



The Awakening And Other Stories (Oxford World's Classics)

Kate Chopin

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480 pages

Review

A Creole Bovary is this little novel of Miss Chopin's --Willa Cather From the Inside Flap

The Awakening shocked turn-of-the-century readers with its forthright treatment of sex and suicide.

Departing from literary convention, Kate Chopin failed to condemn her heroine's desire for an affair with the son of a Louisiana resort owner, whom she meets on vacation. The power of sensuality, the delusion of ecstatic love, and the solitude that accompanies the trappings of middle- and upper-class life are the themes of this now-classic novel. As Kaye Gibbons points out in her Introduction, Chopin "was writing American realism before most Americans could bear to hear that they were living it."

This Modern Library Paperback Classics edition includes selected stories from Chopin's *Bayou Folk* and *A Night in Acadie*. About the Author

Kate Chopin (1851-1904) did not begin to write until she was thirty-six years old. Up to that time, her life gave no hint of either literary talent or literary ambition. Yet after the publication of her first stories in 1889, she enjoyed ten years of a productive, serious, and fairly successful career. Her first novel, *At Fault* (1890), had difficulty finding a publisher, so she brought it out at her own expense and sent review copies to important journals. Her short stories close to a hundred of them were published for the most part in prestigious national magazines. They gave her a solid reputation as a gifted 'local color' writer that is, an author specializing in the depiction of a particular region of the country and its inhabitants. From these many stories, she culled two well-reviewed collections: *Bayou Folk* in 1894 and *A Night in Acadie* in 1897. *The Awakening*, now her best-known work, appeared in 1899. Critics of Chopin's own day disapproved of the sexual frankness of *The Awakening* and were especially disturbed by the narrator's neutrality toward the unconventional behavior of Edna Pontellier, the heroine. All reviews of the novel were unfavorable. Soon after this setback, a planned third collection of short stories was rejected by a publisher, and Kate Chopin essentially ceased to write. In poor health, she died some five years after *The Awakening* appeared. She was only fifty-three.

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