

ESSAY TEMPLATE

Introduction

- Make a claim with complexity.
- Establish a line of reasoning.

What's a claim?

A claim is an arguable statement.
Avoid summarizing a text and instead make arguable interpretations about it.

Body Paragraph 1

A -

P -

E -

What's APE?

APE stands for Assert, Prove, Explain.

- An **assertion** is an arguable claim or statement.
- **Proof** refers to textual support (quotes in prose and poetry essays, details in the open question), supporting your claim.
- **Explain** refers to why it matters.

Body Paragraph 2

A -

P -

E -

What's complexity?

Complexity is a broad term referring to sophistication, contrast, or juxtaposition. For complex arguments, consider making one of these complex claims:

- **Layered** - this **AND** that
- **Contradictory** - this **BUT ALSO** that
- **Paradoxical** - this **IN SPITE OF** that

Body Paragraph 3 (optional)

A -

P -

E -

What's a line of reasoning?

The line of reasoning is the thematic purpose or interpretation of the work. It explains "**why does this matter?**" and should be referenced throughout an essay. Avoid putting it at just the beginning or just the end of an essay.

Conclusion

Apply line of reasoning to NOW - why does this *still* matter?

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To be a woman in 1894 began and ended with being a wife. Her duty, her ambition, and her entire life would revolve around her husband, because that was what society had dictated at that time. However, when a loyal wife becomes a widow, that expectation suddenly evaporates. The widow can say, go, and do what she wants. Readers can see this transformation in Mrs. Mallard as she reacts to her husband's sudden death. Mrs. Mallard's reaction of **simultaneous grief and joy** demonstrate the plight that many wives felt in an **oppressive patriarchal society**.

Body Paragraph 1

When hearing of her husband's death, Mrs. Mallard plays her role perfectly. Mrs. Mallard is simply overcome with **grief**. Chopin writes, "**She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment,**" fulfilling the role of a mourning wife. While the reader is not told many details of the marriage, it is one based on mutual respect and even, at times, love. When confined to her room in a state of mourning, Mrs. Mallard thinks, "**She knew she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed gray and dead.**" **Because her entire existence up to this point has depended on her ability to act as a loving wife, it is fitting for her to grieve. She is mourning not only the loss of a husband, but the end of a lifestyle.**

Body Paragraph 2

And yet, Mrs. Mallard's grief transforms to an overwhelming feeling of **joyful freedom**. "**Free! Body and soul free!**" she whispers as she looks out the window at a bright new day. The death of Brently Mallard represents the death of her marriage and her subordination as a humble wife. Chopin writes, "**She would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow creature.**" **Once the husband has died, Mallard's role as a wife is gone and she now can embark life as a widow—one with personal freedom and individuality. The change in outlook is so powerful that Louise characterizes it as "a very elixir of life."**

Body Paragraph 3 (optional)

In its ironic ending, Chopin introduces that elixir to Mrs. Mallard too quickly. Despite a second telegram proving his death, Brently Mallard walks through the front door, oblivious to the accident that all believe killed him. Mrs. Mallard, afflicted with a heart condition, is so shocked by his appearance that she drops dead. **The doctors prescribe her death to his sudden arrival, "a joy that kills."** **However, through Louise's thoughts we can see that it was not the joy at Brently Mallard's life, but the grief of it that in fact killed her. Her imagined life, laid out before her as "days that would be her own" was snatched from her the second her husband opened the door. To return to the role of a nameless wife, of Mrs. Mallard, would be too cruel, and so Chopin killed her in an authorial sense.**

Conclusion

Apply line of reasoning to NOW - why does this *still* matter?

"The Story of an Hour" is an exploration of irony and subverted expectations, but also a wry look at the role that women played in their husband's lives. Because Mrs. Mallard cannot hold a job, pursue or own interests, or even enjoy her own "self-possession," she finds herself consumed with joy at the thought of her husband's passing. It is not because the husband is abusive, but in fact society is. The concept of living for oneself, of truly being "free, free, free!" is such a terrifying thought that it may indeed be the joy that kills.

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