The Characters In The Awakening By Kate Chopin

In Kate Chopin's "The Awakening" there are three characters that represent the different expectations in their society. Reisz who represents independence and freedom, Edna who represents entrapment, and Adèle who represents the ideal female of society. Adèle is a mother who devotes her entire self to her husband and kids. She lives to serve her children and husband, and is the clear example of a mother woman. " Her name is Adèle Ratignolle. There are no words to describe her save the old ones that have served so often to picture the bygone heroine of romance and the fair lady of our dreams." (Chopin 8) Reisz is divorced with no kids. She devotes her life to music and works as a living example of a completely self-sufficient woman. While Adèle path of life is what Edna should follow, Reisz's path of life exemplifies the path Edna is looking for in order to find her true happiness

Compared to Adèle, who is ruled by her kids and husband, Reisz is ruled totally by her love for herself, rather than by the social expectations of society. Edna is not happy with her life, and wants the freedom Reisz has. " 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. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me." (Chopin 40) She wants to be free of the burden put on her by her husband and kids. Adèle's life is controlled by her husband and kids.

There are many reasons that Edna should follow Reisz and her way of life. Adèle knows the life of being socially expected that Reisz gave up for isolation and independence, but that is not a life Edna would be happy with. Reisz is the exact model of what Edna wants to be in her life. Reisz is an independent, self-providing women. On the other hand, Adèle is supposedly Edna's best friend, but Madamoiselle Reisz is the only one who truly understands Edna's struggle. Throughout the story Reisz becomes the most important role in Edna's awakenings. While Edna is looking for some sort of freedom in her life, she turns to Reisz for help. Reisz tells Edna she must remain courageous, she must have a brave and defiant spirit. "I do not know you well enough to say. I do not know your talent or your absolute gifts-which have not been acquired by one's own effort. And moreover, to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul." (Chopin 53)

Edna sees from what her life would be like if she was independent from her husband and kids. She would be able to experience being self-sufficient, be able to engage in her passions and fulfill her dreams. Edna sees Reisz and her happiness. Reisz does what makes her happy, refusing societal expectations. Reisz's happiness is more important to her than upholding societal expectations.

Edna's suicide, in the end, was foreshadowed throughout the book. Her continuous hints at unhappiness was the biggest sign. She felt that death was the only way for her to be free of her husband and kids. Death was the only way she could escape her fate. She began to realize that she would never escape the life she had created for herself. She would never be satisfied with her place in life, and therefore would always be unhappy. She wanted to be free, in the way that Reisz was. While she was living, she would always have to take care of her husband and kids and would never escape her entrapped role. As long as she living she wouldn't be free.

Eventually in the end, Edna gives up. She goes out into the ocean and swims until she can't go any farther. She finally gets to experience the freedom she had hoped for her entire life.

Edna felt that by marrying and having kids, she was doing what was expected of her, not realizing that would not be the life she wanted to live. She gets rid of the burden and guilt from her husband" I am no longer one of Mr.Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose." (Chopin 89) She escapes the constant need from her children. Edna fulfills her dream when she died. She is free and free is all she ever wanted to be. "Goodbye-because I love you. Perhaps Doctor Mandelet would have understood if she had seen him but it was too late; the shore was far behind her, her strength was gone." "She looked into the distance, and the old terror flamed up for an instant, then sank again. Edna heard her father's voice and her sister Margaret's. She heard the barking of an old dog that was chained to the sycamore tree. The spurs of the cavarly officer clanged as he walked across the porch. There was a hum of bees, and the musky odor of pinks filled the air." (Chopin 95)

These words were Edna's goodbye. With these words, she went for a swim she would never come back from. She left with the freedom she had always wanted. She finally had what she has wanted for so long. It took her death for her to achieve her dream.

Works Cited

1. Chopin, Kate. The Awakening. Black and White Classics, 1899.