

Read the following short story carefully, noting Mrs. Mallard's initial reaction to the news of her husband's death, then her delayed reaction. Discuss the way Chopin develops Mrs. Mallard's character through the use of tone.

Thesis: Mrs. Mallard's immediate reaction to her husband's death is conveyed with a tone of frantic grief and her delayed reaction is one of exhilarated optimism. This tonal shift emphasizes the childish quality of her character, because although her feelings change, her behavior does not.

Jobs:

1. development of character (through tone)
2. identify tone
3. initial reaction v. delayed reaction

Initial Reaction – frantic grief

- heart condition; news broken to her gently - detail
- she wept at once with sudden, wild abandonment - detail
- pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul – metaphor/imagery
- most people cannot accept it; she immediately begins sobbing – detail
- storm of grief - metaphor
- goes to room alone, refuses company - detail
- sob came and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams - simile
 - CHARACTER: upset by her husband's death b/c of her dependence, childish

Shift = paragraph 9

Delayed Reaction – exhilarated optimism

- monstrous joy - oxymoron
- pulses beat fast and coursing blood warmed and relaxed her body - imagery
- free, free, free! - repetition
- she would live for herself - detail
- she abandoned herself (possessing) - detail
- saw long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely - metaphor
- feverish triumph – imagery/oxymoron, goddess of victory - allusion
- drinking very elixir of life - metaphor
 - CHARACTER: confident, selfish, childish, raving, unstable – her epiphany is passive

