

# EXPLORING THE INNER WORLD OF THE CHARACTER THROUGH NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN KATE CHOPIN'S THE STORY OF AN HOUR

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## **Abstract**

Characters become familiar to the readers because Literary Texts offer glimpses into their psyches and provide insights into their inner worlds. The world of the thoughts and feelings of the characters is given a verbal rendering by the author with the use of powerful narrative techniques. Kate Chopin's *Story of an Hour* exhibits a similar feature. It brings out the characters' inner world through various narrative techniques and devices. This paper explores these devices and study how they contribute in understanding the central character.

## **Key Words:**

*inner world, narrative*

## **Introduction:**

Characters become familiar to the readers because literary texts offer glimpses into their psyches and provide insights into their inner worlds. The world of the thoughts and feelings of the characters is given a verbal rendering by the author with the use of powerful narrative techniques. Kate Chopin's *Story of an Hour* exhibits a similar feature. It brings out the characters' inner world through various narrative techniques and devices. This paper explores the various narrative techniques and devices employed to show the inner world of the character Louise Mallard in Kate Chopin's Short Story "The Story of an Hour".

## **Methodology:**

The paper will adopt a qualitative, textual analysis approach to explore the inner world. A close reading will be conducted to identify and analyze narrative techniques used to convey Louise's inner world. Further, it will study how these techniques contribute to the reader's understanding of Louise's character.

*The Story of an Hour* chronicles the feelings of the protagonist Mrs. Mallard that unfold at the news of her husband's death. It gives the reader's an inside view of Mrs. Mallard's feelings. Though the story recounts her story of an hour of her reaction on the news received of her husband's death, it certainly gives the readers the story of her entire married life. This story describes in minute detail the effect this devastating news brings on the character and her feelings on her loss and her subsequent relief on losing her husband. The character goes through lot of emotions of past hurt, painful memory and the present joy which the news brings.

These emotions and feelings of the protagonist are conveyed to the readers through various devices. A qualitative content analysis approach was adopted and the following narrative techniques were observed

## **Techniques of Narrative Discourse:**

### **Free Indirect Discourse:**

The entire story is narrated in free indirect discourse by the authorial narrator in second person at the extradiegetic level. The protagonist Mrs. Mallard lives in the fictional world on the diegetic level. This story is an example of fixed focalization as the presentation of narrative facts and events are from a constant point of view of a single focalizer. Free Indirect Discourse may be a representation of a character's words (free indirect speech) or verbalized thoughts (free indirect thought). But in this case, it is more an example of Untagged Free Indirect Thought or Verbalized Thoughts. The text unveils the character's indirect thought to the readers which have been verbalized by the narrator.

*There was something of coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She*

*did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name*

*There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; 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.*

*And yet she had loved him – sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!*

**Direct Discourse:**

There are also instances of Direct Discourse where Mrs. Mallard alone in her room utters the words of freedom.

*She said it over and under her breath: 'free, free, free!*

*'Free! Body and soul free!' she kept whispering.*

**Diegetic Statements:**

Kate Chopin's narrative discourse has diegetic statements telling the narrative of nonverbal events.

*Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.*

*It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there too, near her.*

The text also contains the narrator's evaluative and commentatorial statements.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

**Stream-of-consciousness manner:**

Louise's thoughts and feelings are presented in a stream-of-consciousness manner as she sits in her armchair, feeling the warmth of the sun and the freedom of her newfound independence:

*"There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; 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."*

Her thoughts reveal her sudden joy for the newfound freedom from constraints of unwanted relation.

*Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own.*

*She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. it was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long,*

**Conclusion:**

By employing these narrative devices, Chopin masterfully crafts a thought-provoking and emotionally resonant story that continues to captivate readers. These techniques provide insights into Louise's emotional state, desires and conflicts. These devices and techniques help in greater and deeper character development. Readers are drawn into Louise's inner world. The narrative presents a subjective experience, allowing the reader to understand Louise's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in a direct and immediate way. It gives psychological insight into Louise's character and inner world. These narrative techniques reveal the inner world of Louise which is repressed and in bondage. Readers realize that she longed to break away from the shackles of societal pressures and begin life anew. Finally when the moment came she could not handle the boundless joy which was presented before her and she died. These devices are of great importance to convey the inner grief and sorrow of the Louise.

The character Louise lives in a traditional Victorian society and has a conventional and traditional marriage as per Victorian society. This story questions the status of women in a traditional society who were deprived of exercising their rights. She thinks to herself that there would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose their will on others. These thoughts sum up the lives of women in a traditional society. Through the techniques of stream of consciousness and free indirect discourse the repression and

suppression of the protagonist's feelings and desires are brought to surface which were hitherto conveniently stifled by mandate and dictates of a traditional society. These devices give a voice to the angst and sufferings of women through fictional works and compel the readers to reassess the societal rules and expectations which it enforces on its women counterparts.

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