met her moods.” Explain the significance of this quote to a classmate who is having difficulty understanding it.
48. Edna seems to be experiencing a lot of emotional turmoil: “She carried in her hands a thin handkerchief, which she tore into ribbons, rolled into a ball, and flung from her. Once she stopped, and taking off her wedding ring, flung it upon the carpet.” As Edna, write a letter to an advice columnist, like Dear Abby, explaining the problems in your life.
49. Now, imagine you are the advice columnist, write a response to Edna’s letter.

XXII

57. When the Doctor visits with Mr. Pontellier, he asks if Edna has “...been associating of late with a circle of pseudo-intellectual women – super-spiritual superior beings?” Why do you think this is an important question? Write a short explanation of this quote and the reason behind it to help a fellow classmate understand better.
58. If you could have a talk with Mr. Pontellier about the role of women in society, what would you say? Write a dialogue in which you explain how modern women are expected to act, as opposed to how Mr. Pontellier expects women to act. You may begin by saying:

You: Mr. Pontellier, I’m from the 21st century and women of our day are not expected to do as they did in your time.

Mr. Pontellier: How so?

You: Well, for one thing...

XXIII

59. Mr. Pontellier is expected to make all the decisions in his household, including selecting a gift for Edna’s sister’s wedding and advising Edna’s father what to wear to the wedding. In a marriage, do you think that there should be one decision-maker or do you think that married couples should make decisions together? Write a speech for a friend’s wedding reception, offering advice to the newly married couple based on your opinion.
60. Edna is amazed by Madame Ratignolle’s ability to flirt with Edna’s father, especially since Edna doesn’t know how to flirt at all. Write a short chapter for a self-help book about dating, instructing readers about how to flirt successfully.