***The Awakening* by Kate Chopin Student Study Guide**

**Chapter I**

1. Explain how the parrot and the mockingbird are used to introduce this chapter.
2. Describe Leonce Pontellier.
3. What does the following quotation tell you about Leonce’s attitude toward his wife? He looked “at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of person property which has suffered some damage.”
4. Who is Robert Lebrun?
5. Discuss the use of the following sounds in Chapter I: other birds, the piano, Madame Lebrun, the children, Edna and Robert.
6. How do these sounds indicate something about the setting of the novel?
7. What indications are there that the Pontellier marriage is strained?

**Chapter II**

1. Describe Edna Pontellier.
2. What kind of person is Robert Lebrun?
3. What shift in point of view is evident in Chapter 2?
4. What do you learn about Robert and Edna from their conversation at the end of the chapter?

**Chapter III**

1. How does Leonce’s behavior when he returns from the Klein Hotel reveal his attitude toward his wife?
2. What shows the reader more signs of the marital conflict between the Pontelliers?
3. Discuss how sounds are used as a backdrop to the scene of disagreement between Leonce and Edna. How is the sea used as a symbol?
4. How does the gift Edna receives from her husband symbolize her marriage and most marriages of this time?

**Chapter IV**

1. Describe the unusual nature of the relationship between Edna and her children.
2. What satiric comment does the narrator make concerning “mother-woman”? Cite specific words that reveal the satiric nature of these comments.
3. Who is Adele Ratignolle, and how is the embodiment of the “mother-woman”?
4. How does the fact that Edna is not a Creole affect her relationship with others on Grand Isle?
5. Support the following statement as a possible theme in the novel: there is danger in novels that can confuse susceptible women.

**Chapter V**

1. During the Middle Ages, courtly love was embodied in the behavior of a knight toward the fine lady he loved. He would prostrate himself before her, idealize her, carry her favor into battle, but never demonstrate physical love for her. How does Robert’s behavior toward Edna fit this pattern?
2. What is the difference between Robert’s present attentions to Edna and his past attentions to Adéle Ratignolle?
3. What is the significance of Edna’s sketching in this chapter?

**Chapter VI**

1. What question does Robert pose to Edna after Madame Ratignolle leaves? Why does this question pose a problem for Edna?
2. How is the sea used symbolically in this chapter?

**Chapter VII**

1. How are Edna Pontellier and Adéle Ratignolle contrasted in this chapter?
2. How is the road to the beach used symbolically in this chapter?
3. How are the lady in black and the two lovers used symbolically in this chapter?
4. How is the flashback to Edna’s childhood used to show the reader how Edna has been repressed and lonely all her life?
5. What do you learn about Edna as a person, given the reasons for her marriage to Léonce?
6. “She grew fond of her husband, realizing with some unaccountable satisfaction that no trace of passion or excessive and fictitious warmth colored her affection, thereby threatening its dissolution.” How does this omniscience of Chopin reveal Edna’s feelings about marriage and intimate relationships?
7. How does Edna feel toward her children? What does she realize about herself and her role as a mother?
8. How is the theme of “awakening” revealed in this chapter?
9. How is the symbolism of the unknown “lovers” used in this chapter?

**Chapter VIII**

1. Why does Adéle tell Robert to leave Edna alone? Why is he annoyed by this?
2. How is the sound of the sewing machine (different from previous sounds) used in this chapter to reflect mood?

**Chapter IX**

1. How is the sound of the parrot used in this chapter? Can you see any significance to the words the parrot says, particularly in relationship to the turmoil developing in Edna Pontellier?
2. Who is Mademoiselle Reisz? How is she a contrast to Edna Pontellier?
3. In the past, what image has been evoked in Edna’s mind by a certain musical passage? How is this a contrast to Edna’s life up to this point?
4. What is Edna’s response to the music of Mademoiselle Reisz? How is this related to the “awakening” theme in the novel?

**Chapter X**

1. What realization does Edna come to as she walks to the water with her husband by her side?
2. How are images of sound and smell used as a backdrop to this scene?
3. How does Edna respond to swimming successfully for the first time? What happens that can be considered symbolism or foreshadowing?
4. What is the significance of “the spirits of the twenty-eighth of August”?

**Chapter XI**

1. How is the theme of rebellion against marriage shown in Edna’s behavior when her husband returns? How does this rebellion end?

**Chapter XII**

1. Edna goes to the Chêniére for mass. How are the “lovers” used here?
2. What does Edna do that she has never done before? What phrases are repeated?
3. What is Robert’s reaction? In what position does this put Edna as far as her relationship with Robert is concerned?
4. How does Edna feel as she and Robert sail to the Chêniére Caminada?
5. Who are the people aboard the ship in addition to Robert and Edna? Briefly explain the significance of these people.
6. What is the significance of the plans Robert says he has for the future? What is Edna’s response?

