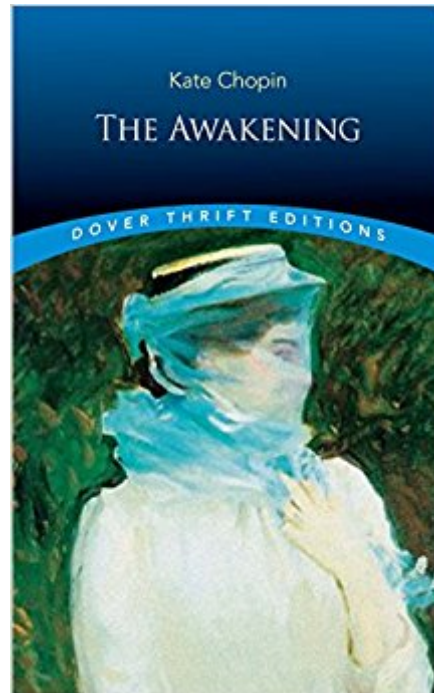




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# The Awakening (Dover Thrift Editions)



## Synopsis

When first published in 1899, *The Awakening* shocked readers with its honest treatment of female marital infidelity. Audiences accustomed to the pieties of late Victorian romantic fiction were taken aback by Chopin's daring portrayal of a woman trapped in a stifling marriage, who seeks and finds passionate physical love outside the straitened confines of her domestic situation. Aside from its unusually frank treatment of a then-controversial subject, the novel is widely admired today for its literary qualities. Edmund Wilson characterized it as a work "quite uninhibited and beautifully written, which anticipates D. H. Lawrence in its treatment of infidelity." Although the theme of marital infidelity no longer shocks, few novels have plumbed the psychology of a woman involved in an illicit relationship with the perception, artistry, and honesty that Kate Chopin brought to *The Awakening*. Now available in this inexpensive edition, it offers a powerful and provocative reading experience to modern readers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This gorgeous edition of Chopin's 1899 classic features period photos of the novel's New Orleans location and a durable plastic dust jacket. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

"Shelly Frasier's reading is thick with languor and sensuality as she creates an Edna who feels all but physically present."---AudioFile --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

I chose 5 stars for the rich language heard more than a century ago and the moving tale of a woman in an unhappy life who felt unfulfilled, constrained by society of the time. Edna lived at the end of the 19th century, married to a wealthy man who did not understand her wants, needs, or desires. She was also a woman of her time, not understanding herself. Slowly she discovers her inner voice by becoming aware or awakened to her primordial desires. Should she have been born in today's era, the ending would have been different. There is a thread of truth woven throughout the story that will touch all women on some level. This is a book well written and I recommend it to all.

Beautifully written, well thought-out and complete. There is something wonderful about a book written by a woman, about women's issues, in the time she is actually from. I love historical fiction, but I often sense that even the best writers of today can't completely capture the thoughts and experiences of a person from the past. It's in the little details, I think, the natural way of speaking, the little daily patterns of living that don't exist anymore because technology has changed so much. This isn't a long book, or difficult to read, but the story of the awakening of Mrs. Pontellier will stay with me for a long time.

I had to choose a novella to read for my Senior Seminar class and then do a 20 page seminar paper on chosen novella before I could graduate. After hearing about all the controversy that surrounded the book when it was first published, my interest was peaked and I had to read and write about it. I chose this edition because not only did it contain the original story, but also contained almost ALL the info I needed for my paper, making my research process very easy. It included info about the author, the time period the book was written, background info on the societal norms of the characters time setting and heritage, critical analysis and reviews, etc. Definitely an interesting read even if you're not looking for all that extra info. Although this book can be considered a novel since it's longer than your typical novella (this edition the story was about 110 long), it's still an easy read. I was able to finish it in two nights each time I read and reread it.

