
The Rising Culture of Feminism in Desiree's Baby and The Story of an Hour by Kate Chopin

Feminist Qualities of the Late 1800's

The two stories, *Desiree's Baby*, and *The Story of an Hour*, by Kate Chopin, both depict the rising culture of feminism that took place during the time period that they were written. The two very opposing stories show different perspectives on the topic of feminism and freedom for women. They stories, too, show a harsh reality of how society occurred during this time period, and how women were treated.

In *Desiree's Baby*, the wife is portrayed as a gentle, motherly, loving woman who basically lives for her husband. She is shown to have none of her own emotions, saying she "loved him desperately. When he frowned, she trembled, but loved him. When he smiled, she asked no greater blessing of God. (Chopin 2)" This story strongly represents the lack of say women had over their own lives, and the amount of control men had over them and their relationships. When Desiree is kicked out of her, her lack of argument shows just how little women got to say when decisions were made for them. This conflict also shows how men often in these times blamed women for faults instead of blaming themselves or even questioning if they were slightly at fault. I found this point especially important because it shows the amount of strength and courage it took for women in this time to fight for their rights and equality.

The Story of an Hour gives a very different perspective on feminism from the other story, which showed the woman being controlled and never recovering from it. While the woman in this story does not get to live freely as well, she at least begins to understand and appreciate her life for her own reasons, and not her husbands. In the beginning of this story, the wife is shown as women and consumed with grief because of her heart disease and the death of her husband. Though, her portrayal and the idea of feminism changes drastically when the women is alone in a room, and sees opportunity through an open window. She realizes she has lived her life under her husband's limitations and controls, and only just now understands that she did not actually love him. She finally for the first time in her life does not dread living, she says, "Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own (Chopin 3)", and sees it as a sign of rebirth, revitalization, and love for herself. This realization shows how strong and limitless women are when not held back because of their gender or sex. In the end, despite the fact that Louise died, I see this as her at her strongest. For once, her body and mind are able to do something that is for her happiness, not anyone else's, and that in itself is such an important part of feminism.

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