**Chapter XIII**

1. How does Edna respond to the actual church service?
2. Who is Madame Antoine?
3. What does Edna do at Madame Antoine’s house? How is this related to the “awakening” theme in the novel?
4. What role does Robert play during this time?
5. What thoughts has Edna had about her husband and her children?

**Chapter XIV**

1. What is Léonce’s reaction when Edna does not return with the others? What does this show you about their marriage?
2. How does Edna clarify for herself and for Robert how special their relationship has become?
3. How is the song she hums after parting from Robert related to the theme of awakening?

**Chapter XV**

1. Why do you think Robert decides to leave Grand Isle for Mexico?
2. What is Edna’s reaction to the news that he is leaving?

**Chapter XVI**

1. How does Edna spend much of her time after Robert leaves?
2. What does she say or do that shows the depth of her feelings for Robert and her awareness of a change within herself?
3. How are Mademoiselle Reisz and Adéle Ratignolle foils to Edna?
4. What does she learn from Mademoiselle Reisz about Robert and Victor Lebrun?
5. How is the following quotation an example of foreshadowing? Edna says, “I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn’t give myself.”

**Chapter XVII**

1. What is the setting for Chapter Seventeen? How is this a contrast to the previous setting?
2. How is Léonce Pontellier’s attitude toward his home similar to his attitude toward his wife?
3. What is the purpose of Edna’s Tuesday “at home”? How does this change after she returns from Grand Isle, and how does this fit into the theme of rebellion?
4. How does her husband react to this and other things that happen in the household, such as his complaints about the cook?
5. What does Edna do after Léonce leaves?
6. What is the significance of Edna taking off her wedding ring and then putting it back on?

**Chapter XVIII**

1. Edna visits the home of Adéle Ratignolle in New Orleans. How is the Ratignolle marriage a contrast to the Pontellier marriage?
2. How does Edna feel about a marriage such as Adéle’s?

**Chapter XIX**

1. How does Edna spend most of her time in this section of the book?
2. What is Léonce’s reaction?
3. How does Edna feel about her painting?
4. Although she is haunted by memories of Grand Isle, how does she manage to “enjoy” her life?

**Chapter XX**

1. Why does Edna go to the Lebrun home in New Orleans?
2. How is this house described? In what way is this description related to Edna’s desire for Robert?
3. Edna meets Robert’s brother, Victor. How is Victor a kind of exaggeration of Robert?
4. What does Edna learn about Robert while she is there? Why does this depress her?

**Chapter XXI**

1. Describe the apartment of Mademoiselle Reisz. Her apartment is symbolic of another way of life, less stifling and confining.
2. How does Mademoiselle Reisz react when Edna talks about her painting?
3. What is the content of a letter Robert has written to Mademoiselle Reisz?
4. What is Edna’s reaction?
5. What is the attitude of Mademoiselle Reisz at this time?

**Chapter XXII**

1. How do the actions and comments of Léonce and Doctor Mandelet illustrate the following theme: that men cannot understand women? Cite specific references to the text to support your answer.
2. What advice does Doctor Mandelet give Léonce?
3. What does the doctor suspect but never say to Léonce?

**Chapter XXIII**

1. What do Edna and her father share as a common interest?
2. How is her father’s dress and appearance characteristic of him as a person?
3. How does Adéle treat Edna’s father? What is Edna’s reaction?
4. What observations does Doctor Mandelet make when he comes to the Pontellier home to meet Edna’s father and to observe her?
5. Describe the stories told by the following people during the evening: Léonce, the Colonel, and Edna.
6. What is the doctor’s reaction to the evening and to Edna’s story? How is this an example of foreshadowing?

**Chapter XXIV**

1. What is Edna’s attitude toward her sister’s wedding? How do her father and Léonce react to this?
2. Compare Edna’s father to Léonce.
3. What is different about Edna’s attitude toward Léonce both before and after he leaves for the wedding?
4. Why does she act this way?
5. Where are Edna’s children?
6. How does she feel about being alone?

**Chapter XXV**

1. Who is Alcée Arobin?
2. How does he feel about his past encounters with Edna? What is different now?
3. Describe Edna’s reaction to the races.
4. Describe Edna’s behavior after her evening with Alcée.
5. How does the relationship between Edna and Alcée develop?
6. What thoughts does Edna have about Robert and about her husband?
7. Give examples of Chopin’s use of sensual language in this chapter.
8. How would readers in the time period of the novel react to this language.

**Chapter XXVI**

1. As their meetings continue, in what way does Edna allow Alcée to speak to her? Cite a quotation.
2. Why does Edna visit Mademoiselle Reisz?
3. What decision has Edna made? Why does she decide this?
4. What does Edna decide to do before leaving?
5. From his letters (sent to Mademoiselle Reisz), what does Edna learn about Robert’s plans?
6. What comment does Mademoiselle Reisz make about Robert, and how does Edna react to her comment?
7. What does Edna do for her children and for her husband?
8. What has Edna not taken into consideration?