Kate Chopin was one of the earliest feminist writers. She wrote in the early 1900 when women were seen as appendages of their husbands and children. The story is about a young married woman beginning to understand herself as an individual. My favorite line in the book is when she tells her friend, "I love my children. I would die for my children. But I won't stop being myself for them." You need to keep reminding yourself of when the book was written.

to I, for recommending this book. Most regrettably, until I suggested her book, I had never heard of Kate Chopin. If she is to be labeled, she is a southern American female writer, and I have long been fond of the works of Carson McCullers and Eudora Welty. She also attracts the “feminist” label. This work was first published in 1899, twenty years after Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (Dover Thrift Editions) and thirty years before Virginia Wolfe’s *A Room of One’s Own*. I believe Amazon recommended this work based on my recent re-read of Ibsen’s classic, in Kindle version. The novel commences on Grand Isle, Louisiana, one of the outer most barrier islands in the Gulf of Mexico. It is a summer resort, established and hosted by Madame Lebrun for the “gratin” of New Orleans society. Edna Pontellier, and her husband, Leonce, are honored guests. They have two young children. The children are tended to by an individual whose label is now rather quaint, if not entirely obsolete, as in, thrown into the “dust bin of history”: a quadroon. Edna is 28, from Kentucky blue-grass country, and a bit of an outsider in what is admittedly, French society. In fact, the toing and froing of the seemingly “idle rich” is rather Proustian. By slow degree, Chopin depicts a souring marriage, like so many, as follows: “She would, through habit, have yielded to his desire; not with any sense of submission or obedience to his compelling wishes, but unthinking, as we walk, move, sit, stand, go through the daily treadmill of the life which has been portioned out to us.” Sounds like a nexus between “Is this all there is to life?” and “laying back and thinking of the Empire.” A woman’s strong intuition into the affairs of the human heart is demonstrated. And, sure *Ænuf*, another man becomes involved, Robert, one of the sons of Madame Lebrun. Chopin does “nuance”; there are no black or white characters, and the action evolves in a non-stereotypical way. In short, a good read, with a jolting ending that foreshadows the much latter demise of Virginia Wolfe herself. It is a “meaty” novel, full of insight, and longer than the 74 pages indicated in the description. I double-checked my Kindle version, and it shows four or five pages with the same page number. If this came from a print version, the face type must have been very small. And a note about the reviews of two other reviewers, in the USA listing. As I have grown to expect, the lead review is another excellent one by Roger Brunyate giving the work 5-stars. Far more surprisingly, the 1-star, by Ben G., on “The Dangers of Self-Centeredness” is cogent and quite

reasonable, simply from a very different perspective. Think it is the very first time that two quite divergent reviews, in terms of the book's rating, have been worthwhile reads. Is it an "awakening" to one's own self, or simply dangerous narcissism? The last 20% of this edition is eight short stories. All too often, in cases like this, the stories can range from mediocre to out-right "filler." Not so in this case. Almost all are succinct and powerful, as well as being thematically varied. One is on a civil war battlefield, and deals with mistaken identity in the "fog of war." Another concerns two sisters, camped out beside the ruins of their mansion, which they are obsessed with rebuilding, after it having been destroyed by Union troops. Another concerns that wonderful and terrible power by which "one drop" of black blood makes the entire person black. And there is the transformative power of a simple pair of silk stockings to a woman's sense of herself and place in society. Written in 1899! An enduring theme. The French influence, particularly in southern Louisiana, and along the Mississippi River, permeates Chopin's writings. In fact, there are numerous sentences of untranslated French in her work. Though I spent some time working in northern Louisiana in the early 70s, the history and development of the French influence in the state is the only one with political boundaries designated as "parishes," remains rather fussy, and so I decided to partially correct that deficiency by reading Wordsworth's epic poem, *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* (Classic Reprint) in the near future. As for "The Awakening," 5-stars

I wanted to feel more for this book than I did. I respect the book, and there were times that I marveled that it was written when it was, given the honesty it portrayed about the main character's feelings of her role in life, about motherhood and keeping up appearances. The characters mostly did not come to life for me, and I finished the book because it was a short enough read. Unsatisfying to the end.

My freshman English Professor offered this as a between term reading when I ask for suggestions. I was 28 and a single parent when I went for "my turn" for college. I have read it countless times since. She was what I wish every freshman experience in English could be for students. How many of you can say English 101 was a magical experience?

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