

CLASS XII ENGLISH LITERATURE

THE STORY OF AN HOUR

'The Story of an Hour' written by Kate Chopin in 1894 is about the tragic event or events that happened with Mrs. Louise Mallard one day.

The story starts with the news that Mr. Brently Mallard has died in an accident. Richards, Mr. Mallard's friend, is first to hear this shocking news and he informed the Mallard family immediately. Mrs. Louise Mallard has heart disease, so great care is taken in informing Mrs. Mallard about her husband's death.

Josephine, Louise's sister, takes the responsibility to break the horrible news to her. She says in broken sentences, the truth veiled in concealment. At once Mrs. Mallard breaks down completely. She goes wild with grief. When the storm of grief has subsided, she locks herself in her bedroom.

Sitting on an armchair near the open window of her room, she looks at the blue sky, physically exhausted. The spring air smells of upcoming rain, of fresh greenery and flowers. She can hear a distant voice singing a song, countless sparrows twittering madly somewhere.

As a kid she used to cry herself to sleep literally every night. She was quite young with a calm face. But now there's a steeliness in her stare. But her gaze isn't of reflection, there is intelligence and knowledge in that gaze. She goes quite still and waits with fear for what is coming for her. But she doesn't know what exactly is coming her way.

Her bosom rises and falls tumultuously. She struggles to keep herself free from the clutches of whatever is trying to drown her. She fights and wins. In her semiconscious state, she keeps whispering the word "free!" repeatedly. The fear and vacant expression is replaced by a calm, bright and keen expression. 'At last I'm free' is her first thought. She thinks that her husband, though kind, never really loved her. She felt suffocated and hopeless with him, not loved and cherished. But now that he's dead, she can be free. 'Free soul! Free body!' were her exact words.

Josephine was kneeling outside Louise's door, begging her sister to open the door. Louise screams that she's fine and asks her not to worry for her. Her imagination has taken her on a riot. She was imagining herself during summer, winter, spring and in all the seasons alone, enjoying herself, without any restrictions or sadness. All of a sudden, she rises and opens the door and walks down the stairs, hand in hand with her sister. But when she reaches the bottom stair, someone opens the door with a latch key. On the threshold stood Mr. Mallard, travel-stained and calmly carrying his umbrella and grip-sack. It is known that he was quite far from the place where the accident had taken place. In fact, he didn't know there had been an accident at all, let alone that someone had put his name in the dead men's list.

Then everything happens quite fast; Richard tries to shield Mr. Mallard from Mrs. Mallard's view but it is too late. The shock of seeing him again kills Louise at once. When the doctors come, they say she died due to her heart disease.

ASSIGNMENT:

NB: Write it in your literature copy.

1. Write a paragraph each on the following characters: 1. Louis Mallard. 2. Josephine.