**Chapter XXVII**

1. What happens in the developing relationship between Edna and Alcée?

**Chapter XXVIII**

1. This is the shortest chapter in the book, less than one page. How does Chopin present the consummation of Edna and Alcée’s relationship? After the passionate kiss with Alcée, what does Edna realize about herself?

**Chapter XXIX**

1. What does Edna do in order to carry out her plan to leave Léonce? How does this illustrate the theme of independence?
2. When Alcée visits her that afternoon, how is Edna very much in command of the situation?
3. How does Edna appear as a different person now?

**Chapter XXX**

1. Who are the guests who attend the dinner?
2. List the guests who do not appear and the reason they do not attend.
3. Describe the setting for the dinner, the table, the furnishings, and the overall atmosphere. What does this tell the reader about Edna’s decision to leave?
4. How is Edna dressed, and how does she look?
5. How does Edna feel during the evening?
6. How are sensory images of sound and smell used?
7. How is Victor dressed, and how does he act during the dinner?
8. What does the following quotation indicate about the evening? “The voices of Edna’s disbanding guests jarred like a discordant note upon the quiet harmony of the night.”

**Chapter XXXI**

1. What are Edna’s dual feelings as she and Alcée clean up after everyone leaves?
2. What is the pigeon house? In what way is it different from Léonce’s house?
3. How does Edna feel when she enters the pigeon house with Alcée?
4. In what ways has Alcée invaded Edna’s personal space?

**Chapter XXXIII**

1. What incidents show Léonce’s concern with appearances? What steps does he take to avoid scandal?
2. How does Edna feel in her new home?
3. How does Edna react to her visit with her children?
4. What is her feeling when she returns to the pigeon house?

**Chapter XXXIII**

1. What warning does Adéle give to Edna when she visits her at the pigeon house? What is Edna’s attitude?
2. What request does Adéle make of Edna?
3. Why is Edna upset when she sees Robert at Mademoiselle Reisz’s apartment?
4. How does Robert act during this meeting?
5. What excuse does he give for not writing to Edna during his absence? Why do you think he says this?
6. Later, during dinner at the pigeon house, what does Edna learn is the reason for Robert’s return? How does she feel?
7. What is the feeling between them at the end of this chapter?

**Chapter XXXIV**

1. How do Edna and Robert act during dinner?
2. How does Robert’s tobacco pouch, add to the tension?
3. How does Alcée Arobin act when he drops by the cottage to give Edna a message from Mrs. Merriman?
4. What is Robert’s reaction?
5. Why does Robert mention Mr. Pontellier before he leaves?
6. How do Edna and Alcée act after he leaves?
7. What verbal exchange takes place before Alcée leaves?

**Chapter XXXV**

1. How does Edna feel the next morning?
2. How does Chopin use a clothing image here to represent Edna’s feeling of freedom?
3. What three letters does Edna receive that morning?
4. What happens in Edna’s relationships with Robert and Alcée?
5. What would have been the effect of the following comment in 1899 about Alcée: “he had detected the latent sensuality, which unfolded under his delicate sense of her nature’s requirements like a torpid, torrid, sensitive blossom”?

**Chapter XXXVI**

1. How is the garden in the suburbs used as a symbol in this chapter?
2. During her encounter with Robert, what does Edna realize is true about his feelings for her? Why do you think this presents a problem for him?
3. In what way is the new Edna much more unconventional than Robert?
4. What is ironic about Edna’s insistence on leaving when she gets the message from Adéle?
5. How is her response an example of irony?

**Chapter XXXVII**

1. What are Edna’s feelings while she watches Adéle prepare for the birth of her child?
2. What kind of warning does Adéle try to give Edna?
3. What effect does witnessing this birth scene have on Edna?

**Chapter XXXVIII**

1. What conversation do Edna and Dr. Mandelet have when he walks her home?
2. What is Edna’s frame of mind as she returns home after her conversation with Doctor Mandelet?
3. Who does Edna hope is waiting for her at the cottage?
4. What does she find instead? What do you think Robert means?
5. How does Edna spend the rest of the evening?

**Chapter XXXIX**

1. How is the setting for this last chapter appropriate?
2. What is the subject of conversation between Victor and Mariequita?
3. What picture has Victor given of Edna? How is this ironic?
4. How would you describe Edna’s demeanor at this time?
5. What does she give them as the reason for her visit?
6. What does she say she intends to do before dinner? What is their response to this?
7. The reader learns what Edna thought during that last sleepless night following her return from Adéle’s. What realization does she come to about herself, Léonce, her children, and Robert?
8. How is Edna’s removal of her clothes as she walks down to the beach symbolic?
9. Find the quotations that show the seductive nature of the ocean as described by Chopin.
10. Edna swims out too far, experiences one moment of terror, and then relaxes into the ocean. What thoughts does Edna have now?
11. What choice has Edna made?
12. Does Edna have any other choice, given her nature and the conventions of society at this